

Ľubomír Feldek – THE UNAMENDED SAINT

or

YOU HAVE THE POWER, BUT WE HAVE THE TRUTH¹

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Introduction

The play *Unamended Saint or you have the power, but we have the truth* was written by me between 2016 and 2017 following a request from the Slovak National Theatre.

The initial idea was stipulated more than 20 years ago by my friend, František Mikloško, who was already a good councillor to me when I was still hesitant whether I, as an Evangelical writer, should pursue a Catholic topic. “Don’t worry, you will manage,” he encouraged me, “your wife is a Catholic.” The premiere coincidentally happened to be in June 2017, so it turned into a present to his 70th birthday.

The fact that I was thinking so long about writing the *Unamended Saint* was not only related to the Catholic nature of the topic.

The process was also postponed by my personal circumstances in the 1990s, which were, however, only marginal when compared with the heroic story of Silvester Krčméry.

The process of studying the relevant materials took its time too. It would have been impossible to write it without Silvester Krčméry’s memoirs, recorded in the books *This saved us* (1995, Bratislava: Lúč a Signum) and *With Truth against Power* (2014, Žilina: Artis omnis).

While doing the research and working on the play about the “Unamended Saint” Silvester Krčméry, I also came across a name of a surgeon Gejza Kauzál, and suddenly I realized that the story is more related to my own than I had originally thought. In the Žilina trial with Kauzál and others – also called a “medical trial” – together with medics Kauzál, Fraštický, Comorek and Kontúr, one lawyer was tried too – it was my father. On what grounds were they sentenced? Those unlucky guys were playing cards, chatting about Central European Federation and throwing anti-state jokes. When the prosecutor quoted them in his speech during the three-day-long trial, the relatives present in the courtroom (myself among them) did not know whether to laugh or cry. At present, there are only few words about the trial available online. I found them when I googled “from history of Žilina hospital”. “In light of the large-scale societal changes, surgeon Kauzál, representing modern bourgeoisie, became uncomfortable to the contemporary political actors. His last surgery (of a lipoma) on 2nd November 1959, assisted by doctor Váňa, was not completed, because he was called to his office where officers from the State Security apparatus were waiting to arrest him. He was subsequently sentenced in a politically motivated trial.”

Those times were an ideal source for anti-state jokes – when secret police officers arresting a doctor did not mind endangering a patient.

The imprisoned medics were then employed in prison clinics. Both doctors met at one of them, and so Silvester Krčméry got a chance to grow fond of Kauzál’s humour. In the

¹ Translated by Jakub Csabay

scene when they depart, I allowed Kauzál to surprise Krčméry with a notebook of prayers. This way, I wanted to show what a significant impact Krčméry had had on his fellow prisoners – highlighting that he was not only a healer of body, but also a healer of soul.

The great number of opportunities he had had for his cause can be observed through chronological and geographical summary of his imprisonment, which serves as a backbone of the play and which the audience can find in the brochure too:

Chronological and Geographical Summary of Krčméry's imprisonment

From the date of his arrest to the date of judicial verdict

26th July 1951 – arrested in Kuřivody
27th July 1951 – 12th November 1951 – Detention in Brno
12th November 1951 – 24th June 1952 – Detention in Prague Ruzyň
24th June 1952 – December 1952 – Detention in Bratislava
December 1952 – 12th March 1953 – Detention in Košice
12th March 1953 – November 1953 – Detention in Prague Ruzyň
November 1953 – April 1953 – Detention in Bratislava
April 1954 – 24th June 1954 – Judicial Custody in Bratislava
24th June 1954 – Trial at Higher Military Court in Trenčín
12th August 1954 – Appeal Trial at the Collegium of the Supreme Military Court in Prague

From the date of sentence to the date of release

August 1954 – November 1955 – Prisoner's Camp n. 9 Mírov
November 1955 – April 1958 – Prisoner's Camp Banská Bystrica
April 1958 – November 1958 – Prisoner's Camp Příbram Bitýz
November 1958 – November 1959 – Prisoner's Camp Prokop (Slavkov nad Ohří)
November 1959 – January 1962 – Central Camp Vykmakov
January 1962 – 21st October 1964 – Prisoner's Camp Prokop (Slavkov nad Ohří)
21st October 1964 – Released (probationary period of two years)

The date of the play's premiere was also very "Krčméry-symbolic". It took place in the evening of 23rd June 2017, on the eve of his favourite saints-day – the birthday of John the Baptist. At the same time, it was the evening preceding 63rd anniversary of his trial at the Higher Military Court in Trenčín. That was where on 24th June 1954 Silvester Krčméry presented his famous speech, with which in the present-day Slovakia every student graduating from high school should be at least vaguely familiar, irrespective of the student's religion. One can beautifully see from the speech how Krčméry's struggle for religious freedom was also a struggle for freedom in general. For him, Jesus Christ's name was a synonym of the good and the truth, and the following message must have shocked even the judiciary back in those days: "By serving the God and the people, we served the society, and so according to present-day terminology, we served the "working class" too. Yet, we do not distinguish between people! Neither according to class, nor wealth or coat, race and origin, but to us every human being represents another Jesus Christ." While there is no doubt that Krčméry's message was enrooted in his religious belief, it could be easily added to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* without any necessary adjustments.

Naturally, Krčméry's speech became one of the play's moments of climax, through which I tried to show that small nations had also been standing in the frontline against totalitarianism, and that they had not only had martyrs but also heroes, who were comparable to heroes from large nations.

After reading the play, my friend Jiří Stránský, a Czech writer and former political prisoner, wrote to me the following: "Heřman Tyl (prior and later abbot in Teplá monastery) referred to very few people as 'quite a man', but he did so in relation to Krčméry at least three times – that was something extraordinary. We should not forget about such individuals!"

However, it is not only the theme of the play that must be good but also the play itself must be of good quality – people familiar with theatre know well that a fine theme would not redeem a poor play. Fortunately, Krčméry's human greatness constituted a predisposition for creation of a great theatrical character. For example, his numerous refusals of amnesties and how this “unamended saint” strived to remain in prison. (In these instances, audience often attempts to resist laughter, though there is no need. Krčméry himself was no ‘cry-baby’ – he also liked to laugh.)

I tried not to miss even this theatrical opportunity, and it appears I was quite successful. After the first two seasons of the play's presence on National Theatre's posters, there is no sign of decline in people's interest. Moreover, while buses bring people to watch it from all over Slovakia, the play is starting to travel too. It is not only performed in the National Theatre's Blue Salon but also in its Studio Hall as well as on its tours. I hope that after the play's success in the National Theatre, other professional and amateur theatres will express their interest. (Amongst other reasons, because the technical conditions for the play are very simple – they were already so in the National Theatre and they can be even more so in other venues.)

When the play had still been in the preparatory phase, I used to go to every rehearsal and made further adjustments to the script. In terms of the written form of the play, I considered it reasonable to go back to the original text. This equally applies to the name of one of the characters. The play was introduced as a part of the National Theatre's programme shortly before Eszterházy's play *Mercedes Benz*, in which the Devil also appeared. Back then, I had acknowledged that it would have been better to give up the Devil. Therefore, I renamed him to the Actor and allowed him to reveal his true Devil identity only in one scene – in the dream one, in the prison of Banská Bystrica. In the written form, I use Devil again.

The team that prepared the premiere on 23rd June 2017 is listed in the brochure in the following order: Dramaturge: Peter Kováč. Director and Music: Kamil Žiška. Stage and Costumes: Peter Janků. Starring: Matej Marušin and Richard Autner. Voices: František Kovár, Dušan Jamrich, Jana Ol'ňová, Ján Gallovič, Štefan Bučko and the author. The list of contributors is, however, much longer and the final version involved contributions from the whole theatre.

