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6 poems

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## 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.

## 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.*

**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 diphasic, 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.