

## **Anarchy and Theatre, Theatre and Anarchy: G.S. Rhodes, E.P. Garin, and I.A. Charin's engagements with the anarchist movement during the Russian Revolution (1917-1921) and its aftermath**

Sergey Ovsyannikov\*

The February Revolution overthrew the three-hundred-year monarchy of the Romanovs and stirred societal activity in Russia. Political and social movements, as well as professional and national-cultural unions, began to grow both quantitatively and qualitatively. Workers', peasants', and soldiers' councils were organized across the country. These large-scale changes affected all areas of life, including the arts, literature, and the entire cultural sphere.

With the growth of the anarchist movement and the strengthening of its impact, anarchism and culture increasingly influenced each other, intertwining in peculiar ways. On one hand, a number of older anarchists, such as V.M. Volin, published poetic verses in the anarchist press<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, members of the radical intelligentsia joined the anarchist movement. Thus, futurist poet A.I. Kuntsevich (literary pseudonym Konse) became one of the organizers of the Kiev Association of Free Anarchists and a member of its Information Bureau. A well-known dramatic actor, M.V. Dalsky, was an active participant in the Petrograd Federation of Anarcho-Communists and, later, the All-Russian Federation of Anarcho-Communists. In 1918, artists A.M. Rodchenko, A.M. Gann, K.S. Malevich, and poets R. Ivnev, A. Svyatogor, A.F. Struve actively collaborated and were publishing in the newspaper *Anarchy*, the organ of the Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups. In 1919, poet-imagist V.G. Shershenovich joined the editorial board of the organ of the All-Russian Federation of Anarchist Youth (VFAM), *Life and Creativity of Russian Youth*, and among the founders authors of the this magazine included friends of Shershenovich from the group of imagist poets S.A. Yesenin, A.B.

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\*Sergey Ovsyannikov is an historian and independent researcher based in Kaliningrad, Russia.

Kusikov, A.B. Mariengof<sup>2</sup>. From the ranks of VFAM emerged the well-known playwright, writer, and screenwriter E.I. Gabrilovich (literary pseudonym Leonid Chivolov), writer M.M. Podobedov (literary pseudonym Surovyy), and poet G.E. Sorokin.

I will now turn to three case studies of creative people whose lives merged first with anarchist organizations and, later, theatrical activities.

### **Anarchist and singer Savely Khodes**

On February 10, 1941, the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the Tatar ASSR "On the progress of preparations for the Decade of Tatar Art in Moscow" was issued, which, in particular, stated that "the director of the [Tatar State] theater [of opera and ballet] Comrade Khodes (**Fig. 1**)<sup>3</sup> is extremely slow in carrying out organizational issues, delays the selection, staffing of individual workshops of the theater, especially at the expense of Tatars ... The director of the



**Figure 1.** Saveliy Grigorievich Khodes

Tatar Opera Theater, Comrade Khodes, allows incorrect and careless spending of state funds, almost does not deal with the economic issues of the theater, and in connection with the upcoming decade in Moscow, makes hasty, unprofessional material requests.” The result was his dismissal because he was not ensuring the work entrusted to him.”<sup>4</sup> In those years, such high-level criticism could have serious consequences. Moreover, S.G. Khodes knew this firsthand.

Saveliy Grigorievich (Savl Gershevich) Khodes (sometimes the surname is written as Khodess) was born on June 23, 1902, in Kyiv to a family of musical and theatrical workers. Soon his parents moved to Samara, where he graduated from a Commercial School. After the 1917 revolution, anarchism began to gain popularity among students of secondary and vocational schools in Samara. From March 1917 G.S. Khodes initially sympathized with the Bolsheviks, but and after the Bolsheviks seized power in October, he joined the anarchist-communists.<sup>5</sup> By that time, a federation of anarchists had formed in Samara. In January 1918, the federation began publishing its newspaper *Black Banner*, announcing, in the first issue, “we will not lower our black banner until the rays of the rising luminary of Free Brotherhood and Free Labor shine over the ruins of Slavery.”<sup>6</sup>

Rallying around the seriousness of this endeavor, on March 27, 1918, S.G. Khodes, S.T. Stetsenko, and A.I. Voytsek organized a partisan detachment to fight against German imperialists and counterrevolution following the contentious treaty of Brest-Litovsk, under which Lenin’s government ceded most of Western Russia to the Germans. The detachment was named “The Second Partisan Detachment of the Federation of Free Revolutionary Detachments”, and it numbered over 20 people.<sup>7</sup> At the end of March 1918, the detachment went to Moscow “to obtain information about the situation at the front” and with the intention of later making their way there to the front. In Moscow, the detachment was met at the station by a representative of the Union of Independent Anarchists. At first, the Samara residents were quartered in the residence of the “independents” on Povarskaya Street. Two days later, representatives of the Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups promised to provide them with uniforms and weapons. The Second Detachment joined the forming 1st Partisan

Combat Detachment named after Mikhail Bakunin and moved to Malaya Dmitrovka. Three days later, the Samara residents moved to the mansion of A.F. Pastukhova in Chudovsky Lane, where they joined forces with the anarchist groups “Grakom”, “Hurricane”, and “Hawk”. The united Samara Partisan Detachment, which now included 75 people, was on guard duty in Moscow’s anarchist clubs.<sup>8</sup>

On April 12, 1918, the Cheka (a Secret Police with extraordinary powers to arrest, detain, and execute, decreed into existence by Lenin in late 1917) and units of Latvian riflemen conducted a large-scale operation to defeat anarchist groups in Moscow. Fighting took place on Malaya Dmitrovka and Povarskaya, using artillery and machine guns. All mansions where anarchists lived were occupied by Chekists and Red Army soldiers, and about 600 people were arrested. Among the arrested anarchists was S.G. Khodes.<sup>9</sup> The detained anarchists were taken to the military guardhouse of the Kremlin and the basements of the headquarters of the Moscow Military District. After interrogations, S.G. Khodes was released as an “ideological anarchist” and made his way back to Samara.

