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10 poems

LIBERTY OF THE TYRANS
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MOBILIZATION FOR LIFE

LIBERTY OF THE TYRANS

I.

To tear a man or a woman
out of the circle of their dearest ones:
take their coordinates, from which
they battle with a spiral wind of a tramontane
and with a sudden
invasion of stupidity.

Flay their skin off till the bones,
take possession
of their vital juice, of their legacy,
let their relics be ascribed to you.

But even beforehand, when they're still alive,
screw them in the mud,
stimulate general catalepsy
as to the bravery of the uttered be evaporated
as to the sense of the heard be covered.

Burn them on the academic stake
at the hollow grin of the mechanical puppets,
which interrogate students
and foist them their own
sick phantasms.

Put on a white dress
after the *autodafé*
and with a mastered smile
announce a new,
better and nicer start.

With a body you can do everything.
With mind and spirit
you can do everything.

If you have them.

II.

Extract the spirit of a man or a woman
out of their body:
prohibit their books,
present their thoughts as dangerous
cerebral missiles, stick on them
a paranoiac stigma.

Spit on their opus, cut it in pieces, work,
which they had drawn out with great effort,
so that only a few perplexed footsteps
in the snow remain after them.

Trample even these!

Erase their achievements
so as to not a single prop persist,
that none, not even an absent
proof of their existence is left.

Not a single prop for a restless thought
of somebody, who
would like to live and
create in this place.

Liberty of tyrants comes before our liberty.
There, where those of us who love freedom
expect laughter and cry of life,
even death silently withdraws herself from it.

TO REMAIN A SOURCE OF THE HUMAN

To remain a source of light, even when they try to denigrate you,
and to have the power of a solvent, which dissolves their
heavy words from the chains of freedom
into the sweetened water of forced propriety.

To remain a source of light, even when they try to devour you,
and to have the power of an x-ray, with the help of which you
look directly into the swim bladders of piranhas
and know how they will move with the water currents.

To remain a source of light even when they try to nullify you,
those dark shadows in the hushed beam of night, when
all the cows in the left part of the stable
are just as dark as those in the right.

And perhaps the ones in the middle are also black, the ones which
secretly chase the beams inside our
newly deprecated works,
so that they can selfishly ascend towards the light.

To remain a barely perceptible chink in a stuffy room,
a very tiny flow of energy, a touch of the human.

DANGEROUS

I really was dangerous,
in the way that a shower
can be dangerous to someone who is dirty.

Too quickly and too steeply
my reputation grew among students,
among several cultivated people from Koper and especially
people not from Koper,
undermining the image of the crazy woman,
which had just about been successfully deployed
by the combined forces of exportable Slovenian literature.

Tomaž Šalamun had to arrive, or somebody under his name, and
occupy the chessboard with his black pawns. Abracadabra.

You had the opportunity, Koper,
to create something new, something people friendly.
You squandered it. It still shows that
the human contents planted here after the war
is not worthy of this beautiful Venetian city.

I am neither a Koper poet nor a Slovenian one, I am merely a poet,
I describe human cataclysms, children's hands,
and heartrendering seagull cries.
I have no fear that I could not do this anywhere in the world.

IN THE INDIAN FILE

Words in the head are different
from words in the mouth and
words in the mouth are different
from words in the ear.

Words in the head
operate silently,
they are untouchable and untouched,
they snuff and wither without the form.
Their kingdom is not
exactly of the head in which
they had appeared.

Words in the mouth
are on their way to the sound and to the form;
they are like a glottal cavalry in the attack
that in the head echoes from the stamp.
But in the last moment
they rearrange themselves and
come out in the Indian file.

Words in the ears are
a pleasant prickle – more a vibration than a sound,
more a rhythm than a sense
(or may it be that the rhythm and the sense separate themselves
for a moment to form a new reunion).
Their only task is to
fertilize the words in the head
and push them into the mouth.

That's how a thought rises.
That's how a dialog rises.
That's how a poem arises.