Finally, I would like to give credit to few councillors of mine. In the scenes situated in Brno, local dialect was used, which would have been impossible without help from Peter Minařík. Not even the “oval effusion”, which allows for the reversal at the end of the play, was an idea of my own but of my friend, doctor Peter Belan. My personal gratitude to certain individuals is not missing in the brochure either: “The author is thankful to František Mikloško, František Neupauer, MUDr Peter Belan, Peter Minařík and the Slovak National Theatre dramaturge Peter Kováč for their valuable advice.”

Lubomír Feldek

Characters

Silvester Krčméry

The Devil

Voices

The stage and equipment

The dominant feature of the stage is the background made of white canvas (resembling a zoomed X-ray screen), behind which shadow-play is performed. It could be also used as an information board showing location and chronology, though it is preferred that they are read out loud. At the end of the play, a quote from a documentary, *MUDr. Silvester Krčméry*, shall be displayed there. (The documentary is available online). Only the most necessary equipment shall be used during the play, such as chairs, boots, socks or newspapers, which are to create the sense of environment, more specifically clinic, car, torture chamber, prison cell, courtroom etc.

The light and sound

Even though the State Security apparatus in 1950s used violent methods and crippled many of its victims, they were also proud to be able to torture without any physical contact. “We haven’t even touched you,” the interrogators proudly said in moments when they tortured only with the use of light and sound. As light and sound are also theatrical means, it is a suitable opportunity to give the audience some sense of methods the State Security had used.

Prologue

(IN KRČMÉRY’S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE)

(When the lights turn on, only the white canvas is seen in the back of the stage – resembling zoomed X-ray screen – and the voice from behind of the stage announces the following: IN KRČMÉRY’S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE. Shadow-play is taking place behind the canvas.)

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. Next patient, please.

DEVIL’S VOICE. Good afternoon.

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. Good afternoon. Stand next to the X-ray...a bit closer...push your chest towards it...Inhale with a deep breath...Hold your breath...Still...A bit longer... That’s enough...You can breathe normally now...and put your clothes back on. Good bye.

DEVIL’S VOICE. Before I leave, doctor, may I ask? How is it looking with me?

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. I am afraid, it’s not my job to tell you. I am just a roentgenologist. You need to ask...

DEVIL’S VOICE. Please, I beg you.

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. What environment do you work in?

DEVIL’S VOICE. In a usual one. Office mostly.

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. And before? Haven’t you worked in a mine or other dusty environment?

DEVIL’S VOICE. You think that...? No, I worked in...civil service.

KRČMÉRY’S VOICE. I seem to recognise your voice. Haven’t we met in Kuřivody? I was doing my military service there in 1951...and I was arrested on 26th July 1951... on the day of St. Anne, the patron of my family...I was on a night shift in a military clinic...

(It turns dark.)

PART I – BEFORE THE VERDICT

(THE ARREST IN KUŘIVODY)

(When the lights turn on again, a voice from behind of the stage announces: 26th JULY 1951 – THE ARREST IN KUŘIVODY)

SOUND. *(Music is played in a distance, a Russian song Kalinka).*

KRČMÉRY. *(Standing in the middle, listening for a moment, closes his hands and starts praying).*

SOUND. *(The Kalinka melody stops).*

DEVIL. *(Screaming from behind of the stage).* Doctor! Where is the doctor? *(Enters the stage running.)* There you are. Come quickly! Quickly! One officer is dying. He is throwing up and is in a terrible pain. We will be outside. *(He runs away.)*

KRČMÉRY. *(At first, he follows him, then stops, comes back, sits down and starts putting on warm socks and boots.)*

DEVIL. *(Returns).* Why are you so slow? Why do you need the warm socks? Why the boots? The night is warm.

KRČMÉRY. *(With bitter irony as if suspecting what's going to come).* Well, it may get cold until morning.

DEVIL. Long way to go until morning. Come quickly! *(Leaves.)*

SOUND. *(Music in a distance, the song Kalinka is played again).*

KRČMÉRY. *(He leaves slowly).*

SOUND. *(Kalinka continues for a while, then music is interrupted by a clatter and Krčméry's voice).*

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Help! Help! He..!

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE SECURITY)

(Glimmering light. The sound of an engine. A voice from behind of the stage announces: IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE SECURITY. The following dialogue is taking place in a car.)

DEVIL *(Snidely).* Do not worry. You are in the hands of the State Security. To make sure we lose no time, not even in a car, I shall tell you something. General Heliodor Píka was executed on 21st July 1949. Milada Horáková – executed on 27th June 1950. Eduard Tesár, executed 20th February 1951, at 04:25 in the morning. Anton Tunega, executed on 20th February 1951, at 04:50 in the morning. Albert Púčik, on 20th February 1951, at 05:19 the very same morning. You should thank one of them.

KRČMÉRY. For what?

DEVIL. We cannot hang all of you. We always hang few as a warning, and then we simply lock up the rest. They may then thank those that were hanged. The hanged saved their lives. You are lucky. We need doctors to stay alive. Even in prisons. Not only for the prisoners but also for us – the officers. But don't rush too quickly.

KRČMÉRY. It means that...

DEVIL. Yes, of course.

KRČMÉRY. How do you know what I was gonna say?

DEVIL. It's the same with everyone we arrest. The same feelings, the same thoughts.

KRČMÉRY *(He starts laughing)*.

DEVIL. Why are you laughing?

KRČMÉRY. You know everything but how come not why I'm laughing?

DEVIL. Of course, we know everything. Sometimes, we just want to double-check.

KRČMÉRY. I am laughing because I've just remembered one Slovak folk tale.

DEVIL. Which one?

KRČMÉRY. The one about Klinko, who was building a church in hell for the devils...

DEVIL. Krčméry, when we tell you the tale, you will stop laughing.

(The engine stops. It turns dark.)

(DETENTION IN BRNO)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 27th JULY to 12th NOVEMBER 1951 DETENTION IN BRNO)

KRČMÉRY *(Standing on a chair)*. Where am I?

DEVIL² *(Still speaking formally to Krčméry, walking around him and looking at his watch)*.

You are in Brno. Five. *(Dark, light)* Hands up. Ten. *(Dark, light)* Fifteen. *(Dark, light)*

Thirty-three.

KRČMÉRY. Till when am I gonna stand here like this?

DEVIL. That's up to you, right? *(Dark, light)* Put the hands up. Forty. *(Dark, light)*

KRČMÉRY *(He falls from the chair)*.

DEVIL. Fifty hours. That's enough for the start. Sit down, statue!

KRČMÉRY *(He sits down)*.

DEVIL. Dominus sit in corde tuo et in labiis tuis ut confitearis omnia peccata tua.

KRČMÉRY. How come you know that?

DEVIL. I used to be an acolyte. May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, so that you tell us everything sincerely. *(At this moment, he alters his tone and starts to address Krčméry informally)* You understand, acolyte? You need to speak. Come on.

KRČMÉRY *(He remains quiet)*.

DEVIL. Don't wanna start? Well, let me start then. But first – back on the chair!

KRČMÉRY *(He stands up on the chair again)*.

DEVIL. Hands on the ceiling!

KRČMÉRY *(He raises his hands and is touching the ceiling)*.

DEVIL. As far as I know, we haven't come across any comparable anti-state element like you before. At one moment, you are in one place, then you move to another. You can't imagine how much gasoline we have spent only because of you.

KRČMÉRY. Yes, I was part of the laic apostolate and I organised gatherings of young Christians in various towns. But is prayer illegal? Hasn't freedom of religion been guaranteed since the Košice Governmental Program from 1945? Or was it just a scrap of paper?

DEVIL. What about Jitka?

KRČMÉRY. What Jitka? No Jitka has anything to do with it.

² The Devil speaks Brno dialect in the scene. In different parts of the original text, the character uses both Czech and Slovak, mostly depending on location.

DEVIL. Come on! How did you know her? You wanna say we made her up?

KRČMÉRY. The name Jitka – it's only a nickname.

DEVIL. Ah, of course! (*Snidely*) A pseudonym.

KRČMÉRY. Leave Jitka alone!

DEVIL. Don't be a wimp, we will make sure no one bothers her.

KRČMÉRY. You gonna...?