The crushing of Moscow’s anarchist groups, as well as subsequent operations to “disarm” anarchist detachments, groups, and federations in Petrograd, Smolensk, Vologda, and Tsaritsyn, led a number of anarchist activists to go underground. In the summer of 1918, an underground anarchist organization was formed with participants in Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, and Samara. It was called the Initiative Group of Ukrainian Anarchist-Communists or simply the Ukrainian Group of Anarchists, although it included more than Ukrainians. The anarchists were staunch opponents of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty and planned to launch a mass popular uprising in Ukraine. In order to obtain funds for the upcoming illegal work behind the front lines, the underground anarchists organized several expropriations of Soviet institutions. One participant later recalled: “The biggest “ex” took place in 1918 against the state bank and the insurance company. Forty anarchists (including me) took part in it. One comrade, Stokozov<sup>10</sup>, got the right to enter through the guarded iron door, disguised as a Red Army commander. The guard opened the door a little, and we burst in. There were twenty-five Bolshevik soldiers there, but one

of us showed a bomb and ordered them not to move... We opened the safe with a gas burner and scooped out several million rubles. I stood by the switchboard and made sure the cashier didn't raise the alarm. It took four hours to open this safe! This was our last successful 'ex.'"<sup>11</sup>

On November 27, 1918, a group of underground anarchists attacked the cash register of "Tsentrtextil," but the employees managed to send a distress signal, and the arrival of a Cheka squadron caught the attackers off guard. During the ensuing fight, two anarchists, I.N. Gavrilov-Mikhnevich and M. Bulaev, were captured.<sup>12</sup> Mass arrests began. In Moscow, at the end of November 1918, L.A. Al'tshul, L.I. Raisbaum, B.E. Rudashvskaya, V.M. Kurbatov, and R.Ya. Yaro-shevskaya, who had arrived from Samara, were arrested.<sup>13</sup> In Samara itself, S.G. Khodes was also arrested. He was soon transferred to Moscow and imprisoned in Butyrka prison. Since On February 13, 1919, he was "listed" with the Moscow Cheka.

At this time, more and more participants of the anarchist movement were being brought to Butyrka prison – in March 1919, M.M. Neikrug and I.I. Epifanov were transferred there from Smolensk, and on July 1919, 16 participants in the All-Russian Federation of Anarchist Youth congress joined them.<sup>14</sup> Practically no investigative actions were conducted regarding the cases of the imprisoned anarchists. People were simply held in prison without interrogations or any charges being brought against them. On August 24, 1919, S.G. Khodes, I.I. Epifanov, members of the All-Russian Federation of Anarchist Youth N.V. Markov, A.E. Meyer-Urinsky, V.D. Smirnov, E.Ya. Baron, as well as members of the Tula Federation of Anarchist Youth I.V. Ogurtsov and E.K. Shelopaev signed a statement to the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee:

We, members of Russian anarchist organizations... each without any specific accusation presented to us, not knowing of any crimes committed against the existing order that would give cause for arrest—believe that imposing such violence, sabotage, and isolation on us, the representatives of the genuinely revolutionary popular forces, cannot and should not take place

in the Republic, especially at this moment when world imperialism threatens all existing achievements of the working class: [therefore] we inform the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee that such treatment of us compels us to demand our immediate release by September 7, 1919, after which we declare a complete hunger strike until our demands are met, a hunger strike in protest against violence, bureaucratism, sabotage, and mockery being imposed on us.<sup>15</sup>

There was no response from the Cheka and the Bolshevik leadership to this cry of despair from the imprisoned anarchists, and on September 7, they began their hunger strike. On September 15, 1919, under the guarantee of a member of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Secretariat of the All-Russian Federation of Anarchist-Communists A.A. Karelin, Smolensk residents I.I. Epifanov and M.M. Neikrug, as well as participants in the All-Russian Federation of Anarchist Youth—N.V. Markov, A.E. Meyer-Uransky, V.D. Smirnov, and E.Ya. Baron—were released. S.G. Khodes and other comrades remained in custody: they were transferred from their cells for treatment to the prison hospital.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of September 1919, S.G. Khodes was finally released. However, Moscow was very restless. On September 25, 1919, members of the All-Russian Organization of Anarchists Underground (OAU)—P. Sobolev, A.N. Baranovsky, M.L. Grechannikov, Ya. Glagzon, and F.N. Nikolaev—organized the bombing of the headquarters of the Moscow Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) [RCP(b)] on Leontiev Lane. As a result of the explosion, 12 people were killed (including the secretary of the Committee, V.M. Zagorsky), and another 55 were injured. Among the injured were prominent Bolsheviks N.I. Bukharin, A.F. Myasnikov, E.M. Yaroslavsky, and Yu.M. Steklov.<sup>17</sup> Raids and mass arrests began in Moscow. On October 3, 1919, Cheka officers arrested S.G. Kaplun, who had a letter confirming that the explosion was organized by underground anarchists.<sup>18</sup> On October 8, “legal” ‘above-ground’ anarchists G.P. Maximov, O.I. Freidlin, I.S. Grossman-Roshchin, S.A. Markus,

