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**CZECH AUTONOMISM: SHARED EXPERIENCES**

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***Abstract***

Autonomous Marxism is not very well known in the Czech Republic. The Czech autonomists have no web pages, have a certain inclination towards secrecy, and on the rare occasion when they have participated in street riots, were labelled as “anarchists” by the mass media. None of the Czech autonomists know the Italian language, but they are well read in the classical texts of autonomous Marxism through the translations of Toni Negri’s and Mario Tronti’s books and articles. In some cases Czech autonomists also published Czech translations of selected works directly linked to autonomous Marxism. Our paper will present a short history of Czech autonomism, mainly through the narration of the actors, using the emic approach.

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## **1. Introduction**

The political and cultural impact of contemporary *operaismo* is not comparable to the golden age of this ideology; confined to the years 1960-1980 in Italy. Until 1989 *operaismo*, because of its heterodoxy, did not represent anything interesting for the ideologists of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Italian autonomist Marxism, in those few cases where the Czechoslovakian press recorded the Italian political events in which it was present, was never mentioned, most probably due to its name being too controversial for a state calling itself “socialist”. The entire Czechoslovak press merely repeated the conjecture on the autonomists (never directly quoted) that appeared in the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party *l’Unità*, notably when the newspaper called the autonomists “provokers”.

## 2. Problem Statement

The name “provokers” also appears in relationship to the German *autonomen*. These, however, were in some cases reported in a positive way, as a mass movement of opposition to capitalism. This occurred, however, only in written texts, deeming the appearance of the *autonomen* unacceptable to the official Czechoslovakian viewpoint because it was too similar in appearance to the Czechoslovak underground opposition to the regime; so when there was television coverage of clashes between police and *autonomen*, these were called “neo-fascists” (from Archive of Czechoslovak state television: years 1985-1988). Shortly before 1989 it began to become increasingly visible as a leftist opposition to the authoritarian regime of Czechoslovakia. It is difficult to define the nature of the prevailing regime in Czechoslovakia from 1968 to 1989 in the terms of the political sciences. In everyday language, the term “communist regime” is employed, although the self-definition of the regime was “socialist state”. There has been some debate over the use of the term “totalitarian regime”, but the majority of politologists are now of the opinion that it was an “authoritarian system”. The term “authoritarian” does not solve the question about the type of economic system of Czechoslovakia at that time. Respondents and authors agree on the term “state capitalism”. One respondent also liked the definition that the “past Czechoslovak regime was a peculiar version of the Western welfare state”.

After agreeing the terminology (in accord with the respondents), we can reconstruct the historical and ideological bases of the Czech autonomists.

### 2.1. Left alternative

The leftist opposition crystallized into a contingent called *Levá alternativa* [Left alternative] which blended the personality of Trotskyist inspiration, former members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, left-liberals and anarchists. The complex path that led them to the discovery, both in the Czech Republic and in the Slovak Republic, of Italian *Autonomism* of the late '70s (as a source of political inspiration), started, not as a result of a debate within the Marxist groups, but rather within the debate among the anarchist groups. Its inception being in 1989, the year in which the authoritarian Czechoslovakian regime collapsed (Tomek & Slačálek 2006). One of the first anarchist journals, founded in 1991, was called *Autonomie*, although the inspiring model seemed to be more that of the German *autonomen*. There were only very few references to the Italian *operaismo* that was later to become the base of Autonomist Marxism.