DEVIL. We aren't. Jituška is already sitting in a cell. Doesn't make sense that it was just an innocent joke. You were organising a conspiracy and calling each other with secret names.

KRČMÉRY. I hope that by saying...

DEVIL. Of course, you made it worse for her. You fucked it up for her. By saying that rubbish, you snitched her and now she is one of the elements of that anti-state nonsense. We will chat again in the morning. And after tomorrow, we shall look at one new name every day. Jukl. Mádr. Vacková. Jitka is enough for today. You deserve a reward. (*He strikes him and leaves.*)

KRČMÉRY (*He is praying*). Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. (*He is checking up on himself*) I think he broke me a rib. Fortunately, as a doctor I know how to ease the pain. (*He lays down*) I just need to lie down on the rib. (*It turns dark for a moment but suddenly a very strong light appears.*)

LIGHT (*The lights aim in the eyes of both Krčméry and the audience*).

SOUND (*The lights are complemented with unpleasant noise, like a circular saw, which is coming both from the back of the stage and different parts of the hall. The devil's voice interferes.*)

DEVIL'S VOICE. The enemies of the working class claim that we don't treat people very well – brutal interrogations and so on. But now you can see with your own eyes what we are capable of without even touching you. The law and human rights are well protected by us. We respect them all.

LIGHT. (*The lights aim again in the eyes of both Krčméry and the audience*).

DEVIL'S VOICE. We are not like your Inquisition.

SOUND (*The unpleasant noise is again coming from the back of the stage and different parts of the hall*).

LIGHT (*The lights turn on again*).

DEVIL (*He appears on the stage again*). We can be elegant. Kystyhant. (*He bows before a lady from the audience*.) You didn't notice? You must have.

SOUND (*The unpleasant noise stops*).

DEVIL. We can do other way. You won't lay down or sit down all night long. You will be standing here like a statue. (*Demonstrating.*) Or walking there and back in the cell. (*Demonstrating.*) You are gonna be so hungry that you will forget how the food tastes and you won't be able to swallow anything. I'm sure you know, as a white-coat, that after few days without food and water, the whole thing is gonna fall apart like a domino. And that's it. Trust me, that's what we are good at. That's why we do it - it works. You are gonna be so tired that you will be tempted to take a nap while standing. (*Demonstrating.*) But once you fall asleep, we will turn the lights back on and we will be...

LIGHT (*The lights aim again in the eyes of both Krčméry and the audience*).

DEVIL. ... making noise...

SOUND (*The unpleasant noise starts again, coming from the back of the stage and different corners of the hall*).

DEVIL. ... and scream. (*Screaming.*) No stopping! Go on! We will make you march again.

(He demonstrates again. Stops. Screams.) No stopping! Go on! *(Walks again. Stops. Screams again.)* No stopping! Go on! *(Walks again. Stops. And screams again.)* No stopping! Go on! *(Walks again. Stops. And screams again.)* No stopping! Go on! *(At last, he pretends to be exhausted and falls on the ground next to Krčméryho, who is lying on the floor.)* This awaits you! *(He screams.)* Now your turn!

LIGHT *(The lights aim again in the eyes of both Krčméry and the audience).*

SOUND *(The unpleasant noise starts again, coming from the back of the stage and different corners of the hall).*

DEVIL. Get up!

KRČMÉRY *(Lying on the floor until now, gets up).*

DEVIL *(He gets up too).* No stopping! Go on!

KRČMÉRY *(Moving, stops after a while).*

DEVIL *(Clapping rhythmically as if directing a ballet).* No stopping! Go on!

KRČMÉRY *(Moving, stops after a while).*

DEVIL. No stopping! Go on!

KRČMÉRY *(Moving, stops after a while).*

DEVIL. No stopping! Go on!

KRČMÉRY *(Moving groggily, then being exhausted he falls on the floor).*

DEVIL. Get up!

KRČMÉRY *(Gets up with difficulties and groggily moving on the same spot).*

DEVIL. No stopping! Go on! All night long! All August! All September! All October! Go on! Go on! Go on!

KRČMÉRY *(Moving groggily, then exhausted falls on the floor again).*

DEVIL. Get up!

KRČMÉRY *(He stays down, wincing of pain).* ...

LIGHT *(The light turns off).*

SOUND *(The unpleasant noise stops).*

DEVIL. Appendix.

KRČMÉRY *(Still on the floor, wincing of pain).* Yes. You've got it right.

DEVIL. Don't expect you've achieved anything. Everybody simulates. Everyone's appendix stops working at some point. But we manage with everyone. *(Screaming.)* Bring a stretcher! Call the ambulance!

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE SAINT ANNE'S HOSPITAL)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: IN THE SAINT ANNE'S HOSPITAL. Krčméry is lying on a floor. The Devil is walking around him and laughing.)

DEVIL. Hahaha! So, you see, my dear actor? We can act too. You pretended to have an injured appendix and we pretended to swallow your bait. When you woke up from narcosis today here in Brno, in the Saint Anne's hospital, you realized that the appendix doesn't hurt anymore. That's because we removed it. It's been taken out. What? Happy?

KRČMÉRY *(He remains quiet).*

DEVIL. You showed your true colours. Quite nicely! Was it necessary? Waste of a healthy organ, isn't it?

KRČMÉRY *(Still quiet).*

DEVIL. Each body has got only one appendix. Or you've got more?

KRČMĚRY (*Quiet*).

DEVIL. At least, it's clear we are no sadists. We have managed the surgery. Even though it wasn't the easiest. You are a white-coat, you understand that better than we do. And remember, you could have been hanged as a warning for others. You were on the top of the list for a bit, yet you are back in the game now. No problem. But for now, you are lucky, though it has all been just a prelude. On 12th November 1951, you are gonna be transported to Prague. I am sure you'll enjoy a lot of fun in Prague Ruzyň. So, put yourself back together quickly, my dear acolyte. (*He moves as if intending to hit him, but he doesn't and starts laughing.*) Per aspera ad astra. (*He leaves.*)

KRČMĚRY (*He kneels with difficulties and starts praying quietly. In the end, he prays out loud.*). Thank you, Father. I have managed to get through everything, ever since I was born. You give me the strength. It's no illusion, no self-delusion. It's a real physical and spiritual strength. A free choice to carry not dead, but a living God inside me. And so, I go on, fall and then rise again for your glory. Father, give me the strength to remain silent in the interrogations that are yet to come...And if the strength was to abandon me...please allow me to...for your glory...to...

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE PRISON TRANSPORT)

(Flickering light. The voice from behind of the stage announces: IN THE PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CALLED STORAGE ROOM.)

PRISON GUARD'S VOICE. Come on! Move into the bus! Each man into his own storage room! Looks small to you? That's because you're fat, "mukl"! Don't worry, you'll lose at Ruzyň! What? Too late! You should have back in your cell, Krčméry! You will piss in Prague. And what's the rest of you thinking about? Into the bus! You will have plenty of time for such thoughts in the uranium mines! Move! Go on!

SOUND (*Sound of a starting engine*).

PRISONER'S VOICES. This wreck, it's a proper submarine. – Don't insult submarines. At least they aren't taking us to gas chambers. – You never know. Perhaps they are. – No need! We will suffocate here before we reach Prague. Can you smell the exhaust? – It's a convoy of dread. You can't move in this storage room. – Not in mine either. What's flowing in here? It will flood the whole thing. You next door, you pissed yourself! – Leave him. It will freeze. – That's right! It's fucking cold in here like in Siberia. Before we reach Prague, we will turn into icicles.

DEVIL'S VOICE. Shut up in there!

(It turns dark.)

(DETENTION IN PRAGUE RUZYŇ)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 12th NOVEMBER 1951 TO 24th JUNE 1952 – DETENTION IN PRAGUE RUZYŇ.)