COLD EYES OF DESERTED STREETS

Cold eyes
of deserted streets

Cold eyes
of calcined erudition

Cold eyes
of sticky homeliness

Cold eyes
of dosed freedom

Steely
cold eyes
of double-barrelled gun
which
points to the
human being

Warm palm
of mother's hand
put on
child's
forehead

EVERY DEAD ONE HAS ITS NAME

Every dead one has its name,
only the names of the living cause faltering.
Some names are impossible to utter
without a stammer and a rub,
some can only be pronounced
through allusion,
and some, mostly women's,
are forbidden in these sites.

Every dead one has its name,
engraved in the stone,
printed in obituary or directory,
only my name has to be thwarted,
every few years
soiled and substituted
with another one.

A decade ago
a highly ranked party member
warned me:
Stay a poet, as long as there's still time for that.

There's still time?
Time for what?

I've become also a social scientist,
an editor, an organizer
a translator, an activist
and a university teacher.
Unbearable – all these things –
sole trespasses of the old parcel frontiers
which had been
delineated by the dirty
fingers of fraternities.
I ventilate all rooms,
I ignore all ratings,
I let loose all valvelets.

And they have placed me –
as the dead ones – out in the cold.
But every dead one has its name.

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MOTHER, YOU'VE MOVED INTO MY DREAMS

Your lively image,
my beloved mother.
your clear face,
dear Zorka,
your vivacious gestures
have moved into my dreams.

Only there I can still touch you
and there you say to me:
*»Leave these creatures alone,
they're not worth of you. Throw off
the stones behind your neck. Go to the
place where both of you can be happy.«*

I have names for all, Zorka, my dear,
and you had lines for all. I would like
that the lines of your name
could once more revive in my letters,
that your tender hands, which
caressed me, could
touch me once more.

Dreams are journeys to you.
I grope after the ticket in my pocket incessantly.
At the station I perpetually try to buy
two return tickets,
but I can't.

Between life and death
there's a continent of dreams, where
we, the survivors, set off on our night journeys
only to touch once more
our beloved.

THE PORT OF KOPER

I saw dismissed women, textile workers,
worn out, squeezed as lemons,
I saw port-workers standing in front of the factory,
their hands hung down as dry branches
by the contrite trunks of their bodies.
On their faces boycott and despair,
anger and justified irritation.

Today there will be no supper,
tomorrow no breakfast,
lunch will be made of the
supper's and breakfast's leftover.

A five-year old girl,
daughter of a port worker,
said *my birthday is on the
fifth of Main*, and
smile to me.

Desperate thoughts
run through my head,
resound in my ears like
a rumble of cannons on the front-line.

How to regulate
a brutal and unpredictable tide
of life in the capitalism grown wild?

A moon, an inorganic
celestial body,
is a more righteous judge
than the employers.
Its low tide
is predictable.

Impossible lasts,
says Vasko Popa,
*but also an armed
goodness ceases not.*

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A POEM FOR THOSE WHO DESERVE IT

I.

Truly, this poem is only for those
who deserve it:

a poem for those whose soles have lines
which are legends copied from
old maps, all
the errors and erasures included,
transformed by history, marks
seen today as mountain chains dozing
on the great fault-lines;

a poem for those whom you cannot simply
disassemble without incurring a sinkage
in your own basin, a poem
for all those who have
dismantled themselves and can
only be divided with themselves or equal love;

a poem for those who have reached truce
with their own ruin and don't foist it on others,
who never whisper into the ears of history
and don't fidget in embarrassment,
a poem for those whose breath
was once mud and was lava, it was
stone and it was ash;

a poem for those whose hands let a torrent of ink
flow through them and let the river
give final shape to its banks;

a poem for those whose bodies
have experienced the cold onrush of ants, crusades
of alien poetry, and finally a new life,
a different word and a different body
which is love and is tenacity.

II.

A poem for those who have never trampled grass
to see what soil it grows from, for those who don't lean
on someone else's or a silenced voice,
because afraid for their patch of land -
for the kingdom at the end-point of a toothpick.

Neither for those dangling from the acid pines of pride,
nor for those undernourished or overfed, who spend
half their lives slyly filling their deficit with other people's stanzas and
the other half substracting what they have acquired of this foreign balance;
neither is it for martyrs, weary poets,
nor those who
apparently, one day, they will, but have never managed to so far,
O, misery, this poem is not for
cork stoppers that block a bottle's throat
and crumble there, ruining best vintage wine.