### 2.2. Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation

Another milestone that would lead to the establishment of an autonomous group inspired by *operaismo* was the foundation of the *Československá anarchistická federace* [Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation] in 1995. From it, a little later, in 1996, came a breakaway group called *Organizace revolučních anarchistů - Solidarita* [The Organization of revolutionary anarchists - Solidarita]. The organization, called ORA-S for short, proposed that the formation of trade unions should operate both in factories and on the territory, which was meant to become the “backbone of the revolutionary movement

against capitalism” (<http://odpor.wz.cz/VYZVY/solidari.htm>, still on the net on 7.12.2014, now no longer available). From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ORA-S was increasingly considered, within the anarchist movement, as more of a communist organization because of its high interest in workers and industrial unionism. ORA-S itself later declared it was a group inspired by Georges Fontenis’ *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* (Fontenis 1953), “also because Fontenis speaks about class-struggle without any hesitation, unlike the Czech anarchists”. It is also necessary to remember that incitement to class-struggle is currently considered under the laws of the Czech Republic a hate crime punishable by up to three years of imprisonment (§ 356, law number 40/2009).

### 2.3. Collectively Against Capital

In 2004, ORA-S split into two factions. The one that still continues to consider itself a part of the anarchist movement took the name *Anarchokomunistická alternativa* [Anarchocommunist alternative] (AKA). Shortly after, the remaining members of ORA-S changed its name to *-1555: Koletivně proti kapitálu* [Collectively Against Capital] (KPK) which immediately identified itself as a “communist group, striving for the political autonomy of the working class”. The date, minus 1555, represented the year in which the first strike in history occurred (in Ancient Egypt). Within a few months, however, this name for the group was dropped and today no one refers to it. The KPK continues to distance itself from historical anarchism and also from anarcho-syndicalism, continuing with the Marxist ideology that initially defined ORA-S at its inception. Through the years KPK increasingly profiled itself as an autonomist collective with a strong intellectual tension that stretched to the study of the historical texts of operaismo: “none of us read Italian, but everything that has been translated into English or German, is part of our heritage of knowledge”.

## 3. Research Questions

From both the statements of the respondents and the consulted texts (Wohlmuth 1997; Bastl 2000), it seems that throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century there was considerable confusion in the Czech Republic about the meaning of Autonomism. Above all, there was a lack of understanding concerning the theoretical basis, and a lack of knowledge of the political and intellectual situation in Italy in the sixties and seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from where it came. So although the KPK seems to be born of this ideology, as we have seen, its roots lay not in Marxism, but rather in Czech Anarchism.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

Our aim is to understand the insider view concerning how this ideological and intellectual position, having its roots in the late 60s in Italy, has caught on in the Czech Republic. Another matter of concern will be the relationship of the interviewees with other representatives of the Czech left-wing scene and their actual approach to the class struggle aim is to understand the insider view of the ways how an ideological and intellectual position, having its roots in the late 60s in Italy, has caught on in the Czech

Republic. Another matter of concern will be the relation of the interviewees with other representatives of the Czech left-wing scene and their actual approach to the class struggle.

## 5. Research Methods

The data used in this paper come from long-term fieldwork and the participants observations of the groups to which they belonged. This research was conducted independently and at different times; by using the episodic interview method, which combines the advantages of the narrative and guided interview. The informants revealed not only the story of a particular experience as it was preserved in their memory (times, places, situations and other participants) but also the semantic knowledge attached to this particular experience. It was confirmed that telling stories allows the interviewee to express their particular perspective in a more genuine manner than when they are manipulated into answering specific questions in the question-response-schema method. The interviews were unstructured in order to build up a better rapport with the interviewees. It was agreed with the respondents that their anonymity would be preserved (we will not use any data that could lead to the identification of the respondents). The final version of the article was presented to the representatives of the political group COLLECTIVELY AGAINST THE CAPITAL for approval.

## 6. Findings

KPK published a paper magazine called *Kladivo na kapitálu* (Hammer of [the] capital), making a pun with the *Malleus Maleficarum* where, instead of against witches, the magazine was supposed to represent „the hammer which destroys the capital“. Until 2005 KPK also produced the electronic journal ‘Alarm’, created in the period of ORA-S. The representation of KPK on the internet continues through a rich-website blog (active since March 2007), a Facebook page (active since June 2007) and a Twitter account (active from April 2012). Various types of informative materials, namely booklets, a bulletin of the organization (from March 2010 which got the name *Třidní kniha* [class book]) and leaflets, are published in paper versions under the acronym KPK (and from 2013 also published in Rich Site Summary).