KRČMÉRY (*marching around the stage and praying*). ... and I beg you, dear Lord, allow me to have a humble heart, let me not sin with pride, for even here I am marching everyday, although no one commanded me to. Dear Lord, I am doing so out of solidarity with those who marched before me and with those who will do so after – but also to realize how much longer I shall endure and what’s it gonna be like once I won’t manage any further and once I will lose my conscience completely. I’ve already struggled with hallucinations. For the first time in my life I realized that mental disorder can be provoked artificially. I had clear yet false perceptions. I heard bells ringing when they couldn’t have. I saw bugs flying around the cell even though there was no way for them to enter. And those continuous interrogations – day and night, day and night. For fifty hours I was standing at attention while they were taking breaks and swapping. They forced me to do squats, remain in half-squat or stand obliquely against the wall just on the tips of my toes. I often felt that I can no further. They tried everything, even the “freezer“ – the dark cell with no windows or furniture, where temperature falls below zero degrees. Together with hunger – as here in Ruzyň, where I am from November 1951 and now is the end of June, I am only on bread and water – so together with hunger, the freezing cold is much worse, and it causes a man to start shivering to a point that even his bones tremble. But even the shivering was created by You, dear Lord, as shivering is body’s protection mechanism. It means that all muscles contract, although ineffectively, so that one’s body warms up at least a little bit. Every time when I entered the “freezer” I had difficulties to recognize any detail of it in the dark. It’s certain though that the cell made of concrete contains no wooden bench. One must lie on the floor and in the evening, the prisoner must take off his rag and sleep only in his shirt and underpants. To make sure there is no attempt to commit suicide or anything similar, lights are quietly turned on every few seconds. The time I spent in the “freezer” also provided me with an opportunity to meditate – about sin, darkness, blindness and cold. Every morning I woke up I felt tired and stiff – as I had turned into a proper stone or a piece of ice. The first thing I did was to check my eyes and fingers – whether I still had them. I couldn’t even feel my nose and chin. Yet, dear Lord, I am grateful for such an experience – I was always surprised that despite those extreme conditions of being hungry for several months, with hands and feet completely blue, and my body constantly shivering, I never caught cold. Neither cold, nor fever, although I used to have such problems before. I came out of there much stronger and I refused to sign interrogation protocols, even though it made the investigators completely mad. They didn’t want to rewrite everything all the time – to be honest they aren’t the best typewriters I have seen. One of them – sometimes it seems that he is here in Prague only because of me and that it’s the same guy who arrested me – though it doesn’t have to be – they often look like one another – and so this guy sometimes rolls up his sleeves and starts screaming: “Fucking hell, so you’re innocent, right? You haven’t done anything, asshole? You wanna say that if we hang you, we are gonna hang an innocent?” While talking, he always punches my head and hits it against the wall until I’m covered with blood. Yet for now I have always endured, and I signed the protocol only when he calmed down and rewrote it so that on the whole – despite some obscure formulations – it corresponded with my true statements. And so, this way I went through almost everything one can go through, if attended by them. I also realized that prisoner’s inactivity is one of their weapons, so I started to make a program of activities for each day I am here. I tried to walk on my hands. (*He makes few steps on his hands and then continues to march. It is not a big deal if the actor does not manage. He makes an unsuccessful attempt and the next sentence can begin with the following words:*

*“And as I didn’t manage, I started to compose songs.”) And I started to compose songs too. Both lyrics and music. And when I made one, I was singing it all the time so that I wouldn’t forget it. They threaten me with a death sentence? So be it! Also thanks to singing, I strengthened my determination and willingness to sacrifice even my life in the name of Jesus Christ and I was able to imagine how a man, who is whipping Jesus today, may turn into one of his apostles tomorrow. Conscious of such miracle I forgave those who tortured me, and I called one of my songs *Saul, Saul*. (He is singing while marching. The notes can be found in Krčméry’s book *This saved us. But reciting would work too.*)*

Saul, Saul why do you chase me?
From your malicious gang one shall flee?
Saul, Saul why do you chase me?
You shall come to Damascus,
And amend your former status.
Powerless like a child
Come and be reconciled.
Powerless like a child
Come and be reconciled...

DEVIL (*Enters*). Krčméry! Who told you to march?

KRČMÉRY (*Stops singing but continues to march*). Noone.

DEVIL. And who allowed you to?

KRČMÉRY. Noone.

DEVIL. If noone either told you to, or allowed you to, then stop!

KRČMÉRY (*Continues to march*).

DEVIL. Stop at once, I command you!... No marching!... No marching!... No marching!

KRČMÉRY (*Continues to march*).

DEVIL (*He leaves but returns as someone else and starts to speak informally to Krčméry*). You won’t stop? You will keep making troubles? I will teach you how to listen. I will make you repent. (*He is hitting Krčméry and to do so, he must march with him. This must be long enough for the audience to realize that the Devil marches together with Krčméry.*)

KRČMÉRY (*Exhausted of marching, he appears to lose balance after a strike from the Devil, exhales and then falls.*). Ach!

(*When he falls, he is lying on the ground without motion.*)

DEVIL (*Standing quietly above him, and waiting for a sign from Krčméry that he is still alive. When he doesn’t move or speak, the Devil screams nervously.*). Fuck! Hope I haven’t taken you to hell?

KRČMÉRY (*He moves at last and starts smiling*). No, don’t worry. I can take punches even better than I can march.

DEVIL. What are you proud of? Why?

KRČMÉRY. Jesus Christ was also struck. This thought gives me the strength and determination to endure more suffering, and to amend and be a better man.

DEVIL. I will ask for promotion if you amend.

KRČMÉRY. He who amends in the eyes of God might not seem to do so in yours.

DEVIL. So, you didn’t amend. No problem. For me it’s enough that you have learnt to listen.

KRČMÉRY. More important is what you’ve learnt.

DEVIL. What have I learnt?

KRČMÉRY. To march. When you were hitting me, you had to march with me. I am grateful to God for all your strikes. Not me, it's you who amends.

DEVIL. What? I amend? What a joke! Not him, but me! *(He leaves laughing, but returns as someone else in a moment and starts to speak formally to Krčméry.)* You are crazy, Krčméry. Nine months in Ruzyň, some would even give birth in the same period. But you? Nothing. Fortunately, the Prague interrogation must be followed by one in Bratislava. Pack your stuff. You will be transported tomorrow.

(It turns dark.)

(DETENTION IN BRATISLAVA)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 24th June 1952 TO DECEMBER 1952 – DETENTION IN BRATISLAVA)

DEVIL *(Checking Krčméry's suitcase)*. When did you arrive from Prague?

KRČMÉRY. Today. On the day of Saint John, the Baptist.

DEVIL. You see, you are no John, and what an honour has been given to you! For how long have you been behind the bars?

KRČMÉRY. In a month's time, on the day of Saint Anne, it shall be a year. Be it God's will and my detention won't last much longer.

DEVIL. You mean here in the Judicial Palace? At least until winter. They've got stuff on you in other places too. You will be transported to Košice afterwards. For at least half a year. Winterise before that. There is no heating in the prison there. Is this all your stuff returned to you in Prague?

KRČMÉRY. Yes, all of it.

DEVIL *(Checking the prayer beads)*. What's this?

KRČMÉRY. Prayer beads made of bread.

DEVIL. And what's written there on that wheel?

KRČMÉRY. „God's will – the highest law.“

DEVIL. And not the will of the proletariat? You seem to be asking for hanging. What's written on the other side of the wheel?

KRČMÉRY. „Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.“³

DEVIL. I must confiscate this. It will serve as an evidence to prove your anti-state thoughts.

KRČMÉRY. Those thoughts aren't mine.

DEVIL. Not yours? You are a funny man. Whose then?

KRČMÉRY. They are of Paul the Apostle.

DEVIL. „... but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes...“ Hm. *(The Devil suddenly swaps from formal to informal speech.)* You and your apostle, do you know that I'm Paul too? Why did they then confiscate it in Prague? *(Speaks quietly.)* You know what? Keep it. But don't let anyone else read it. *(Whispering.)* The part about hope – that would be sedition even here in Bratislava.

³ Translation of all the biblical texts and quotes used in the play was derived from the following website:
<https://www.catholic.org/bible/>

(It turns dark.)