along with recently released Anarchist Youth members A.E. Meyer-Uransky, V.D. Smirnov, and E.Ya. Baron were arrested. On October 9, A.D. Baron, G.M. Gorbova, and M.I. Mekkel were arrested. On October 13, Lev Chorny (P.D. Turchaninov) was arrested. And finally, on October 18, 1919, S.G. Rhodes was again arrested by the Moscow Cheka.<sup>19</sup> He was accused of connections with the anarchist underground, but soon his case was closed, and he was released. This time he promptly returned to his home in Samara.

In Samara, there was also a group of underground anarchists that published an illegal newspaper called *Underground Communard*. In October 1919, two Samara anarchists involved with this group, M.S. Kogan and N.N. Grits, were arrested in a preemptive move because, according to the Cheka, “an anarchist uprising was being prepared in Samara for September 30, with expectations of support from some Red Army soldiers.”<sup>20</sup> On November 15, 1919, 17 more anarchists were arrested in Samara for agitating among the Red Army soldiers and the local population and distributing anarchist literature.<sup>21</sup> On December 20-21, 1919, new round of mass arrests took place targeting anarchists and “maximalist” Social Revolutionaries in Samara. A total of 19 people were thrown in jail.<sup>22</sup> Among them was S.G. Rhodes, but once again, he was lucky, and was soon released.<sup>23</sup>

Frequent arrests and hunger strikes seriously affected his well-being, including his mental health. S.G. Rhodes gradually muted his anarchist views and ceased being active in anarchist organizations. At the end of 1919, he was hired as a clerk at a military evacuation hospital and volunteered for the Red Army. In the 1920s, S.G. Rhodes entered the advanced training courses for command personnel and served as the head of military clubs in Samara and Kazan. At this time, he was admitted to the RCP(b) and accredited with party membership since 1918. In 1924, he was demobilized and entered the Kazan Music College, becoming a professional singer. From 1930 to 1939, S.G. Rhodes was the director of the Sverdlovsk Opera and Ballet Theater (named after RCP (b) Minister of Education A.V. Lunacharsky), and from 1939 to 1941, he was the director and artistic director of the Tatar State Opera and Ballet Theater in Kazan until his previously mentioned dismissal in 1941. Despite being criticized



by Council of People's Commissars of the Tatar ASSR he was able to obtain employment at the Musical Comedy Theater in the Caucasian Mineral Waters, where he remained until, in 1944, he took charge of the Molotov Opera and Ballet Theater. The authors of his biography relate that while running the Molotov Opera and Ballet Theater, "he fully demonstrated his organizational talent, vast experience, and outstanding creative abilities. The combination of these qualities with a deep understanding of the specifics of the opera and ballet theater allowed S.G. Rhodes to make a significant contribution to the organization of the staging of many bright, meaningful performances at a high artistic level."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, in 1944, together with the famous ballerina A.Ya. Vaganova, he created the Molotov Opera and Ballet Choreographic Studio, which was reorganized in 1945 into a choreographic school, the first non-capital professional educational institution for training ballet dancers.<sup>25</sup> In 1946, Saveliy Grigorievich was awarded the honorary title "Honored Artist of the RSFSR." He died in Perm in 1983.

## **The Two Lives of Ivan Charin**

In the fall of 1943, the artistic director of the Kalinin Young Spectator Theater (TYUZ) Yu.P. Kiselev was evacuated to Saratov. Having headed the local TYUZ, he invited his former team from Kalinin to Saratov. Among those who responded were the theater director Ivan Alexandrovich Charin and his wife, theater teacher Lya Isaakovna Charin. According to the recollections of their colleagues, I.A. Charin was "kind, intelligent, modest, intelligent, attentive."<sup>26</sup> Even while he was the director of the Kalinin TYUZ, he was credited with organizing the work of the young theater in just 5 years, finding a building for it and putting the theater on its feet.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, for many theatergoers, the arrest of I.A. Charin and his conviction came as a great surprise.<sup>28</sup>

Nobody among the Saratov theatergoers suspected that I.A. Charin was a well-known anarchist during the Civil War. Ivan Alexandrovich Charin was born in 1902 in Elisavetgrad, Kherson Governorate.<sup>29</sup> At a young age, while living in Elisavetgrad, Ivan joined the anarchist youth group "Nabat", whose leaders were "Misha Zloy" (Mikhail



