

AT THE HEART OF THE CONFLICT

Debates of the Open University

Since November 1982 I was attending the debates of the so-called "Open University", organized in private homes by ten Belgrade University professors expelled from the University due to their disagreement with the political single-mindedness, imposed by the communist regime. Discussions of various contents were held, of political, psychological, historical and religious topics. One of the greatest debates was held in the home of attorney Srdja Popovic, on the topic of "Death Penalty - pros and cons". There was about 150 present.

Almost all discussions were imbued with criticism of the existing social and political system and of authoritarian (Stalinist) consciousness the system was based on.

That criticism was not being imposed, but was a natural reaction of anyone who dared at least little to think and perceive what was happening in the society.

In the atmosphere of a conscious and purposeful dialogue I understood that majority is almost never right, how easily and by which means it can be misled, and how man must be ready to change his opinion if it can not endure a more serious criticism and self-examination.

I understood that an appropriate word of critique can have a great power and that it is feared by any system based on a misconception.

"A system that can be destroyed by art and philosophy has neither any historical nor legitimate reasons to exist." (Dobrica Cosic)

But, a real wisdom would be to know those truths which would make this life better and more beautiful. Wisdom makes us free for it

speaks what to undertake with our will, lest we not be just an audience in our life, but creators of it as well.

I got an opinion that every man is called to make this world more beautiful and better as much as it depends on him. However, I was still far from real wisdom. I witnessed an interesting phenomenon (at the Open University) - the persons of different life opinions criticizing each others but all being right at the same time. But only in criticism. It horrified me. No one knows an achievable solution.

All are striving for a happier life, and if there is a solution, why then is the history of mankind so full of pain, suffering and death?

Even if we knew the solution of the problems of mankind, I asked myself, how it can be accepted by each individual, if he does not want to think, if he is indoctrinated and so closed for to the truth that would make him truly free?!

I read with admiration introductory article from the first issue of the newspaper "Politika", wondering whether mankind will ever achieve the cited ideal:

"Nowhere is easily forgotten that someone can have opposing conviction and that that conviction is honest and sincere. Immediately some back thoughts and perfidious intentions are being inserted for anyone who has different opinion. So we wonder where such bitterness comes from? And why shouldn't we expect it? Is the enemy the one who criticizes boldly when he has reasons, and praises everything which is worth praising? In life he is usually called a friend. So, is a truth a lesser truth when it is spoken by one man than by many? The value of a condemnation does not lie in the quantity of persons that express it, but in its justification, just as praise is only praise, when it is reasonable, whether it is spoken by a single solitary man or by hundreds or thousands of them. ..."
(Politika, No.1, Jan 12, 1904, page 1, Belgrade)

Then I thought that the problem is in the system and its defense mechanisms: fear and single-mindedness by which it holds man in its hand. "Should the system change, men would be changed, too", is what I thought at the time.

I understood that democratic principles are perhaps most acceptable, but not ideal as well. Hitler came to power in a democratic way. **What if majority is not right in its democratic deciding? What if it is misled, or scared?** Its choice is almost right. Somebody noticed:

"Just 5% of the people think, 25% think that they think, and the remaining 75% would prefer to commit suicide than to think." Because the majority almost never is right, it is afraid of a different opinion and therefore a minority should be protected from it, by guaranteeing elementary human rights to all individuals.

Political arrests

In the First Belgrade Gymnasium I had troubles (they wanted to expel me from it, because of some opposition paroles I was sticking to the walls as the contents of wall-newspapers), but all ended well, since all the class was on my side. Opposition paroles (for example: People went after the leader. Will they catch him?) were returned from the school safe to the classroom wall. But some comrades came from the City Committee SKJ (Abbr. for Alliance of Yugoslav Communists), and professors of the Gymnasium had to sign a declaration that they condemn my action. Then some members of opposition commented jokingly: *"When we come to power, we will appoint you as a minister for pamphlets and tracts!"* Then I neither had any serious problems, nor dreamed of me soon falling into a center of storm and conflict.