*“It was not easy, in the beginning, to be an Autonomist Marxist in a former capitalist country. Since 1990, the anti-worker propaganda here was so hard that it affected even normally antagonistic areas. We knew we had to refer to the way in which the Italian comrades had set up their struggles in the factories and for this reason we found the texts and analyses of our comrades from Wildcat very helpful. We were able to do the work of informing the Czech Republic about the strikes at Fiat Melfi, but also at Volkswagen-Forest in Belgium. To overcome the barrier between theory and praxis we have produced a series of leaflets which we distributed at the Škoda factories in Mladá Boleslav, Vrchlabí, and Kvasiny”.*

In detail: from 2007 to the present day KPK published, on the internet, 67 texts in the Czech and Slovak languages plus two translations into Polish, seven in English and two in French; it also published 11 printed booklets (also downloadable for free from the Internet), two of which are in the original French and one in English (translated from the original Czech) translation by an original Czech), 8 bulletins and

10 series of leaflets. These were distributed in December 2008 in Janov, in northern Bohemia, on the occasion of some racist attacks against the local Roma community; in May 2009 in Prague, at the May Day festival organized by ANTIFASCIST ACTION of the Czech republic (AFA) and at a trade union protest through the streets of the city; in November 2009 in front of the Hyundai car factory in Nošovice, in North Moravia; in September 2010 at an anti-government demonstration in Prague; in October 2010 during an anti-government demonstration in Bratislava; in April 2011 in Bratislava during a protest of the employees of the state health services; in October 2010 during a demonstration organized by the anti-government NGO *ProAlt*, supported by trade unions and left-wing institutional Czech parties; and in April 2012, on the occasion of a large anti-government demonstration organized by trade unions and some NGOs.

*“Although we are aware of the power of internet, which helps us greatly in the transmission of information with our comrades from other cities or other countries, we believe in the direct approach with workers through leaflets and direct dialogue, as previously used in Western Europe, especially in the sixties and seventies, or by us in the form of illegal samizdat. In all our leaflets we have always tried to show that capitalism has its weaknesses, that it is possible, with an autonomous engagement of class, to put the capitalist’s back to the wall and get for the workers better conditions of life and work. The problem, however, are the trade unions. For example, after the demonstrations in September 2010, which started up and encouraged the people, the unions let the employees return to their working places and did not further care about them. The energy, which was sparked during the demonstration, died. The things returned to normal and to the passivity which was even strengthened by the unions by the methodical instruction: the people should not clamor at their working places and take things into their hands!”*

*“There is no doubt that the unions do not support their own activities or the self-organization of the employees, but the biggest enemy of the employees today is their passivity. The unions cannot be blamed for everything”.*

#### **6.1. “The Stalinists” vs. workerists**

Similar critical evaluations of the unions are reported against the “Stalinists”, namely the COMMUNIST PARTY OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA (KSČM), present consistently in the parliament and heir of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which had dominated the political scene of Czechoslovakia in the years 1948-1989:

*“Today The Communist party due to its practical policy is a reform party of the social-democratic type, with a share in the legislative power and actively struggling to gain a share in the executive power. It’s simply a church!”*

The interest of the KPK, at least until 2009, remains linked exclusively to the study, and attempt to autonomous mobilization by the trade unions, of the Czech working class.

