

SILENCE
Author: Emine Sadka
Category: Text

To the democratic partisans from Emida Sladka, as you, such a beautiful and strong minds, like to call me.

/ I dedicate this text and my participation in this competition to all students of VTU “St. St. Kiril and Metodij”, who fight against the politicization of the university with the price of their own private life, time and risk. I wish that the education in Bulgaria will live through, bloom, inspire and unite us to grow together and high./

I have not slept for a few days. The media don't hear us, the pre-election campaigns warn us, we can't mention the names. My university is in danger and everyone is synchronously silent. My speech kills me here, I must get out of it. I will be loudly silent. Tomorrow I am in Shumen. “Hey, You!” of Pink Floyd takes and returns my hope for a few months. I write:

The University of Veliko Tarnovo suffocates under the banner of *(name of a political party, censored/ it is a Macedonian/)* from 1996. The political and institutional influence of some of the lecturers contributes to the disregard of the laws and the values of the university. The problem is on national, cultural and social level. The future of our Alma Mater and of our state is threatened. The local media are afraid to speak about that whilst the national media are prohibited. A group of students is searching for a dialog with the occupiers. The occupiers never appear. Under the mass silence the faces remain hidden and unclear.

Tell me, who are you?! Silence. And you, girl, why you keep silent?

We record this text with the voice of a friend. In order not to mess up the sound recording, we are hiding into the narrow and dark toilet. Is this the right way to do such things, he asks me? I don't know what these things are, but that's how you make them properly.

Then I go to the bookstore and order “a big and black mouth tape”, a black marker and two colored sheets of paper: one blue and one red. I don't have enough money and the salesman tells me: *“I will pay the rest, just do your job”*.

Now, I have arrived in Shumen. I have been participating in the competition for several years. Because of the rain all are pushed into a room, two square meters big – one of which is vacant, we stay outside, on the other are staying we, the participators of the competition. Before I start reading, I asked the PR of the university to print me my texts. He shows me the office and leaves me to do whatever I wish with the printer. I print 17 copies of the texts, which I wrote together with the recording from the toilet:

.....

Tell me, who are you?! Silence. And you, girl, why you keep silent?

.....

I keep silent, because as the word “state” had lost every value, sense and behavior, we the children of the 90s were born. Those children, who don't understand and don't know because there's no one to explain. Those, whose heads had been filled up with the despair of our parents and the paranoias of our grandparents. We wander between new and old, blue and red, sweet and bitter, easy and hard, real and

virtual. We grew up on the Internet. We started living in the era of the positive thinking yet our wounds are wide open silently. We were born spiritually dead under the remains of the destroyed bridges of the generations, ethnicity, religions and history.

Our history is an unclear and savage God, inspired by our grieving literature. In the chest of the slave is beating the bad-implanted nationalism. Lied, we were born in a cultural and political apathy. Our art, universities and schools are propriety of agents from the secret service.

Oh, cry, all of you! Cry for those, who died on the Picasso's paintings. Cry louder, so the dead Lords of the art can hear you.

The words and the truth had lost their meaning long ago. I don't trust them anymore. I don't believe the people either. I inhale the despair of some generations and exhale hopelessness. I cannot write anymore. I cannot breathe anymore. Your silence to the authority makes you a part of it. I am a part of you! I WILL keep silent, silent, silent and will sleep in to our nightmares.

.....

Before start reading in alphabetical order, in the corridor I draw walls on the red and the blue paper. I will build them! I will tear them! We all are the walls! We are the walls! I will cut them to pieces with tape on mouth and with Hey, You! I am happy, that I have censured my cynical idea to tear real political posters. I don't want to see those people.

They call out my name. I stand up. I turn on the recording from the toilet. I put on tape on my mouth. My lips seem to resist the latex that tightens them. My throat tightens. The record ends:

Tell me, who are you?! Silence. And you, girl, why you keep silent?

I distribute 17 printed copies and turn on Floyd and start tearing the paper walls to pieces. The pain of silence moves into my eyes and I start crying. Is this weakness a stupid act of courage, I don't know. But I cried like a little helpless puppy. I'm looking for my wolf pack. They say to me:

- Calm down! Everything is fine! To be calm is needed!
- I know- I'm telling you- We need you, you! The desire for "Unity gives the power" and the hope ... give it to us or return it to us.

One day after the competition the election for a new rector went better than expected. I hope, that only the faith and perseverance of every student who took part in the protests, wrote to the media and so on. Only hope believes and creates itself. Thank you all! I love you and will always come out with you in search of dialogue, not for blood!

A LETTER TO GEORGI MARKOV
Author: Stefan Kichev
Category: Text

On the birthday of dissidents or the dates of their murders, something is happening that would probably be the biggest nightmare for the same dissidents, seemingly receiving their respected honors and recognition. I mean all the solemn ceremonies in front of the monuments with wreaths, on which the rulers and those who want to become rulers make powerful speeches and speak of these people as saints. Martyrs, praiseworthy fallen in the struggle with evil; and the same evil with which these worthy gentlemen who have or want to have power are currently fighting. A fight, in which the deadliest weapons are the most prominent speeches. For this phenomenon our Georgi Markov tells in his letter to Hristo Botev:

“Oh, how much I want to see your face on that day, how above, somewhere above the clouds, you are looking at this human flood to your resting place, how well-organized organizations, soldiers, officers, militiamen, pupils, pioneers, comrades, party members, orchestras, rocket units, ordinary and central committees, generals, poets, ministers, writers and other figures - with cars, trucks, helicopters and on foot go to pay tribute to the legend ... “

Today, most of the "tribute" is seen in Facebook in the form of status or on television, where everyone without leaving the comfort of their home can show respect for the fallen "in the fight for freedom". And being a witness of everything described, I can't only think of Georgi Markov and not turn straight to him.