At the "Open University" they joked before my going into the Army *"Just don't hunger-strike in the army-prison, when you're arrested! There food is excellent there, differently from civil prison!"* *"Ha! Ha!"* was my comment!

And after six months in the army, I came home on a three-day leave, and when I went to Oluja, my friend from that opposition, on the same day, I was arrested. At the Police Station, they were convincing me that all were arrested half an hour before I came to the gathering. I did not believe them, for little was the probability that they were arrested right when I came home on leave. They have been meeting for sixteen years already, every second Friday, at three different addresses in the city. There was little likelihood that all that matched. But it did. I could not believe in the arrest, not only because of the small probability that it would happen to me, but also because such an undertaking would have been a mere political miss of the State Government. And it was a miss. And there was an arrest.

But, I did not still know that there was an arrest, for I had not read the newspaper, and so I answered very courageously to the attempts of the State Security Service to force me to collaboration.

They threatened, if I do not agree, to inform my friend Catarina that I am, allegedly, a homosexual, and to make much other trouble for me.

They: *"It is obvious from his look that he is a homosexual! ... Does Catarina know that you are homosexual?"*

I: *"She doesn't! And me either! And since you know all already, you know even more about me than I know myself, can I then go, if you don't need me any more?"*

They: *"Be silent and sit down! And be wise!"*

I: *"But didn't you say that I got here precisely because of my wisdom?"*

They: *"Keep quiet! Silence!"*

After 15 hours of hearings, my leave transformed into a three-day investigation imprisonment which I spent in the building of the Supreme Court Martial. Only then did I believe in the story of arrest, when I read in "Politika" the time and place of my arrest.

The single cell I was put in was in a real concentration camp. I was permitted to walk 45 minutes daily in the courtyard: circular, in a strictly determined direction and at a specific pace. The courtyard was surrounded with high concrete walls and with an armed guard on a terrace. All the time I was absolutely alone. Beside a metal grid door, the wooden door of the single cell was left opened by night so that a guard checked every half an hour with a flashlight if I was sleeping and how. I felt completely lost.

The officers who interrogated me were much more kind than the members of ordinary SB (Security Service), but threatened me with seven years of imprisonment without outside contact, no one knowing what would happen with me. They mentioned my statement before soldiers that I left of the Party as soon as I was born, for my mother had been a Party member, etc. I was very fearful and so I stopped praising the men from the "Open University". Members of the SB threatened me still, saying that they knew all about me, and they even stated in an ominous voice: "*We know you made boza in the military unit!*" (Boza - a tasty beverage!) It was the last straw. I agreed to give a statement about my attending the debates, but did not want to mention who had invited me to those debates. (*I came to the debates through Boris Tadic, who will become president of Serbia twenty years later*) However, when in a couple of days I learned that Radomir Radovic, one of the arrested twenty eight people, had died in "unexplained" circumstances, I decided to put the truth and justice above all, regardless of the consequences. That member of opposition allegedly committed suicide by taking a pesticide. (One should believe that he had eaten half a kilo of the pesticide to succeed in it).

Then transfer to another military unit followed, where the SB tried to make me their cooperator. That was the task of one colonel-lieutenant, a soldier from 1941. Like in a film, members of the SB told him little about me and my past, and so he had relatively good prejudices about me. After a couple of months of almost daily associating with him he developed such a trust in me that he left me

the keys of his office and treated me like his own son. I believe his heart was broken later on, when he learned who he dealt with. And I also liked him very much, so I was embarrassed much because of all that.