*“Working class is an actor of radical social change. Whereas on one hand it is the working class which keeps the capital running, on the other hand it is also the working class which can stop the*

*capitalist machinery. If this so clear statement would be understood by the anarchist comrades, it would be a different thing (in a good way)“.*

But:

*“The class is not and has never been a fully homogenous block. The class reality is manifold. It is necessary to subdivide the class composition at least into political composition and technical composition: at the same time, political and technical compositions are two sides of one coin; one influences the other. Political composition is nothing else than the way the workers turn their technical composition against the capital, the transformations of the technical composition of the working class are then often the reaction of the capital to their fights”.*

And in perfect agreement with Marxist Autonomist thoughts, KPK remember that *“the reality of the one-time worker was different from the reality of the contemporary enterprise, the logic of the factory spread into the hospitals and supermarkets, the market relations penetrated even to the realms of life, where they were not present in the past“* and *„advanced capitalism, when the capital has taken control not only of the production but pervaded throughout all aspects of the society, it has integrated the proletariat and deprived them of any independent space”.*

Since 2009, the KPK has expanded its horizon of interests and participated at the May Day festivals organized by the Czech *Antifa*.

*“We respect the work of spreading the awareness among young Czech antifascists. But it's sad to note that many young people feel themselves antifascists, but no one explains to them (or is explained in a bland way), that Fascism is the product of capitalism. The swastika is only one of the faces of dictatorship of capitalism – the other is a common workday with its norms, being bossed around and stereotypical work”.*

## **6.2. KPK and the “Velvet Revolution”**

Even more interesting is the realization of an extensive publication devoted entirely to what is commonly called the “Velvet Revolution”, i.e. the events that in November 1989 marked the transformation of the Czechoslovak political system (KPK, 2009). The publication, which was distributed free of charge, especially among the workers of automobile factories in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, among other original analyses includes a severe critique of the CIVIC FORUM, established on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1989 by Václav Havel’s initiative, and which in the early nineties became the strongest political force in the Czech part of the Czecho-Slovak federation.

*“Even in a situation where power was lying on the street, an eventual political engagement of the working class in the events was a danger for the leaders of the ‘Velvet Revolution’. The Civic Forum displaced and directed the students’s movement as a force in motion, but implicitly, it seems, its steps were also intended to prevent a different potential actor (which was reduced to a crowd of extras) to enter the stage: the working class. To refuse to present it with an opportunity to look at the social dynamic from the viewpoint of its specific interests and articulate them politically”.*

The attitude of the Civic Forum is, for the KPK, half between the naive and half calculated in a refined way, as appears in the following statement: “*When Mandler (one of the leader of the oppositional party in November 1989 called CZECHOSLOVAKIAN DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVE) demanded after November 17<sup>th</sup> immediate resignation of the government, the leading signatory of Charta 77 Vondra (foreign policy advisor to President Václav Havel) reacted in a truly ‘revolutionary’ way: ‘And who would we negotiate with?’*” KPK remembers, not without irony, that the Civic Forum “*sent its representatives to the government only three weeks after November 17<sup>th</sup> after an insistent plea from the Stalinist prime minister!*”. Furthermore, in the spring of 1990 Czechoslovakia “*was no longer governed by the figures of dissent, but by economic experts coming out of a pre-November milieu. Later on, former Stalinist managers and bankers participated very deftly in their scenario*”,

also because the dissidents themselves were convinced, as confirmed by former dissident Petr Pithart that

*“economics was done in a much better way by economic experts of official institutions, because they had better access to information, statistics, newest economic analyses... The idea that somewhere in a forgotten academic office before November, there were people working on an authentic analysis of the state of human rights in the ČSSR or analyzing possible ways of developing the non-profit sector, was bizarre, of course. But the economic experts were relatively undisturbed in their work on transformation in Poland or privatization in Latin America...”* For KPK however, it is not important to emphasize what is “*now emphasized by all*” and that is that there was a personal continuity between the establishment of pre-November Czechoslovakia and the post-November one. “*Much more important is the continuity of needs and tendencies of the economy and precisely this element is the link between the Stalinist economy and the recomposition of capital and class, which took place after November 1989*”.