Dear Georgi Markov,

I had enough to listening to poets, ministers, writers, and other people to speak and write about you as a saint, as an apostle of freedom, a pure and innocent lamb. I listened enough to justify your connections with the regime of Todor Zhivkov, the villa where you lived, even the grey BMW that you drove around Sofia. You are not a saint, you are not an apostle of freedom, and you are not, for God's sake, a pure and innocent lamb. If a person truly understands and reads your Absentia Reports about a period (for you) in Bulgaria, will understand, that you considered yourself as a greedy coward who had everything in abundance - money, glory, homes for "creativity and recreation", editorial posts, endless bills in cafes and restaurants, holidays and travels abroad - and, while enjoying comfort, you ignored the real brave people like Konstantin Pavlov, who suffered in ways difficult to comprehend. That you actively participated in the duplication of literature with pseudo-literature, duplication of personality with pseudo-personality, and duplication of life with pseudo-life, as a cancerous cell duplicates human tissue.

I cannot endure how people who benefit to attack the Communism regime, but the well of their ideas is dry, dig frantically and hungrily for your remains and wave them in statuses and speeches about your significance. They appear on TV and tell us about you, as if they are bringing the good news to us, the rescue message, telling about your murder, we understand that, as they appear on the screens of hundreds of thousands of TVs with your name below, are fighting the same villain, who killed you. And we the viewers keep the show.

You would have laughed at us as you had laughed at yourself. Because you are going beyond the boundaries of the straightforward righteous stance of the post-transition anti-Communist in Bulgaria. A stance that can only be shared by robots performing mechanical equations in their heads, in which your equations - the legend for you - are the quest, the valuable and the crucial task unknown. I write, because

you are not a robot and there is no armory, no matter what metal it can hold, it cannot contain or resist the irresistible pressure of your humanity.

Some time ago I was angry that you are not among all the writers that we study at school. While I was in high school, I had an argument with a teacher about you, freshly inspired by your words. But now I think maybe I don't even want to imagine in what a gothic monster our educational system will turn you to or to imagine what bunch of clichés will be written for you in copywriting sites and how students will recycle these bunches, to be able to pass homework or perform successfully exams.

You openly and unconditionally write about the expensive western car you had driven, the salaries of the few offices you had shamelessly received, and the abomination of the Writers' Union, in which you were comfortably affiliated. You write about yourself, just as Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote when he tells about his lackey as a Soviet officer who carried his luggage, cooked and cleaned.

I understand what you wanted to do when you made your confession about time in absentia from Bulgaria in front of the program "Contact" microphone. I understand that you didn't want to make Botev's mistake - you didn't want to give them the legend for you, your name to ring through the radio stations and steadfastly leap from the insatiable mouths of politicians and Komsomolts. You didn't want to crucify yourself in the name of righteousness - you wanted to show that you were unworthy for the pains of Golgotha. To remember, that, on this hill in Jerusalem, a despised and world-betrayed person was killed, not a satisfied and fattened citizen of a small state. Perhaps you have hoped – that if you don't point with a finger, if you don't instruct and moralize, instead you put yourself in the burning pains of the scorching iron of conscience, no hero will be born, no martyr will be born, but when the rest of us hear your desperate shouts instinctively, and we will look at ourselves. Will we think if we are so better than you? Is it really the same way we didn't bend a knee when we had an enormous personal benefit? Did we not even betray our principles? Are we, too, not worthy for the pain of Golgotha?

If you ever appear in Sofia as a vision, in such way as Bulgakov appears in Moscow and you can look well around, you will inevitably realize that you have not succeeded. That the incompetent people at the moment have "used" your name in exact the same way you have complained about using Hristo Botev's name. I don't know what you will say, how will you react, but you will realize at the moment and it is that the enemy defeats you. He killed you with a miniature poisonous bullet and then we turned you into an artificial image of a martyr. An image that can be born only by bronze statues, but not by the breathing human beings which once you have been a part of.

“From now on, with your name on lips, worshiping the legend, all these authorities, and especially the present one, would destroy every Bulgarian who dared to resemble you even slightly.”

AN INTERVIEW WITH AN EYEWITNESS

Author: Mariya Boeva

Category: Text

My mother is not a dinosaur, but claims that she has contributed to the fall of 3 Bulgarian governments. She participated in a protest with her grandmother in 1989, when Todor Zhivkov fell out of power. In 1997 as a student she was against Jean Videnov and more recently she fought against Oresharski, Peevsky and Stanishev.

I want my mother to tell me about the teacher's strike in 2007. I wonder if they managed to change something and what were they have fighting for. I understand they wanted normal working conditions, a better future for their profession and better pay. And did they get them? It is alleged that the syndicates betrayed them and they had to end the strike.