One my letter from June of that year describes best how I felt then:

Letter to a friend

"Yesterday we went to economy (agricultural land), i.e., to destroy weeds among the corn. I am personally against corn being a privileged herb. I am for democracy, that all have same rights, not only corn. If I am for grass and other weeds, it does not mean that I am against corn. No! I don't fight for power, how would I fight in such a way. It is easy for corn to show off when it has me behind who digs, crumbles and crushes it. It is easy under such circumstances to label non-corn to be a weed. It is difficult to prove to corn that perhaps it is a weed. Oh, yes, by this I challenge the already established things, perhaps established wrongly. Grass is tiny, but stronger ideologically. I protect corn from grass just because of my selfish interest. There were those who tolerated grass, but as social relationships determine social superstructure, so those individuals were left without corn, without food and without descendants (similar to them) the selfish survived and had offspring (similar to them) perhaps because no one dared, due to a pure prejudice, to graze grass a little.

So, yesterday I did a herbal discrimination, a genocide over "weed" (from now I always write it with quotation marks, in order to express my revolutionary opinions at least through them) and in the middle of the work it began to rain. And it rains, but not for army. For if according to the "holy" PS (Rule of Service) it stops to rain on May 15

and the nice weather begins, and soldiers wear shirts, then it is so. Perhaps somebody will bring criminal charges against the soldier on duty in the meteorological station, because of an alleged abuse of his position. It is so here. And there are little people here to whom it can seem strange or illogical. ...

Imagine me spending several hours almost every day with a captain from the Security service. Approximately on my voluntary basis (I am bored). You are certainly wondering what happens then. Well, he is misleading me with his irregular opinions, or at least trying to. He probably has a goal to make me his like-minded person. It is his job. You have to understand him. But I am afraid that he will get out from that job with my attitudes.

Then he will be arrested, and I have nothing against him personally, and so I will think a bit about stopping to mislead him. In fact, I have not been misleading him until now either. I have not used some irrational methods for influencing his subconsciousness.

He is a very interesting person. He believes what he thinks, but believes more than he thinks. I met him on Wednesday, June 13th, when the examining judge came here with the prosecutor, in connection with Olujic and others. Of course, I refused to testify. I refused to answer the question posed, as well as the question why I refused to answer the questions posed, as well as the question why I refused to answer the question why... etc. The examining judge said that he can apply sanctions against me because of my refusal to testify, and he began with it instantly - he tried to suffocate me.

He said that our law is one of the most humane in the world - he tried to suffocate me by making me laugh.

Then, he asked me to bear testify about ten times more, whereupon I began to challenge his competency in doing his job, since he could understand in no way that I really did not want to testify against all those (the Belgrade Sixs). Then they packed and left to Belgrade, and I stayed with the captain from SB. We spoke something about the differences between the Sarajevo and Belgrade environment.

He: "Sarajevo has its intelligentsia too!"

I: "Yes! But Belgrade intelligentsia is in publics, but yours is in prison!"

So we understood one another quickly." (Sarajevo, end of June 1984)

I met the captain from SB almost every day and had hours-long conversations in which we were trying to defeat one another ideologically. (I succeeded in it regularly for I was "educated" at the Open University.)

In the military unit I listened very patiently to my comrade soldiers speaking, being indoctrinated with political propaganda, that all that "Group of 28" should be shot by machine-gun. They did not know I had been arrested half an hour after the others. The truth about my arrest and my "political" past was kept as a top secret. Even the senior officer did not know of it, and so I was entrusted with responsible duties in the unit. I was even allowed to organize debates. Since I could not criticize openly the regime, I held a lecture on the topic of religion and indoctrination. I noticed that mechanisms of religious misleading were most approximate to the mechanisms of the ideology of that time, and so I criticized the ideological madness of that time through a form of religious madness.

At the lecture I spoke that a man is prone to idolatry toward some authority, and he needs a scapegoat to pass on him the responsibility for his life failures. What I could not speak openly at the lecture, lest I go to prison, I spoke to my comrade soldiers after the lecture: *"You know, when I spoke about God, I thought of Josip Broz. And speaking about heretics I meant the opposition!"*

Lest I go to prison, I avoided an open condemnation of the regime. Instead I posed "wise" questions on the basis of which anyone reasonable could conclude about the real situation. So a member of the Security Service arrived, on the basis of those my questions, at certain conclusions inserted later on in the order for my punishment. That order accused me because I **"several times and in front of other soldiers spoke against the self-governmental socialistic system of SFRY, speaking that in Yugoslavia there is not socialism and self-government, that in our country exists a form of Stalinist social and political system, ...that people and the working class are misled by politicians in power, that comrade Tito was a Stalinist and fought for his own interests, that there is not freedom in our country, and that in the West there is a greater freedom and democracy"**. The veracity of what I had spoken was proved immediately by the verdict of one month imprisonment, and so it was shown that there really was not freedom of thought and speech in our country.