(DETENTION IN KOŠICE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM DECEMBER 1952 TO 12th MARCH 1953 – DETENTION IN KOŠICE.)

KRČMÉRY (*Praying*). Dear Lord, you know everything and see everything, and so you know that it was easy neither in Bratislava, nor here in Košice – I have been really freezing here all winter, and they were beating me up during each and every interrogation and threatening me with a death sentence. But they never scared me because you and only you give sense and meaning to everything, and so thanks to sacrifices Your faithful have made, there is always a dawn after a dark night. Screaming of a poor woman once spread throughout these walls, who was only guilty of fortune-telling with cards and getting small rewards for it.

FEMALE VOICE. Mr. Zavial, Mr. Zavial, quickly! Quickly!

KRČMÉRY. I could hear heavy steps in the corridor, and then guard's voice interrupted the night's silence.

DEVIL'S VOICE. What's the matter, you old witch? Why are you screaming?

FEMALE VOICE. Mr. Zavial, Mr. Zavial, any news of Comrade Stalin in Moscow and our President Gottwald in Prague? Any news of their poor health? Or of an amnesty?

DEVIL'S VOICE. You are crazy or what? I will slap you and you will forget about this amnesty nonsense. Shut up and go to sleep.

KRČMÉRY. Then one morning, on 5th of March, a sad melody was spreading from the public speakers and reached even the Košice prison and it was rising up to Your sky.

SOUND (*Georgian folk song Suliko is played*).

KRČMÉRY. I recognised in the melody a Georgian song called Suliko. Supposedly, it was Soviet dictator Stalin's favourite song, which every kindergarten child had to learn. But why is it played in the public radio? And why again and again? Could the old witch really see the future? Or even...then on 12th March I was suddenly told to pack up and transported from Košice back to Prague Ruzyň...

(It turns dark.)

(ONCE MORE IN PRAGUE RUZYŇ)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 12th MARCH 1953 TO NOVEMBER 1953 – ONCE MORE DETENTION IN PRAGUE RUZYŇ.)

KRČMÉRY. ...then two days later, on 14th March, it all repeated!

SOUND (*Largo by Dvořák is played*).

KRČMÉRY. A sad melody was spreading, this time from the public speakers in Prague, and it reached even the Prague prison and it was rising again up to Your sky. It was Dvořák's *Largo* this time. This way, from Your highest will, dear Lord, Comrades Stalin and Gottwald passed away one after another.

(It turns dark.)

(THE LAST INTERROGATION IN PRAGUE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: THE LAST INTERROGATION IN PRAGUE RUZYŇ.)

KRČMÉRY *(Conducting an invisible orchestra, and although we cannot hear anything, from the rythm of his moves we can figure out that it is a slow music.)*

DEVIL *(Enters)*.

KRČMÉRY *(Conducting a bit longer. He doesn't stop even when noticing the Devil entered.)*.

DEVIL *(Wonderingly)*. What are you doing?

KRČMÉRY. I'm conducting Dvořák's *Largo*.

DEVIL. You are obliged to be seated during interrogation.

KRČMÉR *(Sitting down)*.

DEVIL *(He lights a cigarete and offers one to Krčméry)*. Don't wanna smoke?

KRČMÉRY. I don't smoke.

DEVIL. Good for you. Smoking kills. So once again. When did you get to know Jukl?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. And what about the priest Ota Mádr? Where did you meet Mádr?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. And what about Růžena Vacková?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. Alright. Let's take a break. It's fucking low air pressure. *(He takes out a flusk, takes a sip and offers to Krčméry, but he refuses with a gesture)*. You think it will rain?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. How much longer you wanna keep joking like this?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. K.H. Frank was here too, after the war. He was sitting on the same chair as you're now and he couldn't remember anything. He also kept repeating „Ich will nicht aussagen“ „I refuse to testify“. And did it help him?

KRČMÉRY. I refuse to testify.

DEVIL. You keep making troubles ever since you were arrested – and now it's already November 1953. I even made sure you are better fed now.

KRČMÉRY. Not before March...

DEVIL. That's right. From March. After the death of Comrades Stalin and Gottwald. It had been impossible before that. But you keep singing the same song on and on. So be it. You are Slovak, and you got into this as a soldier – next you're gonna be tried by the Higher Military Court in Trenčín. Such trial requires several months of preparations. We are obliged to transport you to Slovakia much earlier, and we will gladly do so. We will finally get rid of you. A propos! In Trenčín, they are gonna have no problem with your favourite „I refuse to testify“. Your councillor ex offo shall speak on your behalf at the court. And you will be recommended to keep your mouth shut by the State Security in Bratislava.

KRČMÉRY. The accused has the right to...

DEVIL. It would do you harm. Not even I recommend you to. And you will be guilty of treason. Or high treason, as you call it.

KRČMÉRY. I haven't committed any high treason.

DEVIL. I will prove that you have. We live in times when tomorrow means yesterday and the word treason has now a completely new meaning.

KRČMÉRY. You mean that nowadays the word "treason" suggests that a country is

betraying its own citizens?
DEVIL. Krčméry! You didn't wanna say anything, so better shut up!

(It turns dark.)

(ONCE MORE IN BRATISLAVA)

(When the lights turn on, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM NOVEMBER 1953 TO APRIL 1954 - ONE LAST DETENTION IN BRATISLAVA.)

DEVIL. As your councillor ex offo I advise you, Krčméry – speech is silver, silence is gold.

Doesn't matter whether you committed high treason or not.

KRČMÉRY. What matters then?

DEVIL *(Whispering)*. What matters is – to get a lower sentence.

(It turns dark.)

(ON THE EVE OF THE TRIAL)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM APRIL 1954 TO 23rd JUNE 1954 – JUDICIAL CUSTODY IN BRATISLAVA.)

KRČMÉRY *(He is alone on the stage, speaking out loud)*. But I want no lower sentence.

I want the truth. I will use my right and will speak before the court in Trenčín.

(It turns dark.)

(BEFORE THE COURT IN TRENČÍN)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: 24th JUNE 1954 – BEFORE THE HIGHER MILITARY COURT IN TRENČÍN.)

DEVIL *(Dressed in a judicial robe, seated, listening to Krčméry)*.

KRČMÉRY *(Standing)*. I have nothing to say in my defence. Everything that I declare is only in defence of the truth and justice. When I refused to testify, it was only because I saw that the investigation bodies are not interested to find the truth but to twist it. I am convinced that I have a clear conscience before both the God and the people in everything I am accused of. If I shall be punished for what I was doing - for the good, the truth and for Jesus Christ - in such a case it is not a lower sentence that I am not asking for, but it is a higher one that I ask for. And I would be most pleased to even die for Jesus Christ, even though I know well that I am not worthy of such a blessing. And that's why I am not asking for extenuating circumstances. By serving the God and the people, we served the society, and so according to the present-day terminology, we served the "working class" too. Yet, we do not distinguish between people! Neither according to class, nor wealth or coat, race and origin, but to us every human being represents another Jesus Christ. With joy and pride, we go to prisons, and if needed, even to gallows. We can serve the God in prisons too, perhaps even in

a better, more gentle and transparent way than we could do elsewhere. We won't let ourselves be seduced to hatred, revolt or murmur. That's where our power and dominance reside. That's why anyone can persecute us without any risk of repercussion. You have the power, but we have the truth. We don't envy you for the power and we don't wish to have it. To us, the truth is enough. Because it's much greater and more powerful than power. Those who have the power often think that the truth can be masked, suppressed, killed, or even crucified. But the truth has always resurrected, and it always will. Sometimes even on the third day.

DEVIL. This is unbelievable. He is doing anti-state propaganda here. Right here at the court.

The accused, sit down!

KRČMÉRY (*He sits down*).

DEVIL. The tribunal needs to discuss the matter . (*He stands up and leaves.*)

(It turns dark. Then lights turn on again.)

DEVIL (*Returns*). The accused, stand up and listen to the verdict.

