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ARTICLE

The Influence of the Provo Movement and the New Culture Movement on the Surrealist Phenomenon of the Orange Alternative

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ABSTRACT

This text will contribute to research into the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative protest-artist movement, which the author examines not only as a researcher but also as a “witness to history” (students, young researchers who, due to their age, position, or social involvement, observed important or interesting events—a term used by historians in Poland). The author talks about selected cultural and literary contexts and presents the facts—including those that are less known—about the activities of the Dutch Provo movement and the Polish New Culture Movement (and thus an exemplification of the Western European and indigenously Polish influences) on the formation of the Orange Alternative movement, taking into account its specific European and Polish features, as an artistic, political and literary phenomenon in the spirit of the ‘new surrealism’. The Orange Alternative combined joy the idea of street happenings organized in a joyful atmosphere and contestation, written forms of contesting authority in Poland in the form of manifestos. The Dutch Provo movement and the New Culture Movement had a significant influence on the Orange Alternative, particularly on its program texts and happenings. Without them, the phenomenon of Polish surrealism would not have taken shape. The author proposes an analytical method with elements of comparative studies focusing on selected happenings and texts. She will analyse selected happenings and aspects of the most important programme text as an example of the activities of the Orange Alternative, inspired by the Dutch Provo movement and the Polish New Culture Movement.

Keywords: Orange Alternative; New Culture Movement; Dutch Provo; Happenings; New Surrealism

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1. Introduction

The author had the opportunity to confront her research theories in direct conversations with Waldemar “Major” Fydrych, the movement’s leader, which were conducted systematically for four years. The text combines all these elements, together with references to previous scientific work on the movement, publications of its leader, a look from the perspective of the past thirty years, as well as experience, and comparative and analytical contexts.

The presentation is preceded by a brief reflection on the state of research on the New Culture Movement and the Orange Alternative, both relating to the texts presented in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative and academic publications released in book form. It also presents facts—including lesser-known ones—on the activities of the Dutch Provo movement and the Polish New Culture Movement on the formation of the Orange Alternative movement, taking into account its European and Polish specificities, as an artistic, political and literary phenomenon in the spirit of the “new surrealism”. The author considers the significance and specificity of the Orange Alternative happenings, as well as briefly presents its literary output ^[1]. She aims to fill a research gap concerning the analysis of the significance of the Orange Alternative movement in the context of the history of European avant-garde movements in the 20th century.

2. Materials and Methods

The author is grateful to her mentor—Professor Charles P. Marie—for encouraging her to analyse literary texts from an interdisciplinary perspective, which is particularly important in considering selected aspects of the Orange Alternative movement and its programmatic texts ^[2]. In the case of the Provo movement, the comparative method helps not only to find differences and similarities, but to determine to what extent the former and the latter inspired the New Culture Movement and the Orange Alternative—an art and protest movement that is the extensive subject of our research. In the case of our analysis, this method also takes into account the possibility of combining cultural studies reflection with literary studies and art history knowledge. The author talks about the activities of protest

and artistic movements (Dutch and Polish), surrealist manifestos (French and Polish), and happenings. References to Fydrych’s works and the Virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative will also be mentioned ^[3].

The analytical method, which is universal for some disciplines and sciences, becomes when studying the Orange Alternative, taking into account the cultural and literary aspects of its protest-artistic activities (happenings and street installations), selected program texts: *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism* and *Manifesto of Flowers* and works *Hocus Pocus or the Orange Alternative* ^[4]. In Polish academic tradition, it is used in connection with comparative method, which proves particularly useful in analyses requiring reflection on artistic activities and programmatic texts. The analytical method, combined with the comparative method, allows us to highlight the peculiarities of the European and typically Polish Orange Alternative, as an artistic, political and literary phenomenon in the spirit of the “new surrealism”, as well as mentioning its most important happenings ^[5].

3. The Current State of the Research

3.1. Historical Perspectives

These considerations constitute a “link” in a series of articles devoted to the analysis of selected aspects of the Orange Alternative’s activities, its material and immaterial achievements. While the most important documents, publications of the movement’s leaders, accounts of happenings, and chronologically presented history of the movement have been showcased in the Virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative, opened at the turn of 2011 and 2012, relatively few researchers show interest in its specifics and history, due to the complexity, ambiguity and interdisciplinary context of the issue. The Virtual Museum’s collection includes leaflets, statements of event participants, invitations to the openings of Waldemar “Major” Fydrych’s exhibitions (**Figure 1**), films—which are an important contribution to documenting the activities of the Orange Alternative from its inception in 1981 to the present day, but also materials relating to the New Culture Movement ^[6], a youth counter-culture organization operating in 1980–1981 in Wrocław, from which most of the Orange Alternative’s activists originated. For fourteen years after its opening, the Muse-

um's collection has not been supplemented with significant publications on the Orange Alternative, although its opening was accompanied by an online information campaign. Also notable is Juliusz Tyszką's essay called *Orange Alternative: street happenings as social performance in Poland under Martial Law* ^[7], enriched with a sociological analysis of street events organized by Fydrych. He notes that the Orange Alternative emerged in the former German city of Wrocław in Lower Silesia, to which inhabitants of the former Polish lands, which are now parts of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania were displaced shortly after World War II. Tyszką emphasizes the specificity of Wrocław as a multicultural city, where the Orange Alternative was born, but does not analyze the artistic circles whose presence fostered the development of the movement. Notable works not mentioned in the virtual museum include those by

Beata Maciejewska, Elżbieta Lukierska and Mieczysław Michalak ^[8], emphasizing the importance of Wrocław as a city conducive to ventures manifesting a commitment to freedom, as reflected in the activities of the New Culture Movement and the Orange Alternative. Also of interest to researchers is Agnieszka Jaworska's *The Orange Alternative in the student press, in memoirs and in the pamphlets of the 1980s* ^[9], in which the author discusses the historical background, the history of the movement and the specifics of the student milieu from which the New Culture Movement and the Orange Alternative originated. The researchers mentioned here used the presentation of Wrocław as the birthplace of the Orange Alternative to show its fate from World War II to the present day, with particular emphasis on Wrocław - the fortress whose major was Waldemar Fydrych, the leader of the movement.