The energy of the teachers was powerful, as well as their desire for change in education. Unfortunately, according to my mother and her colleagues 10 years had been lost since the strike. Nowadays, no one wants to be a teacher because no measures have been taken on time. They mocked them directly, so they lost all faith that something could change for good.

The most popular event of the teacher's strike was when Finance Minister Oresharski talked with Minister of Education Daniel Valchev, not knowing that the microphone in front of him was working. So, Oresharski said the following "*Let's spoil the sitting!*", then the two ministers openly discussed their intention to delay the negotiations. The scandal was broadcasted on all TV networks and became popular amongst the Internet users. Despite the "unprecedented political blunder", neither of the two ministers had resigned. My mother resents this to this day...

... "*Mother, did you think you would really change something with your participation in the teacher's strike?*" She said, she didn't expect to have any fundamental changes, but she felt an impulse, inertia that she was with like-minded people who would inspire change not only in the education but also within the state.

"*Did you think you were courageous or did you just follow the others?*", she replied, "*The situation was treacherous. We were both together and separately. A month and a half with the little money we had received, with the constant pressure from the Regional Inspectorates, with the corrupted syndicates, with hanging bills and all other households. I remember myself, on my own but I also saw myself with the others. The fight in this case was related to our moral position that we can show that we are here and that we are not on some sitting.*"

"*Did you see any change years later?*" The eyewitness of three revolts responded, "*After the teacher's strike, I didn't see any change, today the working conditions are somewhat different, but not the quality: the textbooks are becoming more boring, shiny and heavy, the teachers have less time to practice, and only rush through the material, I lack the freedom to choose what to teach. I can continue ... everywhere is aging and retrograde. Extremely good people resigned after the strike, may be that was the goal!*"

"*What do you think people should fight for today?*"

"*For Justice and Democracy.*"

THE FIRST SPARK
Author: Yordan Vrabchev
Category: Text

There is a memory that still refuses to leave me. I could clearly see the crystal blue sky, which the clouds filled up with an infinite variety of images and shapes. I could feel the soft grass beneath it, as well as the gentle touch of the sun's rays and the gentle breeze of the spring wind. I watched the nature around me - the hundreds of flowers that sparkled from the reflected light, the movement of the tree-dancing leaves. I also remember the runners in their colorful sports clothes, the cheerful friends walking their dogs, the elderly people sitting on the benches, who vividly were telling their life stories. I could hear the song of a woman sitting nearby who was playing guitar and telling a wonderful love. With a smile, I looked at the concentrated artist who was creating a portrait of a young family.

My eyes watched the people, plants and animals with great interest. My heart was pounding with excitement which was a result of this beautiful scenery. As if I had fallen into a trance; and I didn't move because I didn't want to put an end to my state. I was really lucky to see how ordinary everyday life turned into a colorful palette of thousands of different colors.

Recently I have noticed that my thoughts have been coming back to this memory. It refused to leave my consciousness until I experienced it once more, as if my body and mind needed for a moment to separate from reality and immerse into another distant, ideal world. I regretted, however, that I couldn't enjoy it like before.

...

It was early in the morning - the time I had to wake up for work. I could hear the quiet voices of the seven other men and women with whom I shared the small room that had become my home. Through the tiny window there was a faint light that allowed me to distinguish the silhouettes of my roommates.

I removed the blanket and got out of bed. The little free time I had was determined to be spent on the top of one of the four bunk beds. One of the women smiled at me and made a sign to hurry up because I had only fifteen minutes left before I had to go to work.

I quickly entered the bathroom, brushed my teeth and washed my face, then went to the small wardrobe at the end of the room and put on my uniform. As soon as I finished, I heard the noise of the door opening which was big enough to walk through it in pairs. One of my closest colleagues stood up beside me - as much as the work could make two men close, colleagues. We didn't greet, because the guards were watching us.

We went down stairs. I was secretly looking at the stone-faced faces of everyone who was walking near us. The stairs were wide so that residents could fit in several rooms and walk at the same time. No one dared to shake his head or show any emotion, nor to delay the group or distract himself. At the beginning and at the end of each group of sixteen men were walking two guards, all dressed in black, only their eyes were visible. They were holding machine guns in their hands and they watched closely the people who were told to guard.

When we exited the giant residential building, immediately, we had to look down, as per the rules. Neither one of us had the right to go with a raised head or to be in a standing position to breathe self-confidence. We had to be peaceful and indigent for our own good.

I was imagining the streets and the walking citizens facing down, but I could not look at them.

I was imagining how the sun was shining over the whole city, and finally giving it some color and life, but all I could see was the grey sidewalks. I was thinking about the twittering of the sparrows, the laughter of the people, the voices but all I could hear were the steps.

We quickly reached the factories where each one of us was working. The soldiers gave the command "Stand up!" And we obeyed them. I could see the grey-painted walls and marking of the old light green paint because of the large lamps which were lighting up the room. All the windows were covered with cardboard so we couldn't look through the window and waste time. Everyone was took over their task and we started work.

The working day always went monotonous. My hands had adapted automatically to do whatever was necessary, so I could free my mind at least from this task. Before the start of the new regime, I was one of those people for whom art was a much-needed vent in the everyday life. My current existence consisted only of uniform streets, uniform buildings, uniform people, uniform activities.