KRČMÉRY (*Stands up*).

DEVIL. Soldier of the military service MUDr. Silvester Krčméry, born 5th August 1924 in Trnava, member of the military unit Mimoň, a doctor by profession, a son of a civil servant, most recently resided in Bratislava, Pilárikova st., n. 1, at present Detention Centre Trenčín, committed the act of high treason according to Section 78 Paragraph 2 and 1 of the Criminal Code. From 1945 until his arrest in July 1951, he established anti-state circles „Family“ in Bratislava, Prague, Košice, and other places of the republic – as a part of the Vatican Catholic conspiracy, which was meant to organise activities leading to undermining of the people's democratic establishment, according to political directions from the Vatican – and coordinated their activities according to directions from other leading actors of this conspiracy, about whom he had known as being instructed by the Vatican. He is sentenced to fourteen years of imprisonment according to Section 78 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code. According to Section 47 of the Criminal Code, his property will be confiscated. According to Section 43 of the Criminal Code, he will be temporarily omitted of his civil rights. He is obliged to cover the judicial costs, provided by the state, equal to one half. In Trenčín, 24th June 1954. Presided by: Major of Justice JUDr Antonín Merta, sgd.

(It turns dark.)

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(AFTER THE APPEAL TRIAL IN PRAGUE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: 12th AUGUST 1954 – AFTER THE APPEAL TRIAL AT THE MILITARY COLLEGIUM OF THE SUPREME COURT IN PRAGUE.)

DEVIL (*Closing up Krčméry in his cell*). And so here, behind these bars, you are gonna count days, months and years. There was no point in your defence. Neither in what you said. Nor in your appeal. It made no difference in you being sentenced to fourteen years. And you should be glad that the Military Collegium in Prague simply confirmed the verdict from Trenčín. They could have given you even more. (*Snidely imitating Krčméry.*) „...to us every human being represents another Jesus Christ.“ What a nonsense? Who should understand that? Don't be surprised that you failed at the socialist tribunal. (*He leaves.*)

KRČMÉRY. But I passed the test of my conscience. *(He starts crying.)* Mom.

(It turns dark.)

THE END OF PART ONE

PART II – AFTER THE VERDICT

(IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE. Shadow-play continues behind the canvas.)

DEVIL'S VOICE. Please, don't hide it from me, doctor.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Why do you think I'm hiding something?

DEVIL'S VOICE. When they did an X-ray in the hospital in Cukrová street, I was diagnosed a malignant tumour.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. It's very common that hospitals want to double-check such diagnosis. And all those requests come here to us in Podunajské Biskupice.

DEVIL'S VOICE. I don't need to double-check what's wrong with me – just need to look into the mirror.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Mirrors may lie too. Often one needs to cure the fear from a disease and the disease will disappear.

DEVIL'S VOICE. I would believe it if you, doctors, could do miracles.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Doctors don't do miracles, only the God does. I witnessed several of them when I was in prison camps. Already in the first one, in Mírov, the feeling...

(IN THE LABOUR CAMP MÍROV)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 16th AUGUST 1954 TO 25th NOVEMBER 1955 – LABOUR CAMP N.1 MÍROV.)

KRČMÉRY. Since I started to serve my sentence here in Mírov, I feel very much relieved.

DEVIL. Don't be surprised – after all those years of detention and interrogations. Every “mukl“ has got the same feeling, almost as if released.

KRČMÉRY. Also, because there is work here...

DEVIL. You are right. Those who are lucky might find the work here more stimulating than what they were once doing. There is a lot of manufacturing and various crafts going on here. Locksmithing, joinery, and bag-making.

KRČMÉRY. Are the political prisoners allowed to work too?

DEVIL. Sure. But they cannot become foremen.

KRČMÉRY. Cannot they? But who can?

DEVIL. Only thieves. Or murderers. Some sort of favouritism. Because one of their tasks is

to report on the political prisoners. (*Screaming from behind of Krčméry.*) Fucking Communism! (*Laughing in his face.*) Can you hear that provocateur? (*Screaming again from behind of Krčméry.*) They are hanging us today but one day it will change, and we will be hanging the Communists. (*Laughing in his face again.*) Better bite your tongue off, than repeat that after me. Someone would report you immediately. But you are lucky to be placed into the clinic straight after arrival. That's like a little amnesty, isn't it?

KRČMÉRY. But I want no amnesty. Neither little, nor large. I already told them that if they need an otorhinolaryngologist, I am not an expert.

DEVIL. You are a doctor – that's enough.

KRČMÉRY. I don't want other prisoners to envy me or blame me...

DEVIL. Why should anyone envy you? You are a doctor – that's it. You are lucky that there is the central lab right next to your ambulance. I work there. We will get on well. I am Standa.

KRČMÉRY. I am Silvo.

DEVIL. Why are you here?

KRČMÉRY. For the so-called "Catholic action".

DEVIL. Oh yes! Catholic – that would perhaps be so-so. But action? They are fucking scared of it. You must know Vlado Jukl then.

KRČMÉRY. Of course, he is my best friend. Thanks to prisoner's morse code I found out in Prague that he was arrested too – but I haven't heard any news for the last three years. Not even which prison he is in.

DEVIL. Sure, you don't know?

KRČMÉRY. No, I don't. You do?

DEVIL. Yes, I do.

KRČMÉRY. Where is he?

DEVIL. You have got one guess.

KRČMÉRY. You must be kidding...

DEVIL. Yes, Jukl is in Mírov too.

KRČMÉRY. There are around eight hundred prisoners in here...But what of it, if I don't know where exactly?

DEVIL. Wanna have a chat with Vlado Jukl?

KRČMÉRY. By all means.

DEVIL. I will arrange it for you. You will talk to him. (*Speaking to the audience.*) And I will listen. (*Speaking to Krčméry.*) Though it will be only a few moments.

KRČMÉRY. Those few moments would be a blessing. If it works out.

DEVIL. This lab works for the whole clinic. We just need Jukl to have a stomachache and they will send him over for taking of a gastric juice sample.

(*It turns dark.*)

(IN LABORATORY)

(*When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: IN LABORATORY. Krčméry is on the stage, Jukl's silhouette is seen on the canvas.*)

KRČMÉRY. Vlado! I am so glad to finally see you!

JUKL'S VOICE. I am glad too, Silvo. God must be fond of us. I am thinking of Apostle Paul's words on love from his Epistle to the Corinthians:
Though I command languages both human and angelic –

if I speak without love,
I am no more than a gong booming,
or a cymbal clashing.
Shame there is that tube in my mouth...

KRČMÉRY. No worries. I will continue.

And though I have the power of prophecy,
to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge,
and though I have all the faith,
necessary to move mountains –
if I am without love,
I am nothing.
Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess,
and even give up my body to be burned –
if I am without love,
it will do me no good whatever.
Love is always patient

JUKL'S VOICE. and kind;

KRČMÉRY. love is never jealous;

JUKL'S VOICE. love is not boastful or conceited,

KRČMÉRY. it is never rude,

JUKL'S VOICE. and never seeks its own advantage,

KRČMÉRY. it does not take offence

JUKL'S VOICE. or store up grievances.

KRČMÉRY. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing,

JUKL'S VOICE. but finds its joy in the truth.

KRČMÉRY. It is always ready to make allowances,

JUKL'S VOICE. to trust,

KRČMÉRY. to hope,

JUKL'S VOICE. and to endure whatever comes.

TOGETHER. Love never comes to an end.

But if there are prophecies,
they will be done away with;
if tongues, they will fall silent;
and if knowledge, it will be done away with.
For we know only imperfectly,
and we prophesy imperfectly;
but once perfection comes,
all imperfect things will be done away with.

KRČMÉRY. When I was a child,

I used to talk like a child,
and see things as a child does,
and think like a child –
but now that I have become an adult,
I have finished with all childish ways.

JUKL'S VOICE. Now we see only reflections in a mirror,
mere riddles,

but then we shall be seeing face to face.