Figure 1. Waldemar Major Fydrych in Łódź During the Laying of the Cornerstone for the Alternative Monument.

3.2. Sociological Perspectives

The Orange Alternative Museum's collection includes an article by Wojciech Sobolewski *A Short Course in WO(A). Warsaw's Orange Alternative in Memories and Prints* ^[10], which briefly outlines the Orange Alternative as a generational phenomenon, and *Youth culture in socialism—the Orange Alternative*, by Grzegorz Piotrowski, which primarily exposes the most important historical threads in the context of political and social changes in Poland after 1980, rather than analysing the Orange Alternative's multi-faceted activities. On display in the virtual museum's collection is an English-language essay by Bronisław Misztal entitled *Between the State and Solidarity: One Movement, Two Interpretations—the Orange Alternative Movement in Poland* ^[11]. Misztal mentions the

phenomenon of the Hungarian Orange as the Hungarian response to the Orange Alternative, while his analysis is sociological in nature. He stresses that the Orange Alternative is of great social and intellectual significance against the background of the transformation in Eastern Europe. He also mentions the symbolic role of the *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism* as a verbal act of ideological and surrealist courage. Unfortunately, he does not make a detailed analysis of this most important programmatic text. In the collection of the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative, Nicole Gourgaud, author of *From Agitation and Propaganda to Happening* ^[12], describes the Orange Alternative as a unique "aesthetic-political phenomenon" that could only exist in the former communist bloc countries. Her text only covers the activities of the Orange Alternative up to 1993.

In contrast, Barbara Górska and Benjamin Koschalka show that the happening as a form of political contestation of the Polish realities ^[13], late 20th century slogans, and the strength of their impact on the Polish reality of that time. The sociological texts listed here are scientific essays; the authors do not refer to their research and do not present in detail the reactions of the authorities and local communities to mass events organized by the Orange Alternative in the 1980s and 1990s. In his academic work, Misztal analysed, among other things, the potential of the Orange Alternative in the context of global processes, while Gourgaud carried out a chronological classification of the most important forms of Orange Alternative activity in comparison with the most important events in Europe after 1989.

3.3. Artistic Perspectives

The virtual museum's collection includes *Antagonism, absurdity and avant-garde: disarming Soviet oppression through theatrical means by the Polish Solidarity 'Orange' movement* a text by Lisiunia A ^[14]. Romanienko, with a particular focus on the impact of the movement as a kind of street theatre. Romanienko presents the Orange Alternative as the antithesis of Lech Wałęsa's stance. She stresses that the creators of the movement saw the Orange Alternative as "a record of dramatic rights". Socially engaged art is a form of creative expression that seeks to challenge or raise awareness about social, political, or environmental issues. It employs various mediums (happenings, literature) to convey messages, often reflecting the struggles and aspirations of different groups. This phenomenon is examined by Sven Spieker ^[15], and Ryszard Kluszczyński ^[16], with the latter referring to the category of "protest art", which, although somewhat less frequently, also takes the synonymous form of "art of opposition" in Polish and is currently appearing more and more often in discussions of contemporary artistic practices. Unfortunately, his reflections do not refer to the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative in the context of surrealist inspirations. Rik Hemmerijckx and Stichting Auschwitz show how great the influence of the provos was on protest movements in Europe in the 1960s. However, they treated protest art as a strictly European phenomenon, without distinguishing between its Western and Eastern European characteristics. Their research also covers the development of the movement, but does not

take into account the Orange Alternative. Currently, Martin Firrell is involved in art protest. His work deals with homosexual and surrealist themes. Unfortunately, he did not analyse this topic in greater detail, treating the art of protest as a phenomenon en bloc.

4. Title Development of the Orange Alternative

4.1. From the New Culture Movement to the Orange Alternative

The phenomenon of the Orange Alternative protest-art movement occupies not only a special place in the recent history of Poland, but also of the entire Central and Eastern Europe. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity", which was formed in 1980 in Poland to defend workers' rights and remained one of the cornerstones of opposition against the government of the People's Republic of Poland and communism until 1989, also forged a political, social and national community. At the same time, the New Culture Movement was taking shape among Wrocław students on the initiative of Waldemar "Major" Fydrych. Representatives of the Orange Alternative did not join the ranks of organized opposition and did not identify with a particular political organisation. The movement was an alternative not only to the communist regime, but to the labour cult of industrial society and the Catholic ethic. The New Culture Movement organized provocative happenings and marches. It also published "A", an art newspaper whose first issue contained the Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism, which later formed the ideological basis of the Orange Alternative. The Movement formally ceased to exist on 13 December 1981 with the imposition of martial law. The New Culture Movement proclaimed the primacy of art over reality and the need to negate the communist system as destructive to civil liberties. It gave rise to the Orange Alternative—one of the 20th century's most important anti-communist social movements promoting "socialist surrealism", which was described in the Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism, first published in the "A" magazine in 1981 (**Figure 2**). The leaflets published by the New Culture movement and the content of the magazine A referred to the works and programmatic texts of André Breton, borrowing from him

metaphors, comparisons, content layout, and even hyperbole in the presentation of the main slogans, which were then posted on the walls of dormitories and universities. Activists of the New Culture movement proclaimed the primacy of artistic surrealism over socio-political reality, quoted poems by French surrealists, and considered painters such as Salvador Dali and Juan Miro to be models of artistic achievement. The recipients of this and other

texts of the Movement were primarily artists, students and intellectuals. The texts were also intended to reach the “common man”, who was deprived of hope for a better future by the Polish communist system, as well as to shape the individual and collective identity of the new Homo ludens^[17], ready to fight the representatives of the communist system by participating in happenings and the “street theatre”.