Very often, while I was working, I thought about the events that led to our present state. It was a gloomy spring day in which my colleague and I were preparing the store for the upcoming opening in a few days. I was arranging books on the shelves and was putting the price tags when Lidia asked me to look through the shop window.

From nowhere right in front of the shop, there were hundreds of people going somewhere. The memory of the recently assembled scene in the nearby square immediately appeared in my head, so I guessed the square was their destination. Lidia and I stared at the crowd for a few minutes, then she offered me to go and see what was happening.

There were ten people on the scene, smiling at the growing audience. The sky got even darker as if it was going to rain. I asked a lady next to me what the event was, and she told me that there were new candidates for coming into power and that was their first presentation.

When so many people had gathered around, it would be that the ten on stage would offer something revolutionary. The noise from the crowd suddenly stopped and I understood that it was the beginning. They saluted politely and were applauded. When so many people had gathered around, it would be that the ten on stage would offer something revolutionary. [...] They spoke on the typical topics - the unfulfilled promises of the previous rulers, the decline of society, the impurities in power, and so on. Then they offered their views on the state's overall structure. They emphasized that their main goals were higher incomes and economic development. They gave with full confidence the promise that our country would become a huge economic power which would be above all others. It seemed to me that that notion was too unrealistic, but the crowd took everything that was said with affirmation and applauded again. They spoke about the construction of many factories, new jobs, increased exports (and profits, respectively), which was also welcomed with applause.

After everything was over, we left the square and went back to the bookstore. I was surprised how enchanted everyone seemed to be as if they were hypnotized by the idea of that utopian world that the ten promised us.

In the coming weeks, these new candidate governments were gaining more and more popularity and support. They were gradually revealing details of their grand plan, promising full security to the people, caring for children, and quality education contrary to the goals they had set themselves. They talked very skillfully about something that seemed impossible to us. And that's how they managed to win us all.

For days, the press accentuated the victory - it had become the event of the year. Many prominent people have publicly expressed their support for the new rulers, as well as speeches about the hope for better which they have fulfilled. They didn't realize then that they were supporting the enemy.

As soon as power was received, it was time for change. It all began with an increased transformation of certain buildings into industrial plants and dormitories, which we then thought of as a good attitude towards all those who had failed to secure a roof over their heads and work and to give them a peace of mind.

The people gladly rejoiced at every visit of the rulers in the different corners of the state and eagerly accepted every word and praised them as gods, descended from heaven.

At some time newspapers and websites began to release articles that spoke against the government. Emphasis was placed on the vague source of funding for the new buildings, as well as sponsorship conspiracies and anonymous support for certain businesses at the expense of others. Although the people didn't believe, we also learned from the same sources about a secret law of punishment against all "non-protectionist state goals and views", to prevent any revolts. This was how the end of freedom started.

Rumors were heard that the Authority had used money intended for cultural development to carry out its "state goals and views". A mandatory training has been introduced in the areas of production, as well as love and respect for the party. The news media also spoke of the purchase of a military force to keep people "good and civilized." New rules were introduced, accompanied by severe penalties to ensure the observance.

I remember clearly one of the greatest atrocities of the new government-then imposed upon us as "the example needed to be given". A woman had been attacked for unknown reasons by one of the street patrol guards, for which she was publicly shot. No one dared to stand up, seeing that they would end up in a similar way.

The state soon banned all social media, newspapers, magazines, the Internet. Only TV viewing was allowed, with only one program (of the party) broadcasting "socially significant" and "positive influence" films and shows. The news was selected by the ruling people, so the people, uninformed, dominated and therefore manipulated, were in perfect condition to fulfill "state goals and views".

Gradually, we started to head to the new factories, as the places where we worked were closed. Hardly any of us thought that change was so bad, because they offered us security, house, food and water.

A new law obliged everyone to go professionally to state institutions, so that in the course of time almost the entire population worked there. More new rules have been imposed to maximize production. And so we became slaves without the right for holiday and entertainment, entirely dependent on the state, "condemned" to constant labor.

From my thoughts, one of the guards released me, who pushed me with the barrel of his machine gun to give me lunch. I was reminded of the ten minutes I had. I finished in 7 and went back to my job. The

rest of the day passed as usual. We were told that we had finished for the day and encouraged to gather in our familiar groups and return to the community buildings.

It was dark outside. The moon was lighting the whole city with its bluish light, and the wind was blowing, making the hairs on my neck to rise. Street lighting was switched on at even distances and helped the guards take us to the community buildings. We all waked tired on the grey sidewalk.

Behind me I heard a cry. I tried to ignore it and to continue with everyone else. I felt sorry for the fool who revolted against the law - his destiny was already drawn. But the subsequent noise of another cry, and finally a shot, made me raise my head and look.

One of the last in our group had taken the gun to one of the guards and shot him. Then he ran away making noise on the usually quiet streets. The guards aimed quickly with their guns at the rebel.

They hardly expected this to happen or what followed after. Just before the first rebel was shot, a neighboring group of two people attacked their guards and knocked them down. They grabbed their heads and struck them fiercely, with inhuman force near the sidewalk. There was a terrible breaking of a skull and blood flowed down the street. Two more rebels with machine guns.