Aronovich Radomyslsky, the brother of the famous Bolshevik G. Zinoviev) and Yakov Moyshe-Volfovich Baltin (“Janus”). In the spring of 1919, younger Elisavetgrad anarchists organized the Initiative Group of Anarchist Youth, which set itself the task of convening an All-Ukrainian Congress of Anarchist Youth, scheduled for June 15, 1919. In April 1919, in the group’s bulletin, I.A. Charin rhetorically asked “What should the congress do? What tasks should it resolve?” He answers: “The congress should outline ways and means for building a whole network of anarchist youth groups throughout Ukraine, united into an All-Ukrainian organization.”<sup>30</sup> However, the congress never took place due to the advance of the General Denikin’s counterrevolutionary army into Ukraine. I.A. Charin went underground and would be arrested twice by the intelligence agencies of Denikin’s Armed Forces of the South of Russia (both times he managed to escape from custody).<sup>31</sup>

At the end of 1919, he joined Nestor Makhno’s anarchist Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine (Makhnovists). From October 1920, I.A. Charin, as a representative of the Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of Ukraine “Nabat” (KAOU), became part of the delegation of the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents of Ukraine under the command of the Southern Front in Kharkiv, where he participated in negotiations with the Communist controlled Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR on the terms of a military-political alliance of the Makhnovist movement with the Bolshevik government. At the same time, he was publishing in the “Revolutionary Insurgents of Ukraine (Makhnovists) newspaper, *The Path to Freedom*. In two articles—“On Wrangel” and “On the Truce”—he argued necessity of a “military agreement, military contact” between the Makhnovshchina and the Bolshevik’s Red Army in order to jointly fight against the armed forces of counter-revolution (led by Denikin), but at the same time emphasized that “there could not and cannot be any ideological contact and cooperation with the Soviet government or its recognition.”<sup>32</sup>

On November 9, 1920, the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents of Ukraine recalled I.A. Charin from the delegation at the headquarters of the Southern Front, but he remained in Kharkiv, actively conducting anarchist propaganda in Red Army units. On December 1, 1920, the Confederation “Nabat” in Kharkiv planned a general anarchist congress, which Ukrainian and Russian anarchists were going to attend. On the night of November 26, 1920, the Central Administration of the Cheka of Ukraine carried out mass arrests of anarchists and Makhnovists. At the same time, the Red Army treacherously attacked its former ally –the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine (Makhnovists)-- in Crimea and Guliaipole. About 350 anarchists and Makhnovists were arrested, including I.A. Charing.<sup>33</sup> On December 11, 1920, 40 of the most active workers of the Confederation “Nabat”, delegates of the preemptive congress, and members of the Makhnovist delegation, were sent to Moscow, where they were held in the Internal Prison of the Special Department of the Cheka. According to the memoirs of one of the leaders of “Nabat” M. Mrachny, “the Makhnovists (except for Viktor Popov and the young anarchist Vanya Charin) softened slightly: they were used to looking death calmly in the face in war but sitting quietly in a semi-dark cell with the prospect of being killed in the basement - this is affecting their nerves and they have the look of slightly lost and helpless children.”<sup>34</sup>

Soon, I.A. Charin and a group of imprisoned anarchists were transferred to Moscow’s Butyrka Prison. On April 26, 1921, in order to relieve crowding in Moscow’s jails, the leadership of the Cheka conducted an operation to transport prisoners to provincial prisons. As the anarchists later described in a letter of protest, “soldiers and Chekists burst into the cells, beat the arrested, and dragged some of the almost undressed down the stairs by their hair.”<sup>35</sup> Seventeen imprisoned anarchists, including I.A. Charin, ended up in the Oryol provincial prison. On May 31, the elected political elder of the anarchists, A.D. Baron, addressed the Anarchist Black Cross thusly: “The imprisoned anarchists of the Oryol center, exiled from Butyrka on April 26 of this year, ask you to possibly contact the Anarchist Black Cross as soon as possible to alleviate our situation here. Not to mention anything else—we are feeling the most acute shortage of bread and other food.”<sup>36</sup>

While imprisoned, I.A. Charin grew close to L.I. Gotman, who became his wife (**Fig. 2**).<sup>37</sup> Liya Isaakovna Gotman (1895–1978) was born in Kovel, Volyn Governorate. In the early 1900s, she had emigrated to the USA, lived in Detroit, and worked in a factory. In 1912,



**Figure 2.** I.A. Charin and L.I. Gotman in Kharkov House of Forced Labor No. 1.

she married the anarchist I.I. Gotman (“Joseph the Emigrant”) and joined the movement. In 1917, she returned to Russia and immersed herself in anarchist and trade union movements in Odessa. In late 1918, the Gotmans participated in the founding conference of the Confederation of Anarchist Organizations (“Nabat”) and L.I. Gotman

was elected to the Confederation's secretariat. In 1919, she and her husband joined the Makhnovist movement, where she worked in the cultural and educational department of the Military-Revolutionary Council (Makhnovists) under the pseudonym Elena Keller. During this period she was repeatedly arrested by the Bolshevik authorities in 1919–1920. After the agreement between the Council of Revolutionary Insurgents of Ukraine and the government of the Ukrainian SSR, she traveled to Moscow, where she effectively served as the secretary of V.M. Volin, who had also recently been released from prison. At this time, I.I. Gotman went missing; his comrades believed he was killed by the provincial Cheka somewhere in the area of Millerovo. Returning with V.M. Volin to Kharkiv, L.I. Gotman was arrested on the night of November 26, 1920, and sent with I.A. Charin and other anarchists to Moscow, and then to Oryol prison.<sup>38</sup>