### **6.3. KPK and the Czech neo-liberalism**

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, KPK, in the outrageous conditions of the Czech neo-liberalism, seems to be searching a way out, by a discouragement that has succeeded the fact that “*in the crisis the clear winner is the logic of the capital*”. According to KPK

*“what’s missing in the Czech Republic is the same measure of egoistic attitude of the workers – egoistic as regards furtherance of their own class interests (irrespective of the condition of the company, the ambitions of the company bosses or the willingness of the banks to finance its advancement)”*.

However, a “positive” signal seems finally to be envisaged when, in December 2009 after 10 years of almost absolute silence, the workers of the Hyundai car factory in Nošovice, finally rebelled. The unrest had begun on December the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009; and on December the 2<sup>nd</sup> a small group of workers from the assembly lines stopped work, creating a chain reaction: the same day saw a spontaneous meeting of 400

workers, which created very strong concern in the management of the company, unacquainted, as in the great majority of Czech Companies, to such workers' (spontaneous) initiatives of fight. On December the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the workers of some supplier firms also went on strike and on the December the 4<sup>th</sup> the official trade unions began to turn up. Who then met with the management of the company. The meeting was attended by a representative of the workers who had stopped work on December the 2<sup>nd</sup>. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, the strike alert was declared by the trade unions themselves. This ended with an agreement between the unions and the company on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, after 8 days of unrest.

KPK welcomes the fact that:

*“The active workers, even though a very small minority, did not wait for the unions or the council of the employees to eventually do something. In reality, both these bodies of representatives, the main task of which is to serve as the buffer between the bosses and the working people, often caught hell from the workers. The strike initiators expressed the feelings and attitudes of the workers as a whole; it's only good that there was a small group of people that initiated the strike and it is important that the others joined in; the strike demonstrated the fact, that the bosses don't have the production process totally under control; the strike demonstrated the fact, that the sophisticated system of production and organization of labour in which one operation follows another without accumulation of bigger stocks as a „pillow“ for the case of necessity during the production, is beneficial for the bosses and increases their profits but at the same time it became (at least for a while) a weapon in the hands of the workers and created the domino effect, a stroke that was felt even outside the boundaries of the factory (in case of supplier companies)”.*

KPK also soberly understands what the limits were to the strike (and of the strike alert) at Hyundai:

*“Right after the assembly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December they laid down their arms not to pull them out again. The strike did not lead to the commencement of a larger battle, it ended as a protest; the fact that the fight transformed into a negotiation in offices, and that instead of the workers, the unions became the main actors, matches the fact, that the working people did not manage to organize themselves to fight for their interests; the workers have not yet felt the danger of wage differentiation and ethnic division between the workers and management (workers of other nationalities are not 'bad', so likewise the Czech management is no longer 'good' to the workers under the Korean management)”.*

KPK, drawing on the experience at Hyundai seems to admit the possibility that there are inherent limitations in the possibility of a massive working class movement in the Czech Republic, when they admit that today *“no one in the Czech Republic has experience with the leading of a strike, with the collective class fight which was, moreover, defiled by Stalinism”*, but to avoid falling into a form of negativistic determinism reminds us that *“even a small and short experience may become a great foundation in the future”* and therefore *“the greatest benefit of every strike in political terms is just this”* (KPK, 2010).



Because both in Czech Republic and in the Slovakia there is no de facto guaranteed employment, all workers, both factory and outside the factory, are in a state of constant stress derived from the continued possibility of losing their jobs. Since the systems of self-defense for the workers are very limited, sometimes individuals recourse to sabotage. This type of action is not commented on by the KPK, although they are not unaware of it. The ideal position would instead be rather:

*“the stoppage of the production and further blows in the automobile industry. That’s painful for the capital not only on the material level but also on the political one – because they touch not only the sensitive point of economic production but through it also the working of the capitalist society as a whole”.*

#### **6.4. The case of Greece**

The year 2010 was also the year of protests in Greece against what KPK calls *“anti-worker austerity measures of the state and capital in connection with the crisis of debt”*. At the beginning, in the absence of more precise information KPK spread translations from the Greek magazine *Τα Παιδιά της Γαλαρίας* [*The Children of the Gallery - TPTG*], respected, because of its lack of “classic leftist hyper-optimism, which is seen in every union strike and demonstration and ‘decisive workers’ movement”, but at the same time criticized because *“from that we learn very little about the events in the workplaces”*.