This poem is here and now,
and only for those who deserve it;
for those who, here and
now, understand it,
and not those
who might see it come aglow
in the crackling dark of 30 to 90 years,
if not even more, when I am everywhere dispersed
and nowhere as buoyant and full
of life as now.

Neither is it for those who keep pouncing on eternity,
from which they, at intervals, as dustmen or executioners,
throw other stronger and more fundamental voices
onto the rubbish heap of forgetfulness.

Je m'en fous. Ha!

III.

You must run your head against a brick wall,
not knowing when the wall will rise
or if your head will take it.
Not against the polystyrene, a torch in your hand,
or against a guarded door
left ajar, not with
an ally or in twos, not
through the coefficient of water
or honey, not
barefoot across a dew-covered moss or red-hot coals,
your gaze fixed on the stars, no.
It won't do.

All of this comes later.

You must go with *your own* head through the *time* wall of a word
out of the toughest concrete and *out* at the other end -
because only when there's something left over,
only if there's really something left over -
this poem is for you.

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MOBILIZATION FOR LIFE (II. part of a longer poem "MOBILIZATIONS")

An eccentric, deserter and atheist,
seeking refuge in agronomy,
Goethe and the discipline of children. Whose life
tosses him to and fro on a mine field
like an unsaddled chess knight. Who depicts
the letter L: *Lehrling*, but makes no use
of the basic gears and never brakes.
Who reads *Pigs Fodder*, his feet in a cold bath - to
improve concentration -
and who hopes to discover a shelter in botanical books,
the ground beneath his feet,
but cannot find a coltsfoot leaf
big enough to cover his own shadow.

Who brought my mother on their first date a bouquet
of two ladles and then removed himself
to a distance of 800 km. Once on the field, he
changed the course of the bishop again,
directing him back towards the regal chess piece;
the one that can move painlessly
in all directions, at times simply with a glance
without a move, towards her
hiding within herself
the moves of all moves, watching over them.

And I: the outcome of a family vote
in February 1970; nobody imposed a veto and the embryo
freely grew into me,
so that today I can calmly look upon my path,
a trail, already longer than life, so I
can see your life
ahead of me, much longer than the path.

And so my father invested his
unfinished herbarium into me,
and my thoughts crammed between
the piles of books like flattened flowers
until, in my first collection,

all this vegetative erudition exploded
and all the blades, precisely ordered,
could once again occupy
their former volume.

And now I am faced with an endless
wasteland of flowers, words, willing and fresh,
contracting and expanding at my order
like the universe. What am I
to do with it, here,
in this twisted place,
cold-blooded.

And now in front of my eyes: an endless
featurless pampa
of *common danglers*, *Vulpia myuros*,
covered with an envious spawn of
amphibia.

Your dipphase, alternating current
and the 1200 pages of frenzied notes,
gushing forth with the magnitude
of a hurricane spout. A siphonic
burden you have laid on
your children's shoulders, the way
a war selfishly lays its bodies
and its bloodied memory into
an impenetrable mythical ring and
buries it for the future generations
amid the pages of an earthly book, a large
unpublished hardback
with no corrections and
no editor.

Was God hidden amid chick-peas,
sunflower seeds and carrots,
in the mouths of dystrophic prisoners
on their way home?

Was God hidden in the deaf eardrums of rifles
the Gestapo prodded you with in Vienna,
when you *lads* were shovelling
sand inside the axes of the railroad composition?

Was God hidden in Jaroslav, an internment camp
from World War I, between the teeth of rats,
that, skipping across prisoners, did not surprisingly bite?

Mother's God or your non-God?
Both announced
in capital letters,
both, in an hour of need, puffed into darkness
without an answer,
both numb and frail
as if crouching in an enclosed barrel
of *Mohojeva bolota*.

It was neither the Russian front nor hunger, nor wine,
nor was it your studies, no -

*nothing matters but the quality
of the affection -
in the end - that has carved the trace in mind
dove sta memoria -*

it was my mother who mobilized
my father for life,
the gentle and unfaltering love
named Zorka.

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