The prison regime for inmates in the Oryol central was bleak and harsh - there was no heating or electricity, plus constant dampness in the cells. The prisoners were kept in solitary confinement, where they were condemned to starvation as they froze in the cells. Comrades in Moscow summarized: “the conditions of detention of socialists and anarchists in the Oryol prison are such that all prisoners, if decisive and swift measures are not taken, can be considered doomed.”<sup>39</sup> The prisoners declared a hunger strike in protest, but it did not change their situation, and as a result of the hunger strike, I.A. Charin developed “neurosis with seizures.”<sup>40</sup>

By the summer of 1922, the Bolshevik leadership decided to conduct a demonstrative trial of Ukrainian anarchists. On July 14, 1922, the head of the 1st department of the State Political Directorate (GPU, successor to the Cheka), M.A. Hertzman, issued a decree in which he accused the arrested anarchists “of organizing an armed uprising aimed at overthrowing the conquests of the proletarian revolutionary power of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Councils and the existing Workers’ and Peasants’ government based on the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), as well as of agitation and propaganda expressed in calls for these crimes, i.e., crimes provided for in Articles 57 and 69 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.” On July 19, 1922, the case of the anarchists was transferred

to the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal by the GPU Collegium.<sup>41</sup>

However, on August 7, 1922, in Moscow, an open trial of Socialist-Revolutionary Party members ended in failure, marking a public blow for the Bolshevik leadership.<sup>42</sup> Not wanting to repeat this negative experience for themselves, the Judicial Collegium of the Supreme Tribunal under the All-Russian Central Executive Committee decided on August 22, 1922, to “transfer the case [against the Ukrainian anarchists] for resolution to the Supreme Tribunal of Ukraine.”<sup>43</sup> In this regard, A.I. Charin, L.I. Gotman, and their comrades were first transferred to the Nizhny Novgorod prison, then to Moscow, and finally to the Kharkiv House of Forced Labor No. 1. On October 10, 1922, by a decree of the Presidium of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, the arrested anarchists A.A. Olonetsky, R.Ya. Yarovskaya, A.P. Levada, A.A. Shlyakhovaya, K.Ya. Pilipenko, V.I. Protsenko, F.A. Aarutskaya and L.I. Gotman were released. A.I. Charin and A.D. Baron were sentenced to exile abroad and, on their word of honor not to engage in any political work or agitation for a month, were also released to arrange their personal affairs.<sup>44</sup>

After their release, I.A. Charin and L.I. Gotman went to Odessa for treatment. At this time, the secret-operational part of the GPU was looking for ways to expel them. However, by mid-December 1922, the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR received information that I.A. Charin and A.D. Baron had received authority to participate in international conferences organized by anarchist-syndicalists, to be held in Berlin over December 1922 - January 1923. In this regard, both anarchists were summoned to Moscow. On December 25, 1922, I.A. Charin and A.D. Baron were charged with violating their promise not to engage in political activity and imprisoned in the Internal Prison of the OGPU (Joint State Political Directorate, successor to the GPU). On January 5, 1923, the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) Commission on Administrative Expulsions sentenced them to 2 years in the Arkhangelsk concentration camp, located in the far north, on the coast of the White Sea.<sup>45</sup> I.A. Charin went on a hunger strike in protest, but on January 11 he was transported to the Kholmogory concentration camp, and then to Pertominsk, a camp not far from Arkhangelsky.

Following a series of protests and hunger strikes, I.A. Charin was transferred to the prison hospital in Arkhangelsk on April 5, 1923. At this time, L.I. Gotman-Charin arrived in Arkhangelsk as an agent of the Society for the Assistance of Imprisoned Anarchists. Together with E.E. Ganshina and P.M. Skurikhin, she transmitted information to Petrograd and Moscow, and from there abroad, about the hunger strike of imprisoned anarchists in the Pertominsk concentration camp. All were arrested in Arkhangelsk on March 28, 1923. L.I. Gotman was transported to Moscow, where she was held in the Internal Prison of the OGPU. By a decree of the NKVD Commission on Administrative Expulsion on May 11, 1923, she was sentenced to exile in Berezov, Tobolsk Governorate, for 2 years. In protest, on May 18, 1923, she declared a week-long hunger strike demanding that the place of exile be changed to “a closer place” or “replace exile with imprisonment in... a camp”.<sup>46</sup> In connection with these events, I.A. Charin decided to flee and on June 29, 1923, escaped from the prison hospital. However, on July 7, he was apprehended in Arkhangelsk and returned to his place of confinement. By a special meeting of the Collegium of the OGPU on September 7, he was sentenced to a new sentence - 3 years in a concentration camp.<sup>47</sup>

On September 29, 1923, I.A. Charin was transferred to the Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp (SLON), and on November 14, he submitted a petition for the reconsideration of L.I. Gotman's case and for her exile to be replaced with detention in SLON with the right to cohabitation in the camp. The petition was granted by the NKVD Commission on Administrative Expulsions. The two were reunited again in detention.<sup>48</sup>

On December 19, 1923, in the Savvatievsky skete (a small former monastery of the Russian Orthodox Church), there was a shooting of political prisoners – 5 socialist revolutionaries were killed, and 3 were wounded, among them the anarchist L.Ya. Lebedev. Official media attempted to present this massacre as a misunderstanding. In protest, I.A. Charin, L.I. Gotman, and a number of their comrades wrote an open letter exposing yet another atrocity of the Bolshevik authorities, which was published in the foreign anarchist press.<sup>49</sup> Anarchists imprisoned in Solovki actively collaborated with the Fund for the As-

sistance of Prisoners and Exiled Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists in Russia, organized under the International Workers' Association (anarcho-syndicalist International) and its members M. Mrachniy, S. Fleshyn, A. Berkman, and Ya. Dubinsky. The Fund also provided monetary transfers, packages, and literature. In return, the Fund received information about places of detention, exiles, and Bolshevik repressions.

