

Report from Action Week and the anti-war congress in Prague

AnarCom, Action Week, Dreyfus

May 2024

Contents

“Together Against Capitalist Wars and Against Capitalist Peace!” May 2024. 3

Prague Congress Report - Part 2 4

“Together Against Capitalist Wars and Against Capitalist Peace!” May 2024.

Throughout the week between 120 and 150 revolutionary internationalists against capitalist war gathered in Prague for the Congress to begin communicating and coordinating.

From the start the event was fraught with problems. In part due to the lack of experience of the organisers, and in part due to the reality on the ground of a split in the anarchist movement in the Czech Republic.

This split, along the lines of opposition to all capitalist wars and support for the state in some. Between revolutionaries and defenders of their national bourgeoisie.

The repercussions of this played out in real time before us in what one foreign delegate noted in their report back, as the consequence of “the fog of war”. A foretaste of the splits to come.

The inaugural session on the theme of the conference took place in the Liben District of Prague on Wednesday May 22nd, attended by around 50 of the first arriving delegates.

Introduced by a comrade from the Anti-Militarist Initiative (AMI), the theme of opposing war at home and abroad and opposing the capitalist social peace at home are two sides of the same coin.

The poverty ‘peace’ at home is the austerity and repression of their class war against us, preparing and enabling the slaughter of our class on the front lines of the conflicts: Russia/Ukraine, Israel/Gaza, Yemen, Iran, wherever imperialist blocs grind on their fault lines.

It concluded with lines from one of our own articles (Capitalism’s ‘Social-Peace’ is Class War! 12th Mar 2024):

“The war is no further away than the nearest arms or components factory. No further than the nearest logistics depot, transport hub, communications centre. The war is where the ports and airports are, the military bases and their reserve volunteers’ stations.

It is the rail networks and motorways, the towns, estates, cities and factories where we as workers’ pay the price of war in widening poverty and worsening austerity. Worsening conditions, lower pay and the threat of military call up or conscription.

In truth we cannot move without being at war and when we notice it, the rhetorical guns blaze “disrupter, extremist, terrorist!” We are already, through our toleration of their economic planning and its social and political consequences, being partially conscripted by capitalism and its state actors into its destructive rivalry.”

Discussion was widespread but in full agreement on the Internationalist position the workers have no nation and, opposition to all wars. The use of the language of the West’s ‘Culture-Wars’, often used against revolutionists, such as accusations of ‘Westsplaining’ or speaking with the ‘colonial voice’ was undermined by the contributions from Russian and Ukrainian exiles present at the congress.

A Russian comrade from the group New Prometheus explained how the social peace in Russia was in part maintained by hiding the impact of the war. Increasing workers’ wages so they have a sense of gain.

He also talked of a policy of recruiting from the poorer republics offering more money than workers could earn in their lifetime to be paid if they live or to their families should they die, thus protecting the large urban centres from the direct experience of depopulation and body bags.

Perhaps most impacting was from a Ukrainian comrade on the Ukrainian worker's experience:

"There are no more professional soldiers to send. They can pick you off the street and just send you. A guy used to get a few weeks and then few day's training. Now he gets nothing.

He can get picked up and sent to the front. He's no idea how to fight, he doesn't last a month before he's dead. He's not a warrior he's just a guy in the street."

This was followed by another Russian comrade now living in Germany who said opposition in Russia was limited but often centred around "peace" groups the 2 main exceptions where KRAS [see their short statement to the congress as they couldn't attend below] and the mothers of dead soldiers who have begun to organise. This was backed up and agreed with by our Ukrainian comrade.

Despite this promising start, organisation from this point began to fall apart. Venues were cancelled through the actions and influence of the pro-war anarchists of the Czech Anarchist Federation, and events were cancelled to enable search for new ones.¹

From this point effectively two programs began to take shape. A group of foreign comrades attending, in the absence of scheduling and venues, organised alternative meetings at different locations, and we look forward to hearing the outcomes of the work they have done.

While we continued to discuss and have meetings with other different international delegations, we prioritised our meagre resources to continue where we could the revised program of the original, if now truncated Congress and will report more on this later.

- Report by Dreyfus

Prague Congress Report - Part 2

After a promising start on Wednesday 22nd, things appeared to fall apart on Thursday. After an event hosted by Kites not Drones, news of cancellations came as the original Congress Centre, secured, and paid for in February withdrew at the last minute to the consternation of delegates,

It was at this point the various visiting comrades decided to proceed with a parallel program in the absence of confirmation of alternatives. This group of around 50 secured spaces on the Friday to initiate discussion and debate.