There was an even stronger mobilization. More and more people fled their groups, attacked the guards together, and then with the new weapons they had acquired, started to kill others. Some of us stood in one place, and we were watching humbly but us raising our heads was a sort of success. There was a timid interest on the faces of those who were watching. With wide trembling smiles combining all the pain, as well as the happiness that had come from touching freedom, the rebels were killing guards and taking their weapons. They gathered in the middle of the road behind each other and before we realized we had received a revenge horde sowing the deaths of the "culprits". But were they guilty, the ones that were obliged to kill us and taking instructions from the one who was forcing us to work?

A cheerful jubilation, the same as the statement of the candidate - rulers before, welcomed the rebellion. It turned out that the supremacy of the guards - a weapon - was insignificant against the many angry people at times. The horde continued down, killed uncontrollably, and handed out weapons to volunteers. They barely had a clear idea of where they were heading to, but they apparently received support from many of us.

Out of buildings came out guards, who closed the road ahead of the Horde and with their eyes blank and calm hands, took their weapons and started firing. More guards were appearing from jeeps and as they were getting off they started closing off the road behind the rebels. The horde was surrounded.

The rebels fled to the growing group of guards in front of them and fired with yelling savagely. The bodies were falling on the ground and were coloring it in red. Falling weapons were taken by others who had joined the common goal. Mass murder took place in the eyes of the "tamed" citizens, who were already tempted by happiness. The eyes of many of them were gradually filled up with the fiery fires of the thirst for revenge, and even without weapons they gathered in the Horde's group, and with them they fled towards shooting guards. The God of Death had decided to make a show.

The Horde gathered again in a circle, and in a moment of perplexity the guards stopped. *"Brothers, remember – WE HAVE LIBERATED YOU,"* cried one of the rebels, and his words echoed in the city. The automatic machines turned to the peace workers. We were all shocked

The mass shooting continued. The Horde took down a dozen of us in seconds while being shot by the guards. Desperate cries became part of the overall chaos. Some of us fell consciously as if we had been killed. I was trying to not to breath so I don't attract attention. I fought against my body, which kept shaking from the tension. I could feel tears running down my cheeks and my heart was about to jump out of my chest. The cold took over my body and was feeling the metallic smell of blood in horror. I lost consciousness.

The last thing I remember is my deed. I was declared in a second to be a supporter of the rebellion, and was sentenced to a public shootout. The work in the factories was interrupted, and thousands of workers were gathered in the square where the first meeting with the then ruling candidates was held.

Would my parents see the death of their child, or Lydia - the death of her colleague? With sadness I realized that I would cause intimate pain to my relatives. But I was wondering what impact my death would have on the others. As a rule, they don't have to show emotions, so I could hardly get an answer.

Before I realized, one of the guards had tied my mouth. After a few moments I was already on the stage. Fear caught me, I began to tremble and fight in an attempt to get out of the strong grip, but unsuccessfully. They gave me a moment to look at the crowd before getting shot. With the words of one of the rulers: "*See what you have done!*", The guards were ordered to hack the barrel of the machine guns into my head. Without warning, I felt a great pain, my body paralyzed, and I fell into nothingness. If the storyteller could see that the carnage was the spark needed to start a fire.

A SUNDAY
Author: Kaloyan Zahariev
Category: Text

It was January 30, 1972, and the place - Derry, Northern Ireland, when I realized some things about the FN FAL. First, it is a long and a rough weapon. It weighs 9.4 lbs and is 43 inches long. Second, there are thirty-seven 7.62 x 51 NATO Navy cartridges in the magazine, which exit the barrel at 2756 feet per second. Third, they can hit the soft human tissue from 656-yard distance.

I took down the machine gun from my shoulder and his long barrel nearly touched the ground. My ears were screaming. My palms were sweaty, although my breath was drawing clouds on the cold day. The uniform was stuck to the back. The hot smell of gunpowder was burning my eyes. I wiped the tears with my hand and started blinking.

- Men, forward!

I barely recognized the voice, Sergeant Winston Stevenson. My legs started moving, accustomed to execute orders.

"My boy," - said Sergeant Stevenson, when they accepted me at First Battalion more than five years ago. *"You're an excellent soldier."*

Yes, I was indeed. That's why I pushed out the barricade of barbed wire and walked out among the scattered dead and wounded people. Even did not think what I was doing. The other Battalion soldiers who left with me didn't think either. The cartridge-cases creaked under my boots. A boy was lying in front of me, lying on his stomach. He had turned his head to one side and blood was running from his wide open mouth. His hair had become scarlet. It didn't seem to be over 17 years old, but it didn't matter anymore. I crossed him.

I continued walking past the wall of a building. Behind me, there were five more soldiers with guns. Their eyes were toward the buildings on the other side of the street in search of an armed IRA nationalist. Their helmets were ripped off by the throttled stones of the crowd. Some middle-aged man was sitting on the ground and holding a hand to his chest. There was a dark spot on his jacket. He was in shock, not seeing the soldiers walking towards him. The soldier who was walking toward him crashed into his head and he fell to the ground.

Someone rises from the ground, swaying, and climbs down the street.

- Stop! - a shout came from scattered soldiers.