The Security Service wanted to blackmail me if I did not agree to collaborate, but they released me just after six days of hunger-strike in "Ali Pashin Bridge" prison in Sarajevo. Namely, I succeeded to send a letter through a cook to Belgrade, by which I informed the opposition what had happened to me. The latter simulated in eavesdropped phone talks that they would give to journalists to see confidential papers about how I was maltreated by members of SB. By the way, they passed to journalists the little information I had succeeded to send them from the prison. On that basis and on the basis of intervention of a high state official and Army general, I was released from prison with very kind words: *"Who else left this place in such a nice white car?!"* SB-members drove me to the railway station

and so escorted me to the train for Belgrade. They asked me to speak nothing to anyone, but the foreign press had already written:

YUGOSLAV STUDENT HUNGER-STRIKES

BECAUSE OF "POLITICAL" ARREST

AFP and AP report

Belgrade, September 26 (DTS) - Twenty years-old student Milos Bogdanovic hunger-strikes almost a week already as a sign of protest against 30 days imprisonment verdict pronounced to him by Court Martial in Sarajevo, AFP and AP report.

Referring to dissident circles in Belgrade, France Press cites that Bogdanovic has been sentenced in order to be prevented (from testifying in behalf of the defense) in the forthcoming trial to six dissident intellectuals.

AFP says that Bogdanovic was brought to police and questioned for 15 hours by "political police", together with a group of 28 dissidents, Milovan Djilas having been also among them, on April 20 this year.

AP also says that Bogdanovic was with a group of people that attended a "lecture" by Milovan Djilas, but assesses that his presence in the private flat was accidental, according to all."

(Report of the Republic Committee for confidential information)

Soon preparations were made for trial of the six intellectuals from "Open University". The indictment charged them with the act of associating with the aim of enemy acting: 5-15 years imprisonment.

The prosecutor tried to confirm his assertions that the meetings were held with aim of deposing the regime from power more by psychological effects than by legal proofs. He used claims: *"The meetings were scheduled in advance. They had well prepared introductory texts. The meetings could be attended by those only who*

were invited and who were assessed to be needed and to want to be present." I saw how the undefined paranoid accusation acted more on human heart than it would be achieved by real proof, had they existed - about alleged evil deeds of the opposition.

117 witnesses were heard in the inquiry. And all of us were surprised and confused by no witness of the prosecutor having agreed to testify falsely against the accused six. It was a cause of a paranoia and mutual suspicions of the members of opposition, for all seemed too nice to be real.

The first-accused Vlada Mijanovic (nicknamed Vlada Revolution), who led student demonstrations '68 in Belgrade, sent an appeal to the public where he invited all interested to attend the scheduled trial and prove personally if he is guilty. Shaken by the lies published about the six in newspapers, I went to PMF (Faculty of Science), to the conference of the faculty SSO (Association of Socialist Youth) and proposed that the appeal mentioned be read publicly. The appeal was read by a candidate for the president of University youth of Belgrade. After a couple of days, in the morning, three police members in civil suit, with guns, intruded my flat. After a short search in my room they brought me to the republic police station, where they maltreated me nine hours (physically and threatening) asking from me just to tell them name and family name of the man who had given me some confidential texts (about foreign press writing about the forthcoming trial, which they had found in my flat).