On April 10, 1925, by a decree of the Special Meeting under the Collegium of the OGPU, L.I. Gotman-Charin was released from the camp with a restriction prohibiting residence in six locations: Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Rostov-on-Don (the term "minus 6" was used to designate these restrictions)<sup>50</sup>. She left for Zinovievsk (formerly Elisavetgrad) while I.A. Charin continued to serve his sentence, participating in protests and hunger strikes, that brought him to a state of complete physical exhaustion. Reactionary poet I.I. Savin, who was also imprisoned, noted: "There are many cases of mental illness (the madness of the anarchist Charin, who belonged to the category of so-called 'political and party' people, made a lot of noise)."<sup>51</sup> In accordance with the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) of March 10, 1925, "On the transfer of political prisoners from Solovki to political isolation centers on the mainland", I.A. Charin was scheduled to be sent to the Tobolsk political isolation center, but in Tyumen his health deteriorated sharply.<sup>52</sup> In June 1925, he was transferred to Moscow and placed in a prison hospital. In March 1926, I.A. Charin began to bleed from his throat. As L.I. Gotman-Charin wrote in her letter: "1.5 cups of blood came out. Due to the special weakness of his body and nervousness, especially recently, since he has been bedridden for about 10 months. He is so weak that when I arrived, he could hardly speak at all."<sup>53</sup> On April 9, 1926, I.A. Charin was released. Soon he was placed in the 2nd military hospital sanatorium in Sokolniki and began to recover.<sup>54</sup>

Once I.A. Charin was well, the couple settled in Zinovievsk. They became more and more immersed in everyday life, and after the birth of their daughter Violina in 1931, they finally ceased any political activity. In the early 1930s, they moved to the city of Kalinin, where



they got jobs at the local youth theater. However, politics did not let go of the now inactive anarchists. After the Second Kalinin Regional Conference of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which took place on July 2-4, 1937, accusations were made that “people like Charin” had positions in Kalinin’s Department of Public Education. I.A. Charin was subject to investigation by the 4th Department of the OGPU of the NKVD. According to the investigation, he and L.I. Charin-Gotman were part of a conspiracy: they had been hired at the youth theater and then recruited into a “Right-Trotskyist” organization by the head of the Department of Public Education, S.M. Epstein.<sup>55</sup> I.A. Charin and L.I. Gotman-Charin were arrested in 1940 along with actors N.S. Gradovsky, I.A. Vysotskaya, and N. Moskovets of the youth theater. However, the case was quickly closed and everyone was released.<sup>56</sup>

In 1943 the family moved to Saratov, where Charin worked at the Saratov Youth Theater. But even here, the authorities did not forget about “I.A. Charin, anarchist.” Actress and educator E.A. Ross recalls, “in the late 1940s, he was repressed,” and “the theater tried to defend him”<sup>57</sup> to no avail. Actor and director V.V. Leshchev would discover Charin in one of the camps in the Irkutsk region in the 1950s. Being one of the leading cultural figures in Irkutsk and a laureate of the Stalin Prize, he was able to secure an early release for his colleague, who was once again seriously ill.<sup>58</sup> L.A. Charin likely lived out his days in Irkutsk, as this is where any record of his whereabouts ends. As for L.I. Gotman-Charin, she continued living in Saratov until her death in 1978.

## Unknown Pages of the Biography of E.P. Garin

Many fans of Soviet cinema know the name of the actor, screenwriter, and director Erast Pavlovich Garin (**Fig. 3**).<sup>59</sup> He gained nationwide fame for his roles in theater and cinema, such as Chatsky (“Woe from Wit”), Khlestakov (“The Government Inspector”), the Leader (“An Ordinary Miracle” and “Cinderella”), and, of course, Professor Maltsev from “Gentlemen of Fortune.” In 1963, E.P. Garin starred in the film by director S.I. Samsonov “The Optimistic Tragedy” based on the play of the same name by V.V. Vishnevsky. Acting as a member of an anarchist detachment of sailors, the negativity of his role was emphasized through a satirical song -- “If there was vodka, and a throat for vodka, everything else is nonsense!” Other anarchists were played by stars of the Soviet cinema—B.F. Andreev (“The Leader”),



**Figure 3.** Garin Erast Pavlovich, actor.

V.V. Sanaev ("The Husky"), and V.V. Tikhonov ("Alexey"), however, materials recently discovered in the State Archive of the Russian Federation reveal E.P. Garin's role had an ironic twist. In the distant past he had been connected with the activities of underground anarchists.

