

About this Issue's Cover: Ben Benn's *Portrait of Hippolyte Havel*

In their discussion of Czech anarchism, Ondřej Slačálek and Michael Polák mention a group of Czech anarchists living in the United States, who, during World War One, sided with Peter Kropotkin's call for anarchists to side with France in its war of national defense against militaristic Germanic imperialism.¹ Their stance was condemned by Emma Goldman and her frequent collaborator, Czech anarchist Hippolyte Havel, who was an important cultural force in his own right.

Goldman first encountered Havel in London while enroute to the 1899 International Anarchist Conference in Paris, noting he was 'a veritable encyclopaedia [who] knew everyone and everything in the movement'.² Born in 1869 in the Bohemian town of Burowski (father, Czech, mother, Romani) and educated in Vienna, Havel was brilliant, and fluent in a half-dozen languages. He was also a committed militant who had been expelled from Austria-Hungary, Germany, and France in quick succession.³ Enthralled, Goldman ensured he returned with her to New York, where he became a leading activist nurturing anarchism in the arts. An article published in *Mother Earth* (1908) gives us a sense of how deeply important the arts were for Havel:

The work of the artist, the composer, the painter, the sculptor, or the writer mirrors the reflex of the various struggles, hopes and aspirations of our social life. The creative artist has the deepest appreciation of the tendencies of his time. He is therefore the fittest exponent of new ideals, the true herald of the coming reconstruction; indeed, he is the prophet of the future social order.⁴

This issue's cover is a pen and ink portrait of Havel by anarchist artist Ben Benn, which first appeared in the journal, *Greenwich Village* (20 January 1915). Benn was a talented painter who contributed to Havel's *Revolt* (1915-16) journal until its untimely demise in March 1916, after being targeted by the US postmaster general's office for propagating 'immorality and violence'.⁵ Not only this, Havel also carried on a protracted critique of anarchists who had fallen in with Kropotkin's views, including the publishers of the Bohemian Anarchist paper *Volně Listy*.⁶ Noting its editors were now arguing defeating Germany would liberate 'small nationalities' (code for establishing a Czech nation state), Havel detected one more variant in the counterrevolutionary 'nationalistic insanity' that had fuelled World War One in the first place.⁷

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NOTES

- 1 I am using Kropotkin's language. See Mina Graur, *An Anarchist 'Rabbo': The Life and Teachings of Rudolph Rocker* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1997), p114.
- 2 Goldman, *Living My Life*, Vol. 2 (New York: Dover Press, 1970), p259.
- 3 Havel fled to England after being hounded out of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and France for his political beliefs. In London he belonged to the German-anarchist Autonomie Club, which was a vibrant cultural centre and network building base for hundreds of European anarchists living in exile. Hermia Oliver, *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), p142.
- 4 Hippolyte Havel, 'Literature: Its Influence Upon Social Life', *Mother Earth* 3 (October 1908): 329.
- 5 See 'Hippolyte Havel and the Artists of *Revolt*', in *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). A revised and expanded edition of *Anarchist Modernism* is forthcoming.
- 6 Hippolyte Havel, 'Comment', *Revolt* Vol. 1, 4 (1916): 6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p6.