Among other things they had found among my papers there were numerous pages of text written with randomly ordered letters, ejected from the electronic device for exercising telegraphic signals, by which I exercised telegraphic reception as an amateur, before my military service. Since the SDB members could not find any logic in the texts they found, they were very confused. They told me with threatening voice:

"We know well what does it means, but better for you to tell us it yourself!" However, an electronic device for exercising telegraphic reception has just so programmed to give signs randomly, without any sense.

Had I agreed to collaborate, I would have much trouble to explain to them the logic by which those pages represented a code for undermining the stabile system of SFRY. It certainly was not an only way why I rejected to cooperate.

But since I refused collaboration, they brought me from the room where I had been questioned, saying:

"You behaved like a hero, but now you will go to prison now!" I was convinced that it was their last psychological trick they were trying to scare me by, before they escort me home.

I could not believe them again, until they led me to a magistrate. There was my victim, too, the candidate for the president of Belgrade youth, "forced" by me to read the appeal to the public. In front of him they blackmailed me further on, saying that my further destiny depended on them. Since I rejected the cooperation, I got 15 days imprisonment; for an "indoctrination" of the future president of Belgrade youth.

While I was in "Padinska Skela" prison they were coming and threatening me with criminal charge if I did not tell them who had given me the papers mentioned. It was actually the least important for them to know. If I had yielded just a little, they would never have left me alone. In the meantime a false information in the newspaper "Communist" and on TV was published about "unsuccessful provocations at Belgrade University". The mentioned youth president had, as a sign of penitence, to go to faculties and make propaganda against the appeal to the publics he had read himself, hiding that it had been read at all. At one faculty the son of the famous painter Mica Popovic, Jovan, stood up and told straight to the face of the president of the University youth: *"You are lying*

openly to all of us! I know the man, he has right went out of the prison because of the appeal to the publics!" At the party meeting at Faculty of Philosophy, Djordje Savic, a student of philosophy, split and threw his party member book protesting against my going to prison. At Faculty of Architecture students made a pamphlet in relation to that event. On the front-page of German journal "Die Welte" a text about this case appeared, under the title "Arrested witness".

The act with the decision about my sentence, which I brought to prison with me, contained the entire text of the appeal to the publics, so that it was read by more persons in the prison than it was heard at the SSO meeting at the faculty. The prison policemen recognized in the appeal (among the six accused) the name of their former prisoners, that were punished in '82 because of a manifestation of support to "Solidarność" at the meeting of solidarity with the people of Palestine. These members of opposition from "Open University" rebelled a major part of the prisoners not to work on Sundays. The prison codex guaranteed a weekly day of rest, but the prison authorities did not respect it.

At the trial to the Belgrade Six, the witnesses behaved very well. The defense was posing questions to the witnesses that prosecutor should have posed, as for example: *"Did something at those meetings imply silently against the regime?"* The witnesses of the prosecutor complained against such accusation against the "Open University", as if they had been witnesses of defense. A girl said *"Those meetings on Friday evenings were the happiest moments in my life!"* At times the voice of prosecutor was heard who posed, in a suspicious tone, questions like this: *"Were the meetings scheduled in advance?"*

The witnesses spoke wonderfully. Only one of them, my old and good friend, escaped continually. And one day the court decided to bring him forcefully. I waited until the evening edition of "Novosti", where this decision was published. Then I went to him in order that he learns of that information from the news, not from police. I found only his girlfriend there and asked her: *"What is he afraid of if he will*

“speak the truth?” In the tomorrow edition of "Vecernje Novosti" it was written: "Bogdanovic looked for me yesterday again, but I succeeded to avoid that meeting too!"

He was, finally, a crown witness. In "Osmica" a text appeared about that, with one of the title reading "Bogdanovic brought me there". It was a hard blow for me from someone I would never have expected. He stated that I was bringing the witnesses of prosecutor's office to consultations with the accused and that it was the reason why all testified in behalf of the accused. (During the investigation I was in the army and could in no way influence remaining 116 witnesses). After three days of nuisance the crown witness "corrected" (confessed to had lied) some of his statements. The charge was also changed and Vlada Miljanovic and two more were freed from accusations. One of them instantly make appointment for a continuation of the debates of the "Open University". On the first appointed Friday about 40 of us came to the meeting that was held in Pavlusko Imsirovic's flat. About half past seven phones began to ring. Journalists asked if there had been arrest.