KPK therefore decided to analyze in depth the Greek situation, and as usual came out after the event with a detailed brochure, first in August 2010 and then in April 2012. To understand the Greek crisis for KPK was necessary to start from Marx' Theory of surplus-value and it is *“absolutely useless”* to download everything over the bankers on the issue because

*“there is not a ‘bad’ capital (cosmopolitan and indolent) opposed to a ‘good’ capital (national and honestly industrious). If we want to dissolve financial speculations and banks, it is essential to fight against the whole capitalism so that it is replaced by the free alliance of producers in the world freed from exchange, money and states”.*

The proposal of KPK is:

*“to start a new, from the very reason of the existence of the contemporary system: from the valorization of the capital. The heart of capitalism is the production of goods. So it is only at this target that we have to administer the hardest blows. Militant demonstration is insufficient, the most powerful weapon of the working people is the strike”.*

The text of KPK 2012 opens directly with a quotation from Karl Marx, taken from the manuscripts written between the years 1862 to 1863 and then posthumously published in the twentieth century by Karl Kautsky. The quotation of Karl Marx, recovered by KPK, and reported in the Czech language is the following: “The difficulty of converting the commodity into money, of selling it, only arises from the fact that the commodity must be turned into money but the money need not be immediately turned into

commodity, and therefore *sale* and *purchase* can be separated. We have said that this *form* contains the *possibility of crisis*, that is to say, the possibility that elements which are correlated, which are inseparable, are separated and consequently are forcibly reunited, their coherence is violently asserted against their mutual independence. *Crisis* is nothing but the forcible assertion of the unity of phases of the production process which have become independent of each other” (Marx, 1863, para. 10).

Of interest is the fact that in 2012, analysing the fiscal crisis in states and the case of Greece, KPK considered the start of a currency war between the states possible, with various competitive devaluations, useful, inter alia, because *“apart from other things it manifests itself with the relative decrease of the public debt denominated in the currency, which is devalued. All this on condition that the devaluation is not as high as to excessively increase the price of the imported goods”* (KPK-MC, 2012, p. 15). The interest comes from the fact that about a year and a half after the prediction of KPK, on November the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the central bank of the Czech Republic was to apply the strategy of devaluation, a stroke reducing, by about 6%, the value of its currency: the Czech crown. From the point of view of KPK is therefore

*“competition devaluation is rather an awkward weapon used to surprise competitors. The geopolitical results are obvious: competition devaluation is considered as a deliberate act of market/business war. Generalized market/business war is, however, at the same time, the final stage of the financial crisis; the stage which has severe consequences for the accumulation of the capital, because it calls into question all functions of the currency including the function of the general equivalent and account item, which are the basis of capitalist economics”.*

## **6.5. KPK and the Political system**

Regarding the relationship of KPK with the current political system? This is obviously rejected, but not for abstract ideological reasons, but because the short experience of Czech liberal democracy has already shown that *“every government will, that is to say, favour the demands of the capital and the companies rather than our own needs. This is true also in the case of the possible rule of social democracy”*. Also the opinion and approach of KPK towards street demonstrations is relatively negative; usually organized by the trade union centrals:

*“Even some unionists are reluctant to participate at a demonstration, because ‘there were plenty of manifestations and they were for nothing, this will not frighten the government’. If we want to defend our social condition, we need more than emotions and loud speeches, cold head and more effective weapons: strikes and their goal is not to warn but to make as much damage as possible! It’s on the workplaces where we produce profits for the companies and states and there we ensure the running of the society and that’s why we can hold the workplaces hostage.”*