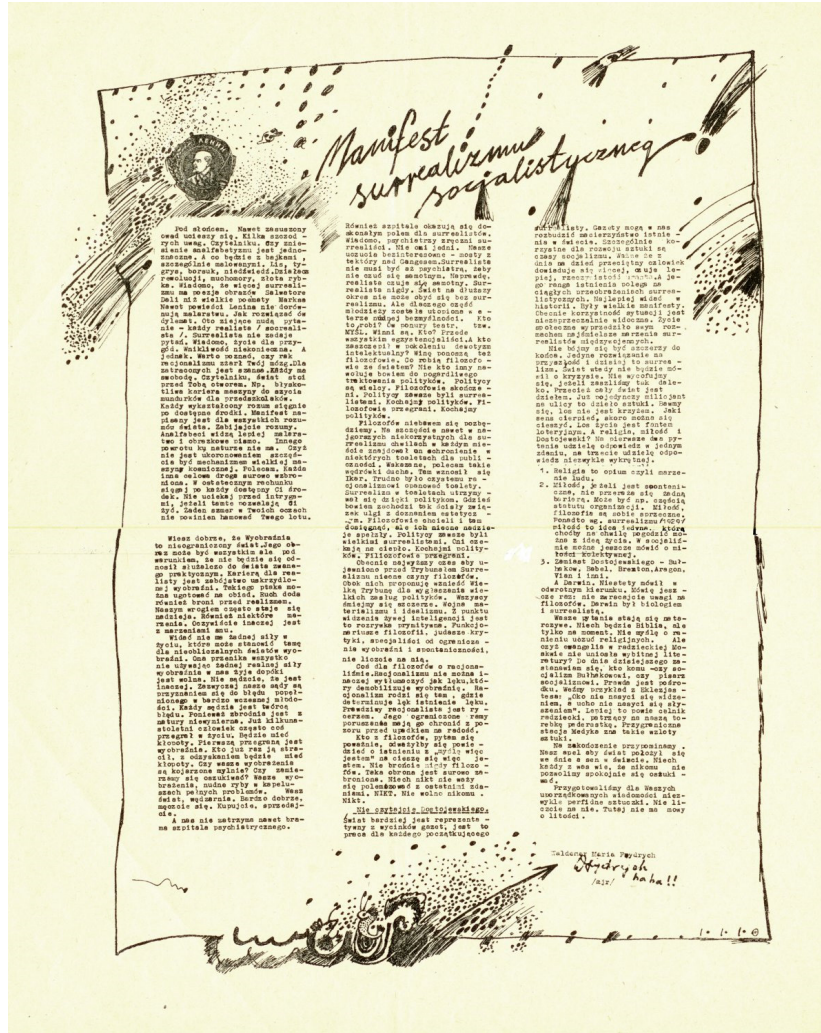


Figure 2. The Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism. Private collection: Marta Moldovan-Cywińska

Note: The information of this figure can be found in Appendix A.

4.2. Toward Western European Inspiration: Dutch Provo Movement

The distinctive colour symbolizing the Orange Alternative is a direct reference to Dutch Provos. Red was associated with the communist regime, while orange was a warning colour. The Provos still use orange for the graph-

ic design of their programme content today. This was also true of the Dutch countercultural group headed by Robert Jasper Grootveld and Roel van Duijn, which operated in Amsterdam between 1965 and 1967 and was fascinated at the time by anarchist ideas. The Provo movement originated in Amsterdam as a countercultural anarchist-satirical movement against the police, social conformity, and

environmental issues. Its activities took place during the Cold War, in the Netherlands a democratic country where freedom of speech existed, although it was often restricted by police repression. The Orange Alternative, on the other hand, originated in Poland, where freedom of speech was non-existent during martial law and the communist era, in a totalitarian system, in order to oppose censorship and communist rule. Unlike the “Oranges”, the Provos were much more politicized. Duijn called on youth to express themselves freely against ossified socio-political structures. Their protests were anti-war and anti-imperialist. They criticized upper-class culture and the power elite, headed by the Dutch royal family. The new social order was to be built on respect for the individual. The Provos’ most spectacular action was the pelting of the wedding procession of Princess Beatrix and German aristocrat Claus von Amsberg, in his youth a member of the Hitlerjugend, with firecrackers. The Provos intended to shake up Dutch society by abandoning the traditional value system, a kind of “humanization” of interactions, and actions aimed at protecting the environment.

Their actions contributed to the dismissal of Amsterdam’s mayor and the local police chief. However, the movement’s leaders soon announced its dissolution, as political institutionalization meant an end to their spontaneous rebellion. They also proclaimed their demands in issues of the periodical PROVO, co-founded by Constant Nieuwenhuys, Roel van Duijn, Martijn Ananar, Erik van Daale, Koen Calliauw, Peter Bronkhorst, Joop Dielemans, Rob de Groot, Bart van Heerrikuizen, Grant Kroeze, Luud Schimmelpenninck, Marja Götze and Carlos Piesaar. Compared to the publications of the magazine published by the New Culture Movement mentioned here and the leaflets distributed by Orange Alternative, the texts of the Dutch Provos were more uncompromising, bold, satirical and humorous. They reached a wider audience, provoked lively reactions from artists and journalists, and inspired the programme texts of the Dwarf Party, which was formed later. Provos and Orange Alternative differed in their methods of action. The former used political satire, environmental demonstrations, and happenings as the voice of a society demanding all civil liberties, while submitting urban projects was a form of criticism of the system. Orange Alternative publicly parodied official ceremonies and

used them. The language of propaganda to fight against it. Absurd actions that confused the militia and the Security Service (e.g., handing out toilet paper on the street) were the main tool of the bloodless revolution that it wanted to bring about in Poland. Such aspirations were not shared by the Provos, who were opposed to social change, nor by the activists of the New Culture Movement, who considered surrealist art and literature to be the primary means of expression in the street crowd. At the same time, we can observe certain similarities between the Dutch Provos and Orange Alternative activists: both groups used humor and absurdity as political weapons, criticizing the authorities indirectly in order to hinder possible repression. They emphasized creativity, provocation, and involving ordinary people in their activities.