Several gunshots echoed. The man staggered, waving his arms as trying to fly and collapsed on the bloody asphalt. He didn't move anymore. There was an armored car coming along the street, and half a dozen First Battalion soldiers ran behind it, chained in heavy helmets and armor. They were holding machineguns and were turning their heads in all directions in search of threats that could be lurking in every corner. The machine slowed down so that the soldiers didn't lose their fragile cover in the wide and empty street. A man wearing a long black coat tried to crawl far away from the armored car. His two legs were dragging behind him, bloodied and useless. The machine doesn't deviate and the front right tire passes through the fallen Protestant. My ears were screaming because of the shots, but I heard the crunching sound when his chest broke. The rubber left grey mark on the grey asphalt. One of the soldiers who was hiding behind the car stepped into the bloody mess, slipped and fell on the ground. His companion took him to his shoulders and tried to pull him to the wall of the nearby block.

- Medic! - he shouted, thinking that his comrade was hit by an Irish sniper.

A machine gun began to rattle beside me and a couple of cartridges creased on my helmet. The soldier - I didn't recognize him because of his helmet, he removed his weapon.

- I think I hit one!

I looked where he was pointing at. Something black had fallen in front of the entrance to the block of flats on the other side of the street. Two legs were lying on the stairs and nothing else was visible.

- Watch out what are you shooting at! - Sergeant Stevenson called out and took off his hat to wipe the sweat from his polished brow. - Watch out for women and children, for God's sake!

At that moment, a man jumped out from the narrow street, which was within twenty meters away from us, swung something and threw it at us.

- Grenade! – shouted someone next to me.

I picked up the machine gun before I realized what he was saying to me, and I pushed the trigger. The weapon shuddered, and the stall struck me on the shoulder. The striker staggered and grabbed his shoulder.

- Cease fire! Cease fire! - Sergeant Stevenson shouted.

He kicked the stone thrown by lonely David against the six armed soldiers.

- That was some kid, sergeant - said the soldier beside me, picking up the scratched cover of his helmet.

I saw a tired and pale face. I knew him, Joseph Nye, from my division. I didn't even know he was next to me. There was a dark bruise mark on his chin from a thrown stone.

- Fucking Irishmen! – said another soldier, who was hiding his face behind the cover of the helmet.

Stevenson looked back. Several more armored cars were floating down the street. In the shadows of some of them were hiding soldiers. In the distance you could hear gunshots. Three fighters dragged a man and were kicking him while he was waving arms and legs to protect himself from the kicks. Somewhere behind them, between the buildings there were ambulance sirens and police cars.

- Take Nay - Stephenson said, nodding to me, pointing to the path where the wounded in the shoulder had disappeared – see what the situation is on that street. If you see something you don't like - just call. Clear?
- We don't like many things today, sergeant - Nay said.
- Her Majesty doesn't care much, boy! - the sergeant snapped. – Do it!

Nay and I ran along the wall of the building. To the left of us, two armored cars were drifting in the middle of the street. We explored the alley with ready-to-shoot machine guns. Nothing. Nearby, among the junk, there was a poster crushed by someone's feet, entitled "Rights for all". Blood was spattered on it.

- You hold it well, mate! – Nay laughed.

One armored car stopped a few yards from us. The engine was growling like a beast waiting for its prey and ready to attack it.

Nay entered the street, and I followed him with lifted machine gun. The rigid stock of the FAL rubbed my bruised shoulder at every step. The alley was situated between the two buildings, which looked like residential buildings. Like a thin blue line the afternoon sky was drawing over my head. My breath was drawing a cloud around my face. I could feel the sweat running down my back.

There was a door in the wall of the building to the left of us. Nay and I pressed our shoulders on the wall on both sides. The handle of the lock was bloody.

- Are we going inside? - Nay asked me.

I wiped sweat from my forehead. The tongue touched my palate. I had the feeling that someone had filled up my throat with sand.

- I'm going in – I said. - Watch my back. If you hear shooting - call the boys. Clear?

Nay looked at the beginning of the street. There was still the armored car as a tiger stalking its prey. The sound of sirens had become deafening. The ambulances came to pick up the dead and the wounded, and the police officers - to arrest the alive.

- Clear.

I pushed the door, and at that moment Nay squeezed my elbow.

- Hey, don't let some fucking Irish kill you?
- You wish! - I forced myself to grin.

I opened the door with my gun. Empty corridor. Stairs leading upwards. Crimson splashes across the stairs. There was only coolness and silence in the building. In fact, the whole town was quiet. The only noise was on the street.

I changed the FALs magazine and pulled the shutter. There was a bullet inside. Well, the gun was ready to kill again. I crossed the doorstep and entered the quiet building. I walked up the stairs breathless. The sound of the sirens doused, but it swallowed every noise in the building. In the corridors, ten people could be wailing and I still I would not hear them. And the screaming in my ears was not fading.

I hesitated. Nay was out. I could go back and call some guys from the battalion to search in the building.

"My boy,- my uncle whispered somewhere far away, stroking the dense black hair of the little boy I was then. - Fear is a good thing, but only at the right place and at the right time. And to know what the right place and time ... that's the difference between the coward and the brave one."

Uncle Steven had run out of Normandy's furrowed from shells beaches, while the German MG42 turned half of his company into a bloody mess. Then he went through France to almost reach Berlin. He only got away with a cracked rib after trying to milk a cow because he wanted to drink coffee with milk.