In May 1921, anarchists Yu.G. Perelman ("Yuzik") and T.P. Silantiev ("Troshka") arrived in Moscow from Kazan, having previously expropriated 200 million rubles from the Forest Committee of the Tatar Council of National Economy (**Fig. 4**).<sup>60</sup> With this expropriated mon-



**Figure 4.** Anarchist Trofim Pavlovich Silantiev "Troshka" after an unsuccessful attempt to shoot himself.

ey, they planned to recreate the Moscow-based "All-Russian Organization of Anarchists Underground" (OAU) which had been destroyed in the fall of 1919 (see above). The main tasks of this renewed organization were envisaged thus: it would conduct a broad propaganda campaign; publish literature, brochures and leaflets; and organize or establish ties with anarchist organizations in other cities.<sup>61</sup> Anarchists I.I. Shapiro ("Sasha-Peter"), V.N. Pivovarov, I. Bubnov, V.S. Potchin,

V.Kh. Omelchenko and S.A. Safronov joined the OAU, and they secured the collaboration of well-known publicist Lev Cherny (P.D. Turchaninov), who was allocated 9 million rubles for the organization of publishing activities.<sup>62</sup>

On April 26, 1921, due to overcrowding in Moscow's Butyrka prison, some anarchist and Makhnovist prisoners had been transferred to provincial prisons in Yaroslavl, Vladimir, Oryol, and Ryazan. At this point, a section of OAU activists led by Y.G. Perelman began planning the escape of anarchist prisoners from the Ryazan facility. To prepare for the escape, V.S. Potehin set up a passport bureau for the production of false documents and in early June 1921, Y.G. Perelman and V.S. Potehin traveled to Ryazan, where they contacted members of the local anarchist group (S.N. Topilin, F.A. Krasavchikov, and I.A. Povarikhin).<sup>63</sup> S.N. Topilin, as a representative of the All-Russian Black Cross, received permission for visits with the prisoners, during which he was able to pass them money and documents. During the night of June 18-19, 1921, nine anarchists escaped from the Ryazan prison by making a hole in the toilet opposite F.A. Baron's cell (**Fig. 5**).<sup>64</sup> The prisoners lowered themselves down with ropes to an unguarded floor, slipped into the prison yard and climbed over a fence



**Figure 5.** Anarchist Fanny Anisimovna Baron

to freedom. Among the escapees were F.A. Baron, wife of one of the leaders of the Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of Ukraine “Nabat”; “Nabat” members K.Y. Pilipenko, D.S. Kogan, I.V. Tarasyuk (Kabasy); underground anarchists I.N. Gavrilov-Mikhnevich, V.M. Kurbatov; Makhnovists A.E. Budanov and P.I. Khokhotva; as well as an anarchist worker, B.E. Lilov (“Turkish”).<sup>65</sup> Investigations established that the escape was carried out “according to a previously thought-out plan with the participation of the anarchist-communist Topilin, who disappeared without a trace.”<sup>66</sup>

Sergey Nikolaevich Topilin was born in 1900 in the village of Kuzminka, Ryazan district, into a peasant family and completed 4 classes in the Ryazan gymnasium. By 1919, under the influence of his older brother Alexander, he had joined a group of anarchist-communists in Ryazan engaged in propaganda activities. In spring 1920, he was also serving as a junior policeman and, at the same time, as director of the local Red Army garrison’s amateur “Kultprosveta” (Cultural Enlightenment) theater. At the 1920 May Day rally in Ryazan, S.N. Topilin was arrested for “calling on the Red Army to abandon their service and weapons, as well as for openly agitating for the overthrow of Soviet power” and imprisoned until further notice in Ryazan’s prison. Soon he was sent for investigation to Moscow. By a decree of the Presidium of the Cheka dated July 6, 1920, S.N. Topilin was sentenced to imprisonment in a concentration camp for 3 months.<sup>67</sup> Upon release at the end of 1920, he promptly joined the UOA. By virtue of his imprisonment, he was familiar with Ryazan prison’s layout, and this likely proved invaluable when plans were being laid for the anarchists’ 1921 prisonbreak.

E.P. Garin enters the picture because he was spending time Topilin in 1921. Erast Pavlovich Gerasimov (the actor’s real surname), was born in Ryazan on October 28, 1902 (his parents were forester Pavel Erastovich Gerasimov and Maria Mikhailovna Garina). In July 1917, he graduated from the Ryazan Gymnasium, renamed the 6th Labor School, and became a supernumerary at the Ryazan City Theater. In 1919, he volunteered with the Red Army and served in the Ryazan garrison’s theater as actor and director. Adopting his mother’s surname Garin as his stage pseudonym, in October 1919, E.P. Garin,

along with his sister Tatyana, also a budding actress, moved to Moscow, where he joined the troupe of the First Amateur Theater of the Red Army under the direction of V.L. Zhemchuzhny.<sup>68</sup>

In Moscow the siblings lived on Arbat Street in house #51, an actors' dormitory with communal apartments.<sup>69</sup> This is where a mutual acquaintance from Ryazan, S.N. Topilin, often visited for varying lengths of time. His first documented stay with E.P. Garin was in early 1921. As Tatiana later testified during the duress of interrogation, "Topilin came to Moscow last winter, I don't remember the month, January or February, stayed for several days and then left for Ryazan again."<sup>70</sup> Thanks to the memoirs of Ryazan anarchist A.M. Garaseva, we know for certain that S.N. Topilin was in Moscow to attend the funeral of P.A. Kropotkin, which took place on February 13, 1921.<sup>71</sup>