Van Duijn also authored the concept of the utopian Orange Free State, which represented a modern alternative to capitalism and was established on 5th February 1970 with the People’s University of Sabotage, a fictional university, as a form of socio-artistic action. Its founders planted an Orange Tree, symbolizing the alternative society the movement advocated. They then held a meeting at Amsterdam’s Akhnaton Club, in which declarations were made about the borders of the imaginary state — they were to align with the borders of the Netherlands at the time. The Orange Free State had its own government and “ministries” for squats, second-hand stores and organic food. It remained politically active until the 1980s. The Dwarf Party put up its candidates in local elections and won five seats. Nonetheless, it eventually disintegrated in 1974 due to internal conflicts. The symbol of the Orange Free State was dwarves wearing orange caps, who were unfamiliar with the laws governing the world of humans. They symbolized — as in the case of the Orange Alternative — the intermingling of worlds: real and unreal, good and evil, children’s imagination and the “weight” of the adult world, good-natured simplicity and “pictorial” cynicism, the opposition of infantilism – responsibility. For observers of foreign events in Poland: journalists and columnists from Western Europe, orange caps were a playful, even childish element, but at the same time a hallmark of supporters or participants in events organized by Orange Alternative. For the latter, they were a source of pride and a distinctive element of identification in the crowd.

Both the Provotariat and the Orange Alternative maintained a long-standing continuity despite intense political changes. The colour exhibited by the Provos and later by the Orange Alternative is part of the symbolism of awakening and is associated with multiplicity and youth. It also symbolized a certain strategy that could be called “the strategy of change” — if only by association with the change of street lights. It was and continues to be featured in works by Polish Surrealist painters like Kazimierz Mikulski, Jarosław Jaśnikowski and Marcin Kołpanowicz. The creators of the Orange Alternative New Culture Movement were aware that in the 1980s the Security Service treated alternative youth movements as a kind of resistance against the communist system. While divided by the socio-cultural gap, as their countries belonged to different political systems, both Dutch and Polish youth sought an effective form of overcoming the barrenness of existence in a given political system, contesting the scarcity or excess of consumerism. Compared to the articles in the magazine published by the New Culture Movement mentioned here and the leaflets distributed by Orange Alternative, the texts of the Dutch Provos were more uncompromising, bold, satirical and humorous. They reached a wider audience, provoked lively reactions from artists and journalists, and inspired the programme texts of the later Dwarf Party.

4.3. The “New Surrealism” of the Orange Alternative

Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism, published in the “A” magazine, was meant to parody propaganda, developing the theme of the unlimited role of imagination. The latter idea was very close to the views of the French Surrealists: “You know very well that the Imagination is unlimited”. Some literary scholars claim that the *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*, by its name, refers to the *Futurist Manifesto* [18]. We disagree with this thesis, considering that Fydrych’s *Manifesto* refers directly to the *Surrealist Manifesto* and the *Second Manifesto* (Program texts of the Orange Alternative and French manifestos of surrealism-selected contexts) Futurism glorified breaking with the past (“museums are cemeteries” speed [19], technology, industry, and war as “world hygiene” while art was supposed to reflect the dynamism of modernity). Socialist Surrealism, on the other hand, proclaimed the combination of the revolu-

tionary potential of the unconscious and dreams with class struggle, and art was to become a tool of emancipation, but not purely realistic — using strangeness, absurdity, and automatic writing. Futuristic texts were full of dynamic, aggressive metaphors, broken syntax, and typographical experiments. Their themes concerned machines, movement, cities, energy, and struggle. Futurism glorified hatred of the past — it literally called for the burning of libraries and museums. It is considered tradition to be an obstacle to progress. Socialist surrealism rejected bourgeois tradition, but aquatic, lunar, and animalistic symbolism was close to French surrealism.

Gourgaud writes that in the *Manifesto* we witness the reversal of hierarchies and the introduction of new rules governing reality [20]. Fydrych goes against the criticised “logos”, even a single police officer on the street is a work of art: “Let us play, fate is not a cross. Why suffer when you can enjoy? The fate of life is a raffle. And religion, love and Dostoevsky?”. Instead of reading Russian literature of “intellectual devotion”, Fydrych proposes a return to a careful reading of Breton’s works. And to a re-interpretation of Salvador Dali’s works. He proposed a socio-literary surrealism, based on reviving the word and the image by giving it a new contestation-artistic function: “the end of every socio-economic formation is its comedy”; “all proletarians, be beautiful”. This was a clear reference to Marxist concepts. However, it sounds like a slogan that has become a cross between a countercultural manifesto and a surrealist revolutionary slogan, a twist in the spirit of French surrealism—because instead of purely political mobilization, we have a poetic and absurd element (“be beautiful”), and the countercultural movement because beauty is understood broadly: as freedom, harmony.