"The Germans then came to the Ardennes, but coffee with milk is not something to ignore - uncle said laughing. Over the years, the pain in the rib was beginning to wobble. - The damned beast has done the Wehrmacht's work."

I walked up stairs. The bloody droplets made a rough line. I walked across the corridor on the second floor. Plywood doors on both sides, embossed plaster on the walls. A child had drawn drawing of men on the floor with pastels. The stick-looking bodies seemed to lie down on the ground, stained with the blood of the fugitive. Everything around was deserted. There was a funeral silence. The sirens outside seemed to come from another world. I gently pushed the door of the first apartment. Locked. I pushed the next one. On the other side, the furniture that was barricading the door squeaked. The frightened people, who heard the shooting and the shouts, had turned their homes into fortress and wouldn't allow anyone, even their wounded countryman to come in.

I followed the trail. I pressed the machine so hard that my palms pulsed with pain. The breath came out of my chest. The sweat dripped on my face and burned my eyes, but I did not raise my arm from the gun.

"You can survive everything but death," Sergeant McMurphy said, while swearing at us and took us through the ditches, filled with slime and mud.

The corridor bent slightly, ending in front of a shrouded door. The blood splattered under it. I pressed my back against the wall beside it, where occasional shots through the wood wouldn't hit me. I pushed it and the reamer on the other side creaked. I put the stock on it and the wood burst. The door slammed with rusty hinges.

- Raise your hands! - I shouted with a pointed weapon.

Inside me, among the brooms, rags and buckets, there were two frightened eyes. A small and weak creature had shrunk to the floor, holding a hand to his chest.

- Throw the weapon! - I screamed with a finger on the trigger. - I told you to throw the weapon!
- I have no weapon, for God's sake, I'm unarmed...

I turned down my machine gun. The curled up on the floor was not a boy but a girl dressed in man's clothes. The brown, torn coat darkened on the right shoulder.

- I ... I have only a stone in my pocket - the girl cried - in the right ... right pocket, but I can't pull it out. Very ... it hurts me very much.

I pressed the gun in her chest, and with my left hand I reached into the pocket of her coat. With my right hand I gripped the handle and pressed the trigger. A stone as much as a tennis ball thumped on the floor. I threw it away. I searched the other pockets. Nothing.

I stepped back and gently removed the barrel.

- Are you alone? Are there others with you?
- No ... no. I'm alone. I came by myself - the girl licked her bruised lips.

A cold sweat dripped on her waxy face. How old was she? Nineteen? Or maybe twenty. Small, weak. Red strands were coming from beneath the big hat. Her green eyes were shining and frightened.

I took the machine on my shoulder. I pulled out the first aid kit from my belt. I pulled out her coat and torn my shirt. The girl screamed and crouched but there was no strength to push me away. A bloody wound opened up right under her armpit. A few inches higher and the bullet would have thrown her arm off.

"You are a terrible shooter" – I was thinking.

I sprayed the wound with iodine, put on gauze and tightened the bandage to stop the bleeding. The girl was choking and tensing, but she did not have the strength to fight. I knocked her back against the floor and pressed a knee in her chest as I tightened the bandage. I stood up with a sigh. At the bottom of the battered bucket there was some water left and I washed my hands. The liquid became crimson.

- Congratulations, you'll live, but if you had hoped for any success in tennis, I'd have to disappoint you.

She only replied with a sore laugh:

- Damned Englishman!
- What do you expect, kid? You stand in front of armed men and throw stones at them. We thought it was a grenade. Your IRA friends are already firing at us and blowing bombs where they want. You're lucky we didn't shoot you on the spot.

The girl crawled toward the wall and leaned back against it. She pushed a bucket and she rolled over the floor. From it she scattered several rags for wiping windows. She looked at me with her big, green eyes, full with pain and anger.

- Why just ... just don't go away and leave us alone ... for peace once and for all?
- The reason to be here is you and your Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, who is leading the crowds in the streets. Did you see all those people who were throwing stones at us?

She licked her blue lips:

- And you ... before you started shooting, did you see ... did you see the posters? The slogans? Did you hear what people call? No one ... no one wants violence. We only want ... just peace and ... and calmness.
- Interesting way to want peace. With stones.
- Stones against guns and tanks. We fight with whatever ... whatever we have and we can.

I opened my mouth, but I hesitated. The girl's hands hung loose on the floor. Her legs were stretched out. The only thing moving was her lifting breasts and her eyes. She had almost lost consciousness. Why did I argue with her at all? What did I expect to achieve?

- I'll see you, little girl.

Her green eyes staggered on my face:

- Then I will watch out ... to be ... more accurate with the stone.

I could take her to an ambulance. But when she would awake he would surely be arrested. Among the police officers commissioned from England to help their Irish colleges to control the chaos, there were those who wouldn't be impressed by the fact that she was a woman. There were rumors of secret prisons, for whose credibility I didn't wanted to learn. It was better to leave her here. There was no longer any danger for her life.

I turned my back to her and walked out of the closet. Something hit me on my back and fell on the floor. Next to my boot lay a ragged ball of rag. I turned around. The girl was just relaxing her strong hand.

- Rights... for... all... - she whispered and her head fell on her shoulder.