After organizing the successful escape of anarchist prisoners from Ryazan prison, S.N. Topilin went into hiding and, in July 1921, appeared again in Moscow. He visited an OAU conspiratorial apartment in Krivoy Lane later that month, and participated in underground meetings, which were attended by V.S. Potehin, T.P. Silant'ev and his girlfriend P.A. Dubova, I. Bubnov and a certain Nikolai.<sup>72</sup> On August 16, S.N. Topilin, together with T.P. Silant'ev, T.I. Kashirin, I.N. Gavrilov, V.M. Kurbatov and I. Bubnov, took part in an attempt to expropriate the cash desk of the Main Military Engineering Directorate. The attack was unsuccessful; they did seize 100 million rubles, but after an alarm sounded and a chase ensued, the money had to be abandoned. A shootout took place in the Smolensk market, where T.P. Silant'ev was surrounded and tried to kill himself while the others managed to escape. During a search of Trochka, the names and addresses of many, but not all, OAU members were found.<sup>73</sup>

Mass round-ups began. The next day, V.S. Potehin and P.A. Dubova were arrested in their apartment.<sup>74</sup> On the same night, during a Moscow Cheka operation, L. Cherny, A.M. Karasik, I.A. Shkolnikov, A.A. Kurganskaya, I.A. Akhromeyev, V.D. Makhov and many others were thrown in jail. T.I. Kashirin, I.N. Gavrilov and I. Bubnov were caught in an ambush, and the latter was killed in the course of armed resistance. After a second unsuccessful expropriation, S.N. Topilin



and another member of the OAU, N.I. Sibirev, went into hiding at E.P. Garin's apartment on Arbat. On August 21, P.A. Dubova was released from custody -- a technique often used by the Cheka for surveillance purposes -- and made his way to S.N. Topilin's hideout -- the actors' dormitory on Arbat street.<sup>75</sup> This is where, on August 22, 1921, S.N. Topilin, N.I. Sibirev, and E.P. Garin were, in turn, arrested, along with P.A. Dubova. The order to arrest E.P. Garin, numbered 1673, was signed by G.G. Yagoda, a member of the Presidium of the Cheka.<sup>76</sup>

On August 23 an ambush at the same apartment led to the arrest of amateur theater actors I.E. Ptitsyn, V.Yu. Nikulichev, P.G. Vankova, E.V. Loginova-Gorich, L.V. Koltynina, V.A. Rodionova, Z.A. Makhotin, and Garin's sister, Tatiana. The bureau of the RCP(b) Cell of the First Amateur Theater of the Red Army sprang to their defence, leading to most being released the next day by the order of investigator S.K. Belychev from the 1st department of the Secret Department of the Cheka.<sup>77</sup> However, E.P. Garin and V.Yu. Nikulichev, who resembled the anarchist B.E. Lilov, remained imprisoned in at the Cheka's headquarters along with S.N. Topilin, accused of connections with anarcho-bandits and with engaging in counter-revolutionary activities. A note from E.P. Garin addressed to S.K. Belychev has been preserved: "To the investigator in the case of the arrested citizen E. Garin. Statement. I request your permission to send the attached letter to my sister due to my extreme need for linen and bread. Erast Garin."<sup>78</sup> The note was accompanied by a letter to T.P. Gerasimova requesting food and linen. It is unknown how long E.P. Garin remained under arrest, as investigations sometimes dragged on for a very long time, but on August 29, 1921, one of the members of the OUA, N.I. Sibirev, began revealing all the names and addresses of anarchist operatives known to him,<sup>79</sup> and P.A. Dubova also gave testimony.<sup>80</sup> By the decree of the Collegium of the Moscow Cheka on September 27, 1921, F.A. Baron, whom the Chekists considered the "ideological inspirer" of the expropriations, I.N. Gavrilov, L. Cherny (P.D. Turchaninov), T.P. Silanteyev, T.I. Kashirin, and V.S. Potehin were executed.<sup>81</sup> S.N. Topilin was transferred to Lefortovo Prison on October 1, 1921, for organizing the escape of prisoners from the Ryazan prison and participating in an expropriation. He was sentenced to execution by the decision of the Presidium of the Cheka.<sup>82</sup>



After it was established that E.P. Garin was not directly involved in the anarchist underground, he was released without consequences and continued his work at the Red Army Theater. Soon he entered the State Higher Directing Workshops, headed by V.E. Meyerhold. Many years later, biographer Erast Pavlovich decided to erase the story of this arrest from memory, and it does not appear in E.P. Garin memoirs.<sup>83</sup> However, ‘playing anarchist’ in “The Optimistic Tragedy” surely brought back memories.

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- 83 The only phrase in E.P. Garin's memoirs that can be remotely related to the incident of his arrest reads as follows: "We have experienced many setbacks and hardships together, but this not only did not darken our existence, but on the contrary, united us. Bad things are quickly forgotten..." Гарин Э.П. С Мейерхольдом: Воспоминания. М.: Искусство, 1974. С. 23.