The Manifesto of Flowers was conceived by its creator as a set of norms governing the super-reality created by the Orange Alternative. It refers to the counterculture movements of the 1960s (‘flower power’), pacifism, ecology and hippie culture. It was created in an atmosphere of opposition to authoritarianism, and its title refers to Flowers as a symbol of love, peace, nature and spiritual freedom. Similarly to the manifesto of the French surrealists, it called for the liberation of imagination from the control of reason and social morality, the abolition of boundaries between dreams and reality, and a radical revaluation of language and art. The new ideal of the surrealist, absolute

artist, was an obvious deformation of the concept of Homo sovieticus, which, according to Mikhail Heller, meant the successor to Homo sapiens in the USSR. In contrast to socialist realism, Homo Aestheticus takes on the artists' attitudes about the needs and daily lives of ordinary citizens, which should still be reflected precisely in art. "Non-violent action with positive outcomes is the only noble pursuit worthy of the attention of the real man, who is no longer the gloomy Homo sapiens of social realism, but evolves into Homo Aestheticus and develops his own form of socialist surrealism". A detailed concept of Homo Aestheticus was presented by Fydrych in *Hokus-pocus*, co-authored with Parisian journalist Bogdan Dobosz.

Descriptions of the background of these events can be found in *Dwarfs and Dimwits* ^[21], a reportage-literary collection of stories, as well as *Lives of the Orange Men* ^[22], a collection of colourful portraits of activists and contributors to the Orange Alternative, which presents their personal experiences, ties to the movement and artistic concepts. The book features a two-pronged narrative, referring to real threads and an oneiric parallel world. Today, Fydrych is working on a book that constitutes a new account of the history of modern art with a special focus on avant-garde movements of our time. It was supposed to be a groundbreaking book — it was meant to symbolize the struggle against the order and rationalism of the bourgeois world, promoting an attitude of "liberation" — in one case spiritual and social, in the other psychological and creative.

4.4. Happenings of the Orange Alternative as an Example of "Ludic Surrealism"

. The turn of the 1980s and 1990s saw major happenings in Poland's largest cities, mainly attended by young people. The Orange Alternative opened up full possibilities for them to contest the remnants of the martial law regime. The division was proposed as follows: the police, provocateurs and the authorities versus us — the university and high school students opposed to the communist system. This created a clear line between good and evil and the possibility of participating in a collective, bloodless form of resistance with elements of black humour. The Orange Alternative's happenings are proof of the truth of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the liberating and therapeutic power of laughter ^[23]. Its author emphasized the special role of the culture of laughter, transporting people into the multidimensional

dimensionality of carnival fun. Ceremonial and spectatorial forms—along with "family speech" and "word labour"—were one part of the triad forming the culture of laughter. The Orange Alternative is globally unique, combining political and artistic contestation, the primacy of imagination over reality and a new dimension of surrealism. Happenings also constituted a kind of "bloodless rebellion", a reaction to the brutalization of social life and violence. The largest number of them occurred between 1987 and 1988. It was at this time that the movement spread to other cities, and its imitators began to appear in Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Lublin and Gdańsk. The activities of these happeners were often assisted by people belonging to the official opposition. Workers from Wrocław factories also collaborated with Fydrych, helping to make props. One of "Major's" happenings at the time was his campaign as a candidate for senator in the 4 June 1989 elections. The previous antinomy: police-happeners, was enriched by the possibility of crowd participation, while blurring the boundary between the recipient and the sender of the "street artwork." The happenings were also a response to the widespread cognitive dissonance between the "red paradise" promoted by regime propaganda and the Polish reality symbolized by empty store shelves (**Figure 3**).

On 7 November 1988, "Major" organized a large open-air performance that was supposed to gather crowds. Attendees started to arrive as early as 4:00 p.m. to Wrocław's Market Square, which proved too small for several thousand people. They brought banners reading "Power to the Imagination." Before the event, "Major" distributed a leaflet encouraging participation in the "Red March" action, suggesting that another celebration of the October Revolution was being held. Was this another happening, since the event did not refer to events or circumstances set in the present? The flyer opened with the call "Comrades!". In it, "Major" referred to the events of "the previous year", writing about the battleship Potemkin and the cruiser Aurora for a novel take on the celebration. "Comrades, let us not worry about the passivity of the police. Let us do it for the great cause, which is the internationalism of the Fortress of Wrocław—a "free city", the leaflet stated. It also spoke of the need to elect "multicoloured" and "orange" delegates, as well as blue ones. "Let the rituals of the revolution come to pass", "Major" appealed, both in the leaflet and later at the rally ^[24].



Figure 3. Happening AWAY WITH BATONS (Wrocław, July 1988).

The happenings were also a form of surrealism politicized in action, given that they used communist symbols like Soviet uniforms or images of communist leaders. They were admittedly peaceful in nature, although each time they were guarded by the police. The happeners tried to entice the officers to join the event, per the assumptions of the manifesto of surrealist socialism, and they often succeeded, with the officers remaining unaware that they were taking part in an artistic event. Passers-by were also included in Orange Alternative performances. Happenings usually ended with the arrest of the participants. Initially, the ‘serious’ oppositionists did not look upon Orange Alternative actions favourably; however, they eventually realized that they had more freedom of action while the police (militia was busy dealing with the movement’s activities). The Orange Alternative’s happenings were significant on several levels — they were art, politics, and social therapy all at once. They were a form of resistance in a totalitarian system. In communist Poland, the authorities could easily break up a political demonstration, but a happening with dwarfs was difficult to classify unequivocally as “anti-state”. The militia and the Security Service were put in an absurd situation: should they arrest a student dressed as Santa Claus or a girl in an orange hat? This ridiculed the apparatus of repression and showed its grotesque side. The Orange Alternative spoke of freedom and resistance in an indirect way, using symbols and absurdity. Dwarves became the identifying code of the opposition, and at the same time, a formally “harmless” drawing. Thanks to this, the message could reach a wider audience than overt political slogans. Participation in happenings was a kind of community building. Happenings drew in passers-by, even