At soon the trial was completed with a sentence of one and half year and with two conditional ones. Opposition won, helped by a strong pressure of domestic and foreign publics.

At one occasion, visiting Olujic (one of the accused six), I said in a serious and solemn voice: *"And my percentage?"* At Olujic's confused look I continued: *"You think that I have not read newspapers and know that we are well paid from abroad? I want my share of money!"* Of course, it was just a joke.

The completion of the trial to the Belgrade Six meant a beginning of a new epoch of freedom of thought and speech in Yugoslavia. We hoped that the freedom of thought and speech would result in an ideological sobering and leaving the principles of Stalinist consciousness. We looked forward to the future. However, it happened what was just feared by us.

The mass has changed just the form, but retained the old principles of thinking. One single-mindedness has been replaced with another single-mindedness. Communist heroes have been replaced with Christian saints, and the notion "dissident" replaced with the notion "member of a sect" (who is also "financed from abroad"). Orthodox communists became in the meantime orthodox Christians. They are great anti-communists now, but still with the same former Stalinist principles of thinking. I needed time to understand that sociological factors cannot change the motives of human heart.

It is not clear to me how could I not understand that the text about non-tolerance toward those who think differently was published in "Politika" considerably before the appearance of Communism in our regions, which means that authoritarian consciousness existed in our people far before the appearance of Communism.

I began to understand that problem is not in ideology, but in human heart. The aim of ideology is just to justify human sins before man's conscience. Ideology is not bad itself, but men are bad, and ideology is just a theory.

I also began to understand that a system cannot be worse than the men it is composed of. Democracy can function only if a majority of people is in a good state. If the majority is bad, then there is no cure, because the legal system will be corrupted because of the majority that tends morally to be such, and the system is condemned to be ruined from inside.

Socialist Svetozar Markovic predicted the failure of socialism in Balkans, realizing the horrible corruption of our mentality:

"The vast majority of workers in the villages and towns are so selfish as only an animal called a human can be. The ideal of a peasant is largely to acquire a great heritage and to become a boss, and a worker in town mostly has the goal of becoming a capitalist or at least a small bourgeoisie.

The evidence that they were not true socialists is that they are still arguing and raving over some trifles, over their personal ambitions, malice, vanity, etc. When they notice someone else's fault, instead of striving to correct it with love from all their hearts, they only find there a new cause for mutual spitting and anger, so that they may show their supremacy. ... The cause of socialism is collapsed, because there are no socialists. " (Svetozar Markovic, Selected papers, 64-67, 1872)

It was not clear to me just how at all in some countries democracy appeared and functioned at least for a time in history. What was which gave so a high level of morals and spirituality that majority of people could live in mutual peace without a special intervention of state apparatus and its interfering with life of an individual.

Only later will I find out that a major change in the mentality of the Western people, which allows the system to function, is a consequence of the Protestant Reformation.

Speaking of the ancient Vikings, known for their warrior spirit, sources from the XVIII century were explaining the causes of the reform of their mentality:

"How came they to be so docile and tractable as to submit to the arts of agriculture? Does a nation, habituated to arms and to idleness, easily give itself up to industry and the arts of peace? If we can answer this question aright, we shall know to what the happy transformation of the North is to be ascribed. ... I have yet shown that the Gospel had now been for three centuries preached in Scandinavia. To this, doubtless, as the principal cause, we must attribute the happy alteration of manners in those barbarous regions. Christian godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While it conducts enslaved souls into liberty, and, turning them from the power of Satan to God, invests them with the garments of salvation, it also meliorates their condition in this life, and diffuses through the world the most

salutary precepts of peace, order, and tranquillity. Let not men expect the general civilization of the globe by any other methods. ... We enjoy, at this day, the advantages of society derived to Europe, from the propagation of the Gospel, while we ungratefully depreciate the labours of those Christian missionaries, through which, under God, those advantages were conveyed to us. ... The durable change of their manners intimates, that their country must have been blessed with one of those gracious "effusions" of the holy Spirit, the consequences of which are commonly felt for ages after." (The Works of the Late Rev. Joseph Milner (1744–1797) in Eight Volumes, vol. III, p. 298, 1810)