TOGETHER. Now I can know only imperfectly;

but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.
As it is, these remain;

faith, hope and love, the three of them;
and the greatest of them is love.

DEVIL (*Suddenly appears*). That's enough, Silvo. Better go to sleep.

KRČMÉRY. What do you mean?

DEVIL. Tomorrow, you gonna be transported to Banská Bystrica.

KRČMÉRY. But why?

DEVIL. Someone must have snitched on you.

(It turns dark.)

(IMPRISONMENT IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM 25th NOVEMBER 1955 TO APRIL 1958 – IMPRISONMENT IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA.)

DEVIL (*Lying on the stage without motion*).

PRISON GUARD'S VOICE. Krčméry, wake up! That grumbler hanged himself again. Come look at him! I cut him off, but I am not sure, if you can still help him. He already turned blue. He passed away.

KRČMÉRY (*He arrives, bends over the Devil, does chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, but gives up in the end*). The guard is right. You are dead, mate! My first patient who died – and it happened to be here in Banská Bystrica! In the town of my youth! I remember that as a child I used to pass by this prison, and when I saw prisoners behind the bars, I turned sad. Now I am one of them and unable to save a fellow prisoner. It is over for you, mate.

PRISON GUARD'S VOICE. Krčméry, you may return to your cell. Go to sleep.

(It turns dark.)

(THE FIRST DREAM IN THE PRISON OF BANSKÁ BYSTRICA)

(When the lights turn on again, the lights are dream-like – red in this instance. The voice from behind of the stage announces: THE FIRST DREAM IN THE PRISON OF BANSKÁ BYSTRICA. We see the same situation as a moment ago)

DEVIL (*He suddenly lifts himself up and starts to speak*). Well, I would gladly try that mouth-to mouth resuscitation again.

KRČMÉRY (*He snaps out of a dream*). What? You aren't dead? But you are blue...

DEVIL. How could I possibly die if I am immortal? What blue? When I am red...

KRČMÉRY. You speak as a devil himself.

DEVIL. I am the devil himself.

KRČMÉRY. If you were really the devil, why would you be here in a prison? You would be in hell.

DEVIL. I wouldn't be the devil if I was stuck in hell. The devil must be on earth, and must always follow a saint.

KRČMÉRY. Don't be ridiculous. Me a saint?

DEVIL. I speak in general. Once I even followed Jesus Christ. When he was in the desert, I was too. Nowadays, it is the same. You are in prison – I must be too.

KRČMÉRY. Mate, be happy that I managed to resuscitate you, and stop kidding.

DEVIL. No kidding. Just letting you know who I am.

KRČMÉRY. Something will happen to me.

DEVIL. When you are with me, you are the best-guarded prisoner in the world, and nothing can happen to you.

KRČMÉRY. You wanna say that you really are...?

DEVIL. Of course, I really... It is always me. It was me in Kuřivody too. And how did you like my rolled-up sleeves in Ruzyň?

KRČMÉRY. I will never forget them. Not even how you were hitting my head against the wall.

DEVIL. But hope you didn't forget our meeting in the courtroom in Trenčín.

KRČMÉRY. So even then, on 24th June 1954...

DEVIL. By all means. It was me who sentenced you to only fourteen years that day.

KRČMÉRY. What do you mean, only?

DEVIL. You expected to be hanged! I am not always as terrible as people say about me. Have you forgotten that I arranged for you to meet Vlado Jukl?

KRČMÉRY. You were the lab assistant?

DEVIL. Yes, him too.

KRČMÉRY. So, you didn't only arrange the meeting but also snitched on me?

DEVIL. Yes, that too.

KRČMÉRY. You are really the devil.

DEVIL. Yes, I am.

KRČMÉRY. That's terrible.

DEVIL. But it's never boring. Just remember! Who arranged for you to have better meals, even though you ungratefully refused to answer my questions?

KRČMÉRY. What were you up to?

DEVIL. What cannot be achieved one way shall be achieved through another. My evil invention. The method of sticks and carrots. You, humans, use it too. And I authorised you to do so without any charge.

KRČMÉRY. Maybe you are just a good actor. The devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, but you arranged for me to have better meals yourself? That's contradictory.

DEVIL. Your whole world is contradictory. Why can't my actions be contradictory too? I simply adapt to your world.

KRČMÉRY. I don't.

DEVIL. Because you always wanna be something special. Always the same! Always contemporary! Always uncompromising! But who else on earth, apart from you, has still got spine and stomach for that? Fear is human. Compromises are human. Adapting is human. Not only human but also natural. A green frog adapts to grass, a brown frog to sand.

KRČMÉRY. Frogs adapt to nature.

DEVIL. And I adapt to human society. I change alongside human history. Yesterday still, the most cruel ideas of mine were welcome – but today? If I didn't change fast, I would need to worry whether I'm not gonna be removed from hell the same way Stalin was from mausoleum. Did you hear that Khrushchev labelled him a criminal? He did so in February 1956, and suddenly the thaw arrived. Оттепель, as Russians would say. Out of nowhere, anti-Stalinists appeared. And the ruthless investigators, on whose shirts

the blood of suspects didn't even have enough time to dry, suddenly started to repent.
Don't be surprised that I repent too.

KRČMÉRY. How do you repent?

DEVIL. Well, for example by revealing you my true identity. And the Kremlin repents by releasing political prisoners. They release them quietly, but they do. And not only those from Siberia. It also started in Stalin's colonies. In Czechoslovakia too.

KRČMÉRY. So that's why in this prison in Banská Bystrica, I suddenly come across only criminals.

DEVIL. And tell me why you, a Christian, scorn the criminals? You don't like the thug, Jano, who tore his irons with bare hands? And what about the Hungarian, who is called "ady hugyi köves ember", „a man with kidney stones in his brain“ – also known as the Horse Head? He is more jealous than Othello. Once he leaves the prison, he is planning to...

KRČMÉRY. I don't scorn them. And if me being here with them is the price for the world changing for better...

DEVIL. That won't last long either.

KRČMÉRY. Why not?

DEVIL. Ask the Horse Head – he has access to Hungarian newspapers. (*He takes out newspapers and reads.*)

Isten, áldd meg a magyart
Jó kedvvel, bőséggel,
Nyújts feléje védő kart,
Ha küzd ellenséggel...

Do you understand? Hungarians rebelled against Moscow. And Khrushchev did exactly what Stalin would have done. He sent tanks to Hungary. The thaw is over, Silvo. It's cold outside and the frost is coming from Moscow again. Don't worry! You will soon have a chance to meet and pray with new political prisoners more than enough! And I will adapt once more to a new form, perhaps to such I had before.

KRČMÉRY. Into a blue one? Like you had a moment ago?

DEVIL. Blue and backslapping. (*He hits Krčméry on his back.*)

KRČMÉRY. Ouch! My rib! I believe you now, it must be you.

PRISON GUARD'S VOICE. You didn't go to sleep? Did you manage to bring him back?

DEVIL. Pssst! The guard is coming. Resuscitate me! And although I am immortal, pretend that you cannot bring me back. (*Lying again without motion.*)

KRČMÉRY (*Responding to the guard, whom we don't see, while resuscitating the Devil.*)

No. He is gone. He really turned blue.

PRISON GUARD'S VOICE. And now, Krčméry, you should really go to sleep.

(*It turns dark.*)

(THE SECOND DREAM IN THE PRISON OF BANSKÁ BYSTRICA)

(*When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: THE SECOND DREAM IN THE PRISON OF BANSKÁ BYSTRICA. The lights are green this time*)

KRČMÉRY (*He snaps out of a dream again*). Ach, that was a terrible dream! The devil, who visited me, has fortunately disappeared. God knows where? Most likely to hell, where else. But where is hell? Isn't it that each of us carries his own hell with him? And if so, isn't there a risk for all of us, including myself, that the devil will come out of me in a moment most unexpected?

MOTHER'S VOICE. Don't be scared, my dear son, it won't happen to you!