¹ We want to set the record straight on this inaccuracy in the AnarCom report. It is undisputed that due to the influence of the Anarchist Federation (AF), our Wednesday event at Safespace Café was cancelled and other sabotages occurred. As for the gyms rented for the weekend congress, in this case we do not yet have enough confirmed information about who was behind the fact that our contract with the landlord (Jeseniova Primary School) was terminated and we were not allowed to hold the congress there. However, in view of the numerous previous sabotages by the Anarchist Federation, in our considerations we are also working with the hypothesis that in this case their membership (and/or sympathizers) may have actively influenced the event. We hope to verify soon whether or not this hypothesis is true. At this time, we cannot state it with certainty, but neither can we rule it out as a potential possibility. We can, however, document with certainty evidence of previous AF provocations and their sabotage of anarchist and anti-war activities.

59 predominately anarchist groups were invited to the 'official' Congress. 10 decided to work with the parallel group (for easy ref calling itself the 'Self Organised Assembly' or SOA.), 8 of them exclusively. Whilst not all the invitees were able to attend, the remainder that did continued to focus on the Congress weekend.

The context was hard for outsiders to grasp, but threats and provocations had preceded any events compelling the organisers to issue the following statement:

"The organizing team ...has been facing provocations and sabotages for a long time, which are supposed to complicate the organization of the anti-war activities... we are watching the attacks of our opponents grow in intensity."

AnarCom made the decision to devote its limited resources to meeting and discussing with specific groups who had approached us while waiting for further news on the Congress venue.

We remained in contact throughout with both the Organising Committee and comrades from the Czechoslovak Anarchist Association (ČAS), gaining insights from their experience. From them we learned:

"The anarchist movement in the Czech Republic has been in crisis and in retreat for several years now, including the split over the war in Ukraine. Afed has few members, but it has strong media coverage and background (autonomous centres, contacts to ex-anarchists, nowadays left liberals at universities).

So, when they started to preach pro-war propaganda, the anti-militarist voice was not heard, and they poisoned the thinking of many people – especially the youth."

There was general consensus the loss of the first venue was attributable to sectarian (or rather pro war partisan) sabotage.

Additionally:

"...there was an anarchist bookfair in Prague this weekend. It's very well attended, last year about 2000 people passed through. We, as anti-militarists, were not invited, as it was co-organised by Afed and the Ukrainian Solidarity Collective were performing there with their pro war propaganda."

There may have been a lot more going on for them than we were privy to. It is worth remembering as context that Czechia is a firm supporter of Ukraine in the middle of an election, next to a country (Slovakia) which just had an assassination attempt on its PM.

We were able in part to attend the relocated Congress on Saturday and participate in some discussion. There were around 50 people there at any one time and literature stalls. It took place in an ecology training centre with lunch provided and amenities for other refreshments. We had not seen the majority of attendees before.

Amongst key topics were the splits in the so-called movement, the division of our class through the exploitation of culture-wars and the centrality of the action of our class rather than our own efforts to change the forces on the ground.

Though good examples of blockade actions at some Italian ports in conjunction with unionised workers were shared – acknowledging the implied limits of ideology and bureaucracy on the potential for more.

A recurring question from the Wednesday to the Saturday had been “what can we do?”. We suggested this question be turned around to ask ourselves “what are we doing?”

Only we can answer this ourselves on the ground and our defining geographies and political and social circumstances will inform us of resources and potential.

Continuing security concerns had led to request for mobile phones not to be used to communicate for the Sunday session which we were unable to attend as unfortunately we couldn’t access the email links notifying us.

Other comrades continued their parallel program throughout and elements of the SOA were working on some form of communiqué by the time we left. We look forward to seeing the outcome of the work of that group.

We have continued to liaise with comrades – perhaps a coalition of the willing – to draw learning from this and to find common ground for a joint statement, primarily relating to the wars and the veritable split in our movement. We will report more on progress on this in the coming days.

- Report by Dreyfus

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



AnarCom, Action Week, Dreyfus
Report from Action Week and the anti-war congress in Prague
May 2024

<https://actionweek.noblogs.org/post/2024/06/01/report-from-action-week-and-the-anti-war-congress-in-prague/>

We are publishing a report from **AnarCom – an Anarchist-Communist network** operating in the so-called UK. We respond to the controversial parts of the report with footnotes. - Action Week

theanarchistlibrary.org