Although KPK realizes that, within the working class and in the workplaces, the will to fight is lacking, even though it is necessary to the class recovery

*“There is no doubt that the workplaces don’t teem with radicalism, politics and the elf-confidence of the people as regards their own possible power. After all, only a very few of us have experienced, at*

*least a small collective fight, in our own workplace. It's not only because there is an error in the 'minds and hearts of the people' or that they have been infected with a 'false awareness'; it has very concrete, material foundations: situations in the work market, measures which the companies use to understand the impacts of the crisis (...) in 2010, fragmented the employees by the precarious employment situation, the neglected experience of the working people to feel one's own strength and self-confidence in the time of need as with the labour power before 2008 etc."*

Nevertheless

*"the path is very hard and depends on overcoming of many barriers and on many factors but is not totally unrealistic. Sure, we don't indulge in illusions that our leaflets and brochures may incite and provoke action etc. In them we offer our perspective and it is taken by those whose 'ears are ready', as a credible contribution to their reflections on how to defend one's life standard – that's where our ambitions end".*

## **6.6. Future strategies**

KPK capably expresses their strategy further in regards to their presentation in print:

*"We don't hesitate to publish or to take it further if we come to something, but our goal is not to comment on everything only to be heard, or to have something to sell/give away and to build propaganda. In the first place, we want to understand things more – we take it further only when we think that we have come to some stimulus, relevant, 'new', which may be beneficial to the class (even though our conclusions may be provisional and as such we bear the responsibility over it). Otherwise we don't publish and that's true for both leaflets and brochures".*

KPK realizes that their meticulous readers come from the ranks of the anarchists. Nevertheless, the members of KPK do not consider themselves united with the anarchists under the umbrella of anti-authoritarianism:

*"Anti-authoritarianism is, moreover, an empty criterion at the best. It's the biggest mistake of the unions when they are authoritarian or when they conserve the working class in the form of mere work labour (in the form of variable capital) and they deal with the class that pursues everyday demands here and now and revolt against capitalism as with an enemy (see Italy in the sixties and seventies of the 20th century). Is it reprehensible: The strike which was without a discussion and approval of the majority, started by a total minority of the workers and presented to others as a ready matter (as in Nošovice in 2009)? How about the strike during which the strikers stand out in the authoritarian manner against the strike-breakers and try at least to neutralize the hesitating? Yes, we cannot call ourselves anti-authoritarians. But we are happy that in the last instance most anarchists agree with us that the goal is the class movement which will be strong enough, smart, self-organized and politically competent to be able to process against the capital and state with all the authoritarian power which is available to them. And which will push away the capital/state in a dictatorial manner from all areas of the society, so that the newly conquered spaces could be immediately filled with new social relations".*

KPK claims that its political positions, perspectives and methods are specific: “we are not easily ranked and that neither in the Czech Republic and Slovakia nor internationally”. KPK now feels itself as “one body” with the Franco-Belgian organization *Mouvement Communiste* (MC). Furthermore, it is clear that knowledge of Italian operaismo brings the KPK to be more interested in the history of *Potere operaio* and of *Autonomia operaia*.

*“at the beginning we had no idea of the Italian operaismo, but very quickly I read all the materials of Mario Tronti, Renato Panzieri and Toni Negri which were available to me (mostly thanks to the internet). I remember for example Tronti’s ‘Struggle Against Labor’ and ‘Workers and Capital’, or Negri’s Capitalist domination and Working class Sabotage’. But my favorite are always Renato Panzieri’s writings. Negri is nowadays absolutely unreadable”.*