KRČMÉRY (*Pointlessly looking in front of himself*). Mom! Is that you? How is it possible?

MOTHER'S VOICE. It's only a dream again – but I am in it this time.

KRČMÉRY. A dream again? Even though it's only a dream, I must tell you, mom, that it was most admirable how you and father were walking under the windows of the Judicial Palace, and you were talking to me just by moving your lips or showing with your fingers. So that I would have been the only one to understand.

MOTHER'S VOICE. That was easy, my dear son! It's easy to learn for every mother whose son is in prison.

KRČMÉRY. Easy perhaps, maybe. It nonetheless made me smile that at your age you're getting skillful in the tricks of criminals. But then I was immediately about to cry when I realized that you're so troubled because of me.

MOTHER'S VOICE. Don't worry, my dear son, I am not.

KRČMÉRY. You are, mom! Where has your beautiful hair disappeared?

MOTHER'S VOICE. Where would it disappear? My hair is the same.

KRČMÉRY. No, it isn't. I saw it well even from behind of the bars in the Judicial Palace.

Your hair turned grey already during my first year of detention. And now? How grey must it be if I have been in prison for the last seven years? Mom, you mustn't suffer!

MOTHER'S VOICE. Don't worry, I don't suffer, my dear son! It's only a dream.

KRČMÉRY. It isn't, mom. Your hair did turn grey.

MOTHER'S VOICE. Alright, it's not a dream. But my hair didn't turn grey! It's the light in this prison, it's somehow grey. Say a prayer, and my hair will turn dark again. Say the same prayer you used to say when you were my little boy, and then go to sleep!

KRČMÉRY. Guardian angel, blessed Father; on our journey from day to night; protect my soul and my family; help us do right and live happily...Amen! Please forgive me, mom! I cannot do differently...even though I want so much to amend...

(It turns dark.)

(IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE. Shadow-play continues behind the canvas.)

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. You mentioned that you were a civil servant. Didn't you work in Prague by any chance?

DEVIL'S VOICE. Yes, in Prague too for a while.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. And what about Bratislava, Košice, and Horný Slavkov?

DEVIL'S VOICE. In all of them.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE (*He laughs*). Me too. (*Turns more serious.*) Now I know why your voice was so familiar to me. You worked in the civil service. That means – State Security.

DEVIL'S VOICE. I won't hide it from you. Yes, that's where my career started.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. You know what I now recall? Not just your voice, but also your

rolled up sleeves.

DEVIL'S VOICE. I had got them rolled up sometimes, that's true. But when exactly do you mean? I hadn't got them rolled up all the time.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Not all the time. Just when you were hitting my head against the wall.

DEVIL'S VOICE. So, you... and I... that's really... If I have ever hurt you, I am very sorry...if you hate me for it...

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. I can ensure you that's not the case. If hatred had been inside me, it would have destroyed me. I prefer praying. Do you know Lord's Prayer?

DEVIL'S VOICE. I think I still remember.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Then you must know that in Lord's Prayer we say: "...and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE PRISONER'S CAMP PŘÍBRAM BITÝZ)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM APRIL TO NOVEMBER 1958 – IN THE PRISONER'S CAMP PŘÍBRAM BITÝZ .)

KRČMÉRY (*Approaching*). Where have they brought me to this time? Where am I?

DEVIL. Haven't you noticed the sign above the main gate? Work sets you free. The Communists don't seem to mind that Hitler made it. Arbeit macht frei. Welcome, doctor, to the camp Příbram Bitýz! Here you will get to know leftist concentration camp.

KRČMÉRY. Why not rightist?

DEVIL. Because our role model is the Soviet Union. Now we also have our own Gulag Archipelago. There are at least fifteen such interconnected camps in the country. Between 1,500 and 3000 "mukls" are dying in each one of them. "Mukl" – that's short for "meant for liquidation". How is it in Slovak?

KRČMÉRY. Don't know. Meant for liquidation? That would be "mefl".

DEVIL. Mefl? Doesn't sound good. Let's stay with mukl. What's this lovely book you are having?

KRČMÉRY. A textbook of Chinese.

DEVIL. Tell me something in Chinese!

KRČMÉRY (*He says few words in Chinese*).

DEVIL. What did you say?

KRČMÉRY. You have the power, but we have the truth.

DEVIL. What a bullshit! He, who has the power, wants to have the power over truth too. Where did you steal that book?

KRČMÉRY. One fellow prisoner gave it to me in Banská Bystrica. He was a professor of oriental languages.

DEVIL. Hungarians learned their lesson and well-educated prisoners started to grow in numbers? Has Stalin resurrected or what? And how many of the Chinese symbols have you learned by now?

KRČMÉRY. Eighthundred.

DEVIL. Eighthundred?! Well, if you were reborn as a Chinese, that should be enough. Throw the textbook away! We don't need anyone introducing the crazy Chinese medicine in our clinic.

KRČMÉRY. I don't wanna go to the clinic.

DEVIL. Where else you wanna go?

KRČMÉRY. To the mines.

DEVIL. What the hell? Anyone else would pay ten thousand so that he can scratch his balls in the clinic. But you? Alright. Here is a protection helmet, Krčméry... *(He puts the helmet on his head.)* ... now you are a construction worker. We are removing the scaffold now. Wanna start on the top? Or at the bottom?

KRČMÉRY. Well, for the start...

DEVIL. Alright, stay at the bottom – I will go to the top -
(Devil disappears, and we hear the noise of rattling metal.)

KRČMÉRY *(He jumps away)*. Ouch!

DEVIL'S VOICE *(Laughing behind the stage)*. Hahaha!

KRČMÉRY *(He looks above)*. What the hell was that?

DEVIL *(He appears)* You can never play with the system and win, the system will always play with you.

KRČMÉRY. So that was on purpose?

DEVIL. That was on purpose. And you will now purposefully go where we need you the most. To the clinic in Horní Slavkov!

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE CAMP PROKOP, SLAVKOV NAD OHŘÍ)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM NOVEMBER 1958 TO NOVEMBER 1959 – IN THE CAMP PROKOP, SLAVKOV NAD OHŘÍ.)

KRČMÉRY *(Coming)*. What's this camp called?

DEVIL. Prokop Slavkov nad Ohří. Welcome amongst the living.

KRČMÉRY. I was amongst the living back in the Bitýz camp.

DEVIL. The guys you have in mind might be dead by now.

KRČMÉRY. Why do you say that?

DEVIL. A news arrived here before you that just after your departure, all of the camp Bitýz is burried hundred meters beneath the ground. Both guards and "mukls". Most of them can be neither rescued nor identified. You've got luck from hell.

KRČMÉRY. If what you are telling me is really true, then I wasn't saved by the devil, but by God.

DEVIL. Why didn't he save all of them then?

KRČMÉRY. Because as he says through the words of Saint John: "I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again." How many prisoners are there here in Slavkov?

DEVIL. Eighthundred, or even more.

KRČMÉRY. And each of them is tatoood the same way as you are?

DEVIL. Each and every one of them. Some have tatooes of wordless images. And others, like me, have slogans. You wanna read it?

KRČMÉRY. Depends where you've got it.

DEVIL. Don't worry, just on my neck.

KRČMÉRY *(Reading)*. „Cut in here.“

DEVIL. Read further. I've got it in French too.

KRČMÉRY *(Reading)*. „Ici couper.“

DEVIL. You can read my eye lits too. *(Closes his eyes.)*

KRČMÉRY (*Reading the right*). „Don't disturb!“ (*Reading the left.*) „I'm sleeping.“

DEVIL. If you were interested, I've got one slogan too: “Join our native party!“ But that's on my... (*Turning around and taking off his trousers.*)

KRČMÉRY. No, not really interested.

DEVIL. But you might be interested in what's on my forearm.

KRČMÉRY (*Reading*). „In love, I was never scared nor lucky.“ Perhaps you might think that, but you forget that God offers the same luck in love to each and every one of us.

DEVIL. How have you come up with this?

KRČMÉRY. Not me but the writer Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy did come up with this, in his tale