I sighed. Some people simply didn't know how to give up. I stopped in front of one of the locked doors and dropped my fist on her:

- There's a wounded girl in the closet. It's yours. Take care of her.

There was only a tense silence, but I didn't expect any respond. The thoughts of the people behind the door were the lives and health of their loved ones. Nothing else matters.

I left the building. Nay was waiting for me outside.

- The little rat has found a hole - I said.
- These damned Irish - he sighed, and followed me along the alley, back to the armored machine.

For some reason, I felt relief in his voice.

There was chaos in the square - police, doctors and soldiers everywhere. Some are pushing stretchers with wounded, others - arrested protesters. A priest was giving the final sacrament of a mortally wounded, and beside him was standing an armed soldier. The wind had bent a trampled poster with the inscription "Civil Rights Association of Northern Ireland". There was the smell of gunpowder, pain and blood in the air.

I looked at the building where I had left the wounded girl and ...

- Honey?

My wife gave me a bottle of water.

- Maybe you are affected by sunstroke. What are you looking at?

There was a real river of people around us. Thousands and thousands of men and women, young and old, were walking down the street. Their voices were echoing. Hundreds of colorful posters were raised in the air - "No to Brexit," "Together to Europe," "Unification, no separation", and tens and dozens of slogans. Some were made by the organized committees, but most of them were the work of the people themselves, and they were nothing but a piece of paper on a wooden stick. But that didn't matter.

- Maybe you are affected by sunstroke. What are you staring at?

Policemen were walking calmly down the crowd. Some of them were talking to their acquaintances at the rally. Two beautiful American tourists who had joined the procession with curiosity took pictures with a young uniformed, who was blushing from embarrassment. There were several horse patrols. A had lifted his little girl to touch the thick mane of one of the horses. A white-haired old woman was walking around, cuddling her puppy.

- I was looking at that building there, - I said, and my elbow cracked. The years were telling their word.
- I remembered some things.

My wife laughed. She slid her fingers through her white hair, which carried the distant memory of fiery strands. She tugged at the top with her bare shoulders. He stroked the ugly scar on the white skin over her arm.

She hit my shoulder with her fist. I groaned.

- Then I told you, that on our next meeting I will hit you with a stone.
- On our wedding you threw a piece of cake on me, so that counts.
- I missed, did I?
- We both laughed. After this, our best man has been sore for a long time because we have destroyed his finest, and the only suit. She stared her big green eyes, whose brilliance the years had never been able to extinguish.
- That time the things were different, were they?

I looked around. The river of people embraced us, pushing us inexorably forward. We were embraced by thousands of voices. Laugh rumbled.

I hugged her and pressed her closer to me. I kissed her white hair.

Past does not matter, only the future.

The past doesn't matter, only the future matters.

Author: Denis Olegov
Category: Text

WHEN THE MAN LOSES HIS VOICE

When the man loses his voice
dreams and aspirations obediently fall asleep
on the threshold, where suffering to tears,
we break unfaithful, without time erased,
because we extinguished the sparks in the fire,
mentally ignorant of early sentences.
Betrayed ideas, bended backs ingloriously
in bow, naively inherent.
Then wane the dawn colorless,
leaked from wounds, appropriately disguised.
Distant windows close ... and here is:
The traces leave unintentional mirages.
We float inert for years. Hardly
the spark lit lives until late.
The eyes quench and become crystals,
when the man loses his voice.

ON THE BLUE SQUARES

Cold squares
from the quiet footsteps
an angry revenge.
Sepoy Mutiny
tears the destinies
in white and black,
reddish-blue
colorless masses.
Blood rivers,
rising the throne,
dissolve in the soil -
tomb of the struggle.
Orphans pray
for spring rain -
démarche of fear!

MANIFEST OF THE FAILURE

We are born in sorrow,
scratched from the list
of those who have succeeded,
the great personalities.
Growing with the mistakes,
decided by the others,
we don't want the rare,
we spurn the strangers.
And blind we believed
the bright future,
suddenly escaped,
has plundered the houses
of the free brains
who decided the change,
rotted out of illnesses
of the falseness of the estrade.
The fool on his throne
laughs at our dramas.
Under the gray clouds
we bow before him.
Kings and ladies
moved us in the game.
Surreptitiously for our bread
we remain serfs.
And the old ones in the taverns
drinking complain,
that we serve the dumb.
The masses are obedient.
Submissively learned,
silently holding out,
with the tormented ancestors,
with the false truths.
Praise our lives
soul program -
of elevated hill
to love the failure.

Author: Alexander Arnaudov
Category: Text

sofia

the road to hell is under repair
everyone is already there
on the monument id written with silence
faith hope love.

the city

between street lamps
we wash the light from
the view
and we are go back
in the envelope of time
until the next beginning
of the world.

passion

no drug
can
kill you
as fast as me
when I go in
to your veins
and stay there
to exhale
such as cigarette smoke
your soul.

**the days flow out like blood
from
the eyes of a roe**

they forget the life and
continue down
in the sky
under the feet of these
who are going towards the end
and morning stretches out hands

the sleep becomes a fog
the city becomes a wound
time becomes a knife
and the heart a scar
which doesn't go away.

family

in the picture on the wall
the roots weigh
and sink
home is far away
from my house.