

MONOGRAPH

Major Waldemar Fydrych (2013)

Lives of the Orange Men. A Biographical History of the Polish Orange Alternative Movement

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Between 1981 and 1989 in Wroclaw Poland, in an atmosphere in which dissent was forbidden and martial law a reality, the art-activist Orange Alternative movement developed and deployed their "socialist sur-realism" in absurd street-painting and large-scale performances comprising tens of thousands of people dressed as dwarves, in an effort to destabilize the Communist government. It worked. Beginning with the 'dialectical painting' of dwarves onto the patches of white paint all over the city's walls, which uncannily marked the censorship of opposition slogans, the group moved on to both stage happenings and over-enthusiastically embrace official Soviet festivals in a way that transformed both of these into mass expressions of dissent. They illegally restaged the mass spectacle of the storming of the Winter Palace on the anniversary of the October Revolution using their own homemade tanks; organized patriotic gatherings in which anyone waving red flags or wearing red (or eating red borscht, or covering oneself in ketchup) was arrested; and inspired other Orange Alternative groups to appear across the country. Although the group existed to the left of the mainstream opposition of Solidarity, their art was a key, acknowledged factor in the overthrow of the Communist government.

Lives of the Orange Men tells the story of the movement's main protagonists, and is the first stand-alone English-language account of the Orange Alternative, written autobiographically by its central figure, and featuring an appendix of newly translated key texts including Major's "Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism," a timeline of every

Orange Alternative happening, and a new foreword from the Yes Men.

(From the publisher's website)

<https://www.pol-int.org/en/publications/lives-orange-men-biographical-history-polish-orange-0?j5Q6rewycZ5HtUDXTWpx7UZE=1>