As early as the 19th century, people noticed that only Protestant people were capable of democracy because of the reform of their mentality:

"Modern democracy grew out from the Calvinist faith convictions from the seventeenth century, especially in Scotland, England, and the Netherland..." (Bertelsmann Discovery Lexikon 1997)

"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." (Benjamin Franklin)

"The Reformation has favoured the progress of the nations which have adopted it, by permitting them to found free institutions, while Catholicism leads to despotism or anarchy, and often alternately to both. Representative government is the natural government of Protestant populations. Despotic government is the congenial government of Catholic populations. ... Catholics, unable either to found liberty, or to do without it, make despotism necessary, and yet will not submit to it. ... Regulated liberty is not possible without good morals." (Emile De Laveleye, Protestantism and Catholicism in their bearing upon the Liberty and Prosperity of Nations, pp. 30-31, 52, 1876)

I understood that people themselves have a need for a totalitarian regime and authoritarian ideology proportionally to their sinfulness, and that democracy functioned only in the countries that once had a spiritual reformation.

The Need for Political Authority

The sin of human heart is also manifested in a disrupting of social relationships, and therefore the mass has a need for an exterior authority to whom they would give the right of political power, expecting in return his taking the responsibility of keeping the social safety. The more sinful people are, their need for an exterior intervention is greater, and so the ruling authority has an excuse for being more totalitarian. By a gradual escalation of evil the system itself is being transformed, so that it is finally destroyed completely from inside by low productivity of work, corruption and other evils and made non-resistant to almost any exterior stress. The same stress that was before an opportunity for strengthening and building of civilization is getting now a destructive role, because the system is rotten in itself.

The Need for an Ideological Authority

Just as sinful world has a need for protection from its own evil in political security, it also has a need for protection from its own conscience. Therefore it needs a religion (or any other ideology) to justify its sinful acts. It has a task of replacing the use of common sense which has been sacrificed in order to provide a peace of man's conscience, and so that ideology directs him to the authority of an institution (a church, a political party, etc.) which takes the responsibility of thinking instead of the man himself. And as that institution has neither the right to take that responsibility from the individual nor succeeds to fulfil it, it has a need to justify its unfulfilled responsibility by inventing "enemies" (national, religious) who will be guilty for all its unfulfilled promises. With a gradual escalation of evil, an ideology (religion) transforms itself. The reason

is that it faces an increasing problem of a collective feeling of guilt. It tries to suppress the feeling of guilt or to pass it to someone else (a class, national, or religious) enemy. So the mass ideology becomes more and more fanatical and, because of its inability to resist a rational criticism, more and more intolerant.

Thinking About All And Good Decisions

Several months after the end of the trial a time came of a quiet thinking about all. Although we were winners formally, in depth of my soul I was not satisfied at all.

Regardless of all the examples of human heroism I saw during this dramatic process, my faith in man was shaken completely. I saw that no one was clean morally. Out of very different motives we fought and sacrifice for the same "people's cause". I was the witness of mutual disagreement and conflict of the Six themselves. My idols and ideals began to shake. I saw that I, myself, was (more than others) moved by a hatred for injustice, instead of by a love for justice. The old Russian folk adage sounded in my head: **"Who fights against a dragon for hundred years, becomes a dragon himself!"**, and in the heart the dragon's wrath and fire.

One evening I began to think. As if I had never thought until then.