random ones, turning them into participants. This created a space where people could experience freedom and solidarity on the street, despite martial law and surveillance. Laughter and shared fun were a unifying tool — and a psychological respite in an oppressive system. Identifying with the crowd in orange caps made young people overcome their fear, while absurdity and humor relieved tension. Participants realized that it was possible to act publicly and creatively without necessarily exposing themselves to immediate brutal attack (although the risk existed). The happenings of the Polish movement were a bridge between art and politics, inspiring both street movements and artists after 1989. They showed that humor and art can be a real tool for social change, anti-politics in practice — instead of serious rallies and banners, they used joy, absurdity, and provocation, which disarmed the system and united people. As a result, they became one of the most original examples of peaceful resistance in Central and Eastern Europe.

Happenings and surrealist activities are ideologically linked, even though they emerged in different historical contexts. In short, happenings took over from surrealism the logic of absurdity, the idea of imagination drawing on dreams, the freedom of association and the breaking down of everyday life, but transferred it from canvas and paper to a living, public space. Like the artistic activities of the Surrealists, happenings were artistic activities in public space that engaged participants and had an element of improvisation. They were often one-off events that did not exist without their audience. The objects used in them took on new meaning. The Surrealists and Orange Alternative happeners emphasized the role of absurdity in artistic creation, where the logic of events often deliberately

contradicts “common sense,” and the need to break down everyday life—in both cases, the aim is to shake people out of their automatic thinking. Happenings were one-off, incidental activities, while the works of French surrealists (paintings, poems, theatrical situations captured on film) were to be created with future generations in mind. Orange Alternative happenings were highly surrealistic, combining the painting of dwarves in communist Poland with a mixture of children’s fairy tales and political absurdity. The effect was similar to a surrealistic painting — evoking a sense of strangeness that exposed the absurdity of communist reality itself. Thanks to the Orange Alternative, the happening became surrealism in motion, in movement, and among people. Instead of Dali’s painting, there was a street scene in which a policeman catches a dwarf, and passers-by become part of the spectacle. The Orange Alternative’s forms of activity have always combined a socio-political and artistic dimension. It was this light, somewhat “playful” dimension of the Orange Alternative, combined with the logic of opposition to the negatives of reality, that has caused young people in Poland and abroad to see it as a way to fight the greyness and apathy of everyday life”^[48]. Lublin saw a happening called “Progress is coming”, which culminated with the participants planting hundreds of onions in the city square; a huge banner they had read as follows: “Lard and onions are Polish culture”. In the case of this and other Orange Alternative street actions, it is

difficult to separate the humour of the absurd from that of the surreal, but both drew on the regime’s reality, fighting for individual freedom. Each city gave them a unique character. Another Orange Alternative happening in Wrocław was organized under the slogan “Vivat a rowanberry extract diluted with water!(one of the most popular drinks in late communist Poland) which “electrified” the police. It involved a huge teddy bear in black glasses, wrapped in toilet paper, as well as a huge face-in-hole board featuring a dwarf, which was actually a wedding portrait. The police swarmed the board, while the teddy bear confronted a puss in boots and one of the marchers dressed as a leprechaun handed out candy to attendees. The teddy bear and onion in the Orange Alternative’s happenings functioned as surreal props – their meaning was both banal and perverse, and thus perfectly suited to the logic of the Orange Alternative (Figure 4). In communist Poland, all demonstrations were associated with banners and solemnity. The introduction of a teddy bear or an onion defused the seriousness, creating cognitive dissonance. It was an ambiguous symbol, because the teddy bear could mean childlike innocence and cuddliness, but it could also refer to Bareja’s famous film *Teddy Bear* – a satire on the absurdity of communist Poland. The onion could symbolize tears (but of laughter or sadness), ordinariness, and even the “layered” nature of reality. These were not elite symbols, but everyday ones, understandable to everyone in communist Poland.



Figure 4. Exhibition at the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk Dedicated to the Orange Alternative.

5. Post-1989 Echoes

The year 1989 was a turning point for Poland and the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. It was then that the Round Table Talks (February–April 1989) took place, i.e., talks between the communist authorities and the opposition, mainly representatives of “Solidarity”, which led to partially free elections and political changes. On June 4, 1989, parliamentary elections were held, the first partially free elections in Poland after World War II. “Solidarity” won a majority in the Polish parliament, which was a huge blow to the communist authorities. The first non-communist government since World War II was formed on September 12, 1989, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a “Solidarity” activist, became the prime minister of Poland. This marked the end of communist rule and the beginning of political transformation. There were huge political and social changes, including the abolition of censorship, freedom of political activity, and the beginning of economic transformation. After 1989, the Orange Alternative lost its primary “target for ridicule” – the communist apparatus of power and its censorship – but it did not disappear completely, only evolved. This was because the socio-political context had changed. In communist Poland, Orange Alternative happenings were a form of resistance against the totalitarian system. After the elections of June 4, 1989, and the fall of communism, the pressure of censorship disappeared, so satirical activities had to find a new target. Poland transitioned to a democratic system, and the absurdity of everyday life ceased to be a tool of political struggle — it became more of a social commentary. Fydrych, the leader of Orange Alternative, also organized happenings in free Poland, often commenting on the new reality: privatization, consumerism, and social inequalities. In the 1990s and 2000s, Orange Alternative was involved in campaigns promoting tolerance, human rights, and artistic freedom. Orange Alternative began to operate more in the international arena — happenings were organized in Germany, France, and the US. Before 1989, satire was a tool for survival and fighting repression, and after 1989, it became a way of commenting on democracy and capitalism, sometimes criticizing politicians of all stripes. In a sense, Orange Alternative gained the ability to operate without fear of brutal repression. It became a symbol of creative resistance and