## 7. Conclusion

Apart from the several documents concerning the situation of Italian factories (most recently the ILVA from Taranto) and various minor translations, KPK has prepared subtitling for Manuela Pallarin’s film *Porto Marghera: Gli ultimi fuochi* (2007), the translation of the booklet accompanying the film, the collective view of the same from December 2007, the translation in May of 2012 of the former *Potere Operaio* and *Autonomia operaia* militant Gianni Sbrogiò’s memories (cf. Sacchetto & Sbrogiò, 2009), a conference in January 2013 on the cycle of worker class struggles in Italy in the years 1968-1980, and a meeting with the autonomist feminist Silvia Federici, now active in the U.S., but whose ideological roots are also in the Italian sixties. From 2007 to this day KPK has organized 32 public lectures on 25 topics: Most lectures have been held in Prague (16), then in Bratislava (6), as well as in Most (2) and London (2) at the Anarchist Bookfair in 2012 and 2016. One of the initiative of KPK was dedicated to the dock workers of Philadelphia and to the labor union INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW). KPK organized a public meeting in the city of Most on November the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and has published a booklet dedicated to the same theme (KPK-MC, 2013). Although the historical information is drawn largely, as admitted by the same anonymous authors, from Peter Cole’s study *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (2007), KPK in this case also stays true to its methodological model where they analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of concrete worker initiatives. The final analysis of KPK is that

*“IWW were no doubt zealous and courageous fighters against capitalism on an everyday level, those who refused the American Federation of Labor (from the beginning) and Socialist party (since 1912), in which they saw the policy of class collaboration (apart from other cases in the form of parliamentarism). On the other hand they satisfied themselves with just this level and did not continue in the theoretical work which would enhance their criticism of the separation between the ‘politics’ and ‘economics’, which would enable them to comprehend the political part of the tasks of the proletariat”.*

In particular is negatively judged the ambiguous attitude of the IWW towards war:

*“It was necessary to understand the war and to firmly stand out against it not only the basis of the principles, but also because of the everyday necessity. The hesitancy of the IWW reflects their contradictions which grew in the first place from the lack of theory of the state and war. The policy of neutrality during the war (explicit refusal of strikes) will be sooner or later paid at a high price”.*

In their analysis of the IWW, KPK notice how this labor union, in 1914 and again in 1916, although it was in theory opposed to war, had done very little in practice. The critique of the unclear position of the IWW in relation to the war does not start, however, with a Leninist perspective (see Lenin, 1915), but it seems more to correspond to Amadeo Bordiga's position, already expressed in 1912 during the Italo-Turkish war. The Bordiga's position seems to perfectly match the critical position of KPK towards IWW, when they said: “we are opposed to the war in theory and we fight it in practice” (Bordiga, 1912).

KPK demonstrates that it has an extensive understanding of the history of the labor movement, with knowledge uncommonly comprehensive for an organization operating in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the question of war is well publicized in a bulletin, dated on March the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014; for example, on the eve of the referendum in which the people of Crimea declared their desire to make their peninsula part of the Russian Federation.

*“Is it true that the policy of annexation by Russia and the Russification of east Ukrainian provinces is a reflection of Ukrainian nationalism, which triumphs in the west of the country, but each annexation accelerates the capitalist war, and therefore it is necessary to constantly reject it. Today, it is clear that a large part of the nationalist forces in Kiev and on the front have a clear neo-Nazi character, so, we are looking for partners in Ukraine, which does not share the common nationalistic propaganda of the Government”.*

However from the year 2015, the KPK, instead of dealing with the possibility of a new war in Europe, has returned to the Italian Marxist sociology of the sixties, in particular the methodology known as workers' inquiry, ie. the knowledge of the realities of the life and work of workers regardless of the analysis of the capital. Leading KPK to an ever deeper approach to Marxist theory.

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It was not our task to make a judgment about the organization we studied. Regardless of this we must confirm a very high intellectual level on the members of KPK, whom we thank for having accepted us, although “without particular enthusiasm”, and their collaboration with our research.

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