I asked myself:

"Why do I live? Rather, for whom do I live? Oh, if I could only find just one person that is normal, good and fair, I would live and die for her if necessary. But each is on his own. No one is normal. No one is really good. We are all mad. We are all dirty.

This type of life is not worth of effort. Where is the happiness in life? Is anything worth of effort? No worth in breathing. No worth even in waking up in the morning. If I were to lose my life now, I would not have lost anything because I did not have anything. No happiness! I

don't even want to look for it any more. Because I don't have anything to lose, I am totally free. I can do whatever I want.

Therefore I will put truth, justice and goodness at the first place in my life. I will sacrifice myself to it. I am not afraid of going to prison again. Anyway, I will lose everything, this time or another. Truth, goodness and justice. It is only what encourages me to live. For the sake of goodness, truth and justice. Even if all be against me again, I will be faithful to them, for they are worthy of it. ..."

After a couple of days, in Olujic's flat, where the arrest of the "group 28" took place, I heard the "Song to the Spring" by Mendelson. Listening to that wonderful innocent melody I thought: "Is it possible that a world of goodness and justice exists really, and that this melody is just a shadow of it? That is what I wish to live for: for what is revealed by this wonderful melody. How is it possible that a shadow exist of what does not exist?! I must find out what is it and where is it!"

This melody poured into me a strength to live, but at the same time it left me very confused. I did not know where to look at in order to find what it speaks.

I felt like a hungry man who senses the aroma of food, but does not know where to cast a glance, where the food is. I felt the aroma of goodness and truth, but that was not enough. I wanted to "eat" it.

A wonderful feeling of bliss, while I was listening to the music, could not satisfy the longing of my soul, but it just induced even more. It is like my tomcat, when I show to him by finger and say "Look, I have left food for you there!", he does not look in that direction where I am showing to him, but look confusedly at my finger. In the same way I noticed, confusedly, that this melody points to Him or That what I need, but I did not know where to look, because I closed, by my atheistic dogma, the door of my mind and heart to a further action of God's Holy Spirit.

God revealed to me, while I was still an atheist, His goodness, and I brought decision unconsciously but willfully for Him. I had a contemptuous attitude toward an existence of God about seven months more. I thought that belief in God is an answer to man's psychological needs. Because I was still burdened, I thought that if someone believes in God, he does it as an answer to his psychological burden. It was not before one and half year later on that I recognized in Biblical verses the One who tried to say me all the time:

"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other." (Isaiah 45:22)

At a level of experience and feeling, longing of heart can be just suppressed, and not to be satisfied as well. God does not change our emotions, but motives (character).

Man needs a deep reform from inside, that can not be realized by any political regime, nor education, nor power of the will itself.

If people had Christian characters, no system would be able to be bad. (A system cannot be worse than the people who form it.)

Prayer and Victory

I do not know myself how I, so stubborn, began to believe in God as a person. But, I know, that the most difficult moments in my life were those of the first prayers. All in me rebelled against God. What rebelled from me most was not what I saw myself as an evil (anger and selfishness) but what I considered to be an only goodness in me. Looking at Christ in all the beauty and magnificency of His character, my own character distorted completely and began to fight against Christ's goodness. It was only then that I understood what my natural righteousness is a "unclear dress". I was good not out of a true love, but out of pride and guilt and various sentimental feelings, but I could not view the difference until I permitted to Jesus to reveal Himself to me through His word - the Bible.

While I was praying, I felt that each pore of my being fights against God and does not need Him at all. I screamed to God for mercy. That struggle lasted for a long time and then, one day, God has heard my voice.

"Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind." (Psalm 107:17-21)

I promised, with the tears of thanksgiving:

"Oh Lord, because You have revealed Your face to me, I will celebrate You forever! ... You are Who was hidden behind the notions of goodness and justice. You are Who was spoken about in that beautiful melody. You are Who I have decided for to live, and die if necessary."

"So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name. My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips, when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me." (Psalm 63:2-8)

"The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord." (Isaiah 38:20)

(The experience shared at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the arrest on April 22nd 1994.)

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