an inspiration for street art and performance movements in Poland. It is worth mentioning that dwarves have become an icon of Wrocław — today, there are several hundred tourist dwarf figurines in the city, which is a kind of “smile” towards the history of Orange Alternative. It has gone from being a “street partisan” to a symbol of artistic freedom and a commentator on reality. It lost its opponent in the form of the Polish People’s Republic, but it remained an important voice in civic culture of an artistic nature. The Orange Alternative was the most important anti-communist mass happening movement in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1980s and 1990s, calling for freedom of speech, freedom of action and artistic freedom (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The Orange Alternative Dwarf on Małalińskiego Street in Warsaw, in the Place of the Painted-Over Fighting Solidarity Sign.

After the overthrow of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the Orange Alternative lost its momentum, effectively having lost its main purpose — criticising totalitarian power and censorship. Political realities changed, so organizing happenings on the streets of major cities ceased to be so popular. In 2011, the 59 Rivoli Centre in Paris opened an exhibition titled “Revolution of the Dwarfs” in Fydrych’s presence, with similar events also hosted in 2005 in Brussels and 2009 in New York. In 2004, the Orange Alternative supported the Orange Revolution in

Ukraine, and the accompanying art events gathered large audiences in Ternopil, Kyiv, and Lviv. The most important events up to 2011 have been documented in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative. Waldemar Fydrych focused primarily on his writing work: *Hocus Pocus* or the Orange Alternative, *Major* and *Lives of the Orange Men*.

6. Conclusions

Thus, the creator of the Orange Alternative combined joy and contestation, introducing it permanently into the pantheon of Polish surrealism. The common, county fair-like dimension of medieval theatre, the reconfiguration of familiar concepts and meanings and laughter, serving to “give birth” to the new, resulted in the emergence of street theatre à la polonaise against the backdrop of the post-“Solidarity” transition. The movement was characterized by a conscious use of irrationality and absurdity in opposition to communism. In this context, it is essential to recall the symbolic statement of “Major”, which caused a stir at a police station in Łódź during martial law in the autumn of 1982 (“I practice dialectical painting of great social forms. According to the Hegelian Dialectic, quantity transforms into quality, that is, the more dwarfs, the better”) ^[25].

I analysed selected happenings of the Orange Alternative and selected aspects of its most important programme text as examples of the Orange Alternative’s activities, inspired by the Dutch Provo movement and the Polish New Culture Movement. Both inspirations proved to be complementary and invigorating for the movement in question, especially in promoting activities and slogans inspired by surrealism. In addition, my goal was to introduce an analysis of how the Orange Alternative was recorded in a virtual museum—as an example of the so-called “surviving memory” showing that it is not only happenings, but also archival texts and publications (e.g., manifestos, essays) that bear witness to the cultural and timeless dimension of the movement. This study is an attempt to introduce research to date, filling the gap regarding the multidimensional significance of the movement’s programmatic texts and in-depth analyses of the symbolic layer of happening. I am also currently working on an in-depth analysis of the similarities between the Orange Alternative and the Dutch Provos, taking into account the influence on representatives of avant-gardes in other European countries.

Combining the perspective of a “witness to history”—a participant in happenings organized by the Orange Alternative, the experience of a researcher, cyclical meetings with Fydrych, deepened by his analysis of the events of the time, and the poetic sensibility of a neo-surrealist writing in French, gives me unique, often different possibilities in terms of analysis. Connections with French surrealism, the provos movement, and the evaluation of the New Culture Movement transformed the Orange Alternative into a full-fledged protest and artistic movement, uniting hundreds of thousands of people on the streets, shouting absurd slogans, dressed in orange outfits with dwarf hats on their heads. Programmatic texts—manifestos, journalistic and literary books written by the movement’s leader—became a symbol of democratic change, of the bloodless revolution in Poland at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.

The above considerations concerning the Dutch Provo movement and the Polish New Culture movement as examples of protest-oriented artistic movements and their influence on the formation of the surrealist phenomenon of the Orange Alternative are intended as a contribution to broader research and do not aspire to be a definitive text. They show the state of research at the present stage, and subsequent studies will provide a framework for further reflection. My goal was to briefly familiarize the reader with the specifics of the Orange Alternative movement, its Polish, French, and Dutch inspirations using selected examples. The contributory nature of the text, often practiced in Polish literary and cultural studies, emphasizes its fragmentary nature. The Orange Alternative is more of a curiosity in the world, known mainly among Polish émigré historians, researchers of social movements, and people interested in the anti-communist opposition. It did not achieve the same global recognition as “Solidarity”, but in Poland it is a symbol of artistic and unusual forms of resistance to communism.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism

Under the sun. Even a dried up insect will be happy. Some generous comments. Reader. Is the abolition of illiteracy unequivocal. And what will happen to fairy tales, especially painted ones. Fox, tiger, badger, bear. Revolutionary activist, toadstools, goldfish. It is known that more surrealism has the poetry of Salvatore Dali's paintings than Marx's great poems. Even Lenin's novels are no match for painting. How to solve this dilemma. Here is a yawning dull question - every realist / social realist /. Surrealist does not ask questions. It is known, life for adventure. Insight not necessary. And yet. It is worth knowing if the cancer of rationalism has eaten your brain. For the lost there is a chance. Everyone has freedom. Reader. The world is open to you. E.g., a brilliant career as a sewing machine for uniforms for kindergartners. Any educated reason will reach for the available resources. The manifesto is written for all the wits of the world. Kill the wits. The illiterate can see better with painting and pictorial writing. There is no other return to nature. Isn't the crowning achievement of happiness to be the mechanism of a great cosmic machine. Recommended. Any other expedient path strictly forbidden. In

the final analysis, reach for every means available to you. Do not run away from intrigues if those allow you to live. No murmur in your eyes should impede your flight.

You know well that Imagination is an unlimited world. Its image can be anything but provided that it does not servilely relate to the world called practical. It is a career for the realist to kill the winged imagination. Such a bird can be cooked for dinner. The Dada movement also defends against realism. Our enemy often becomes hope. Also some dreams. Of course, it is different with dream dreams.

Apparently, there is no force in life that can provide a dam for the incalculable worlds of imagination. She permeates everything, using no real force. Imagination lives in us as long as it is free. Do not think that it is the creator of error. Because crime is inherently unquantifiable. Even a teenager has often lost something in life. He will be in trouble. The first loser is imagination. Those who have already lost it once will have trouble getting it back. Are we going to fool ourselves. Your imaginations, boring fish in hats full of problems. Your world, a smokehouse. Very well, torment yourselves. Buy, sell.

And not even the gates of a psychiatric hospital can stop us. Also, hospitals turn out to be a perfect field for surrealists. It is known, psychiatrists skillful surrealists. They are not the only ones. Our feelings of disinterest - bridges made of cardboard over the Ganges. A surrealist does not need to be as much as a psychiatrist to not feel lonely. Really, a realist feels lonely. A surrealist never does. The world for the long term cannot do without surrealism. But why have some of the youth been drowned in the ether of boring mindlessness. Who is doing this? That dreary theater, the so-called THINK, is to blame. Who? First and foremost, the existentialists. And who inculcated intellectual devotionism in a generation? The philosophers are also to blame. What are philosophers doing to the world? After all, no one else is calling for contempt for politicians. Politicians are great. Philosophers are finished. Politicians have always been surreal. Let's love politicians. Philosophers are losers. Let's love politicians.

The philosophers will soon be rid of them. Fortunately, even in the worst unfavorable moments for surrealism in each city, it found refuge in some toilets for the public. Indicated, I recommend such wanderings of the

spirit. That's where Icarus soared. It was difficult for pure rationalism to master the toilets. Surrealism in toilets persisted thanks to politicians. For somewhere there is such a close connection between relief and aesthetic sensation. The philosophers wanted to reach there as well, but their foul hopes came to naught. Politicians have always been great surrealists. They are waiting for warmth. Let's love the politicians. The philosophers are losers.

Now it is high time for the foul deeds of philosophers to be revealed before the Court of Surrealism. Next to them, I propose to erect a great Tribunal for the expurgation of the great merits of politicians. Let us all laugh sincerely. The war of materialism and idealism. From the point of view of the living intelligence, this is a primitive entertainment. Philosophy functionaries, Judas of criticism, specialists in limiting imagination and spontaneity, don't count on it.

Something for philosophers about rationalism. Rationalism can't be explained otherwise than fear, which demobilizes imagination. Rationalism is born where fear determines the existence of fear. A true rationalist is a knight. His limited framework of movement is to protect him from seemingly falling for joy.

Who among the philosophers, I ask seriously, would dare to say of existence from "I think, therefore I am" to "I enjoy, therefore I am." Never defend philosophers. Such a defense is strictly forbidden. Let no one dare to argue with the last sentences. NO ONE. No one is allowed. No one.

Do not read Dostoevsky! The world is more representative of newspaper clippings, this is a job for any budding surrealist. Newspapers can awaken in us the motherhood of existence in the world. Especially favorable for the development of art are the times of socialism. It is important that day by day the average person learns more, feels better the reality of the world. And his stature of existence lies in constant surreal transformations. This is best seen in history. There were great manifestos. Today, the favorability of the situation is undeniably evident. Social life has surpassed with its momentum the wildest dreams of the surrealists between the wars.

Let's not be afraid to be honest to the end. The only solution for the future and today is surrealism. Then the world will not talk about the crisis. Let's not back down if we have come this far. After all, the whole world is a work.

Already a single militiaman on the street is a work of art. Let's have fun, fate is not a cross. What's the point of suffering when you can rejoice. The fate of life is a lottery fantasy, And religion, love and Dostoevsky? I'll answer the first two questions in one sentence, the third I'll give an extremely twisted answer.

Religion is opium, or the dream of the people.

Love, if it is spontaneous, is not frightened by any barrier. It can be, for example, part of the charter of an organization. Love, philosophy are contradictory to each other. In addition, according to surrealism /1929/ love is the only idea that can be reconciled with the idea of life, if only for a moment. In socialism, you can still talk about collective love.

Instead of Dostoevsky - Bulgakov, Babel, Breton, Aragon, Van and others.

And Darwin. Unfortunately, he spoke in the opposite direction. I say again: pay no attention to philosophers. Darwin was a biologist and a surrealist.

Your questions become insistent. Let there be a Bible, but only for a moment. I don't think of hurting religious feelings. But didn't the gospel in Soviet Moscow lift outstanding literature? To this day I wonder who to whom - whether socialism to Bulgakov, or the writer to socialism. The truth is in the middle. Take the example of Ecclesiastes: "The eye shall not be saturated with seeing, and the ear shall not be saturated with hearing." A Soviet customs officer looking at our pederast's purse would say it better. The border station of Medyka knows such highs of art.

In conclusion, we recall. Our plea for the world to lie down in sleep, and sleep in the world. Let each of us know that we will not allow anyone to quietly deceive themselves.

We have prepared for your orderly news extremely perfidious tricks. Don't count on them. There is no question of mercy here.

Waldemar Maria Fydrych

ha! ha!

/mjr/.

Translated by Marta Moldovan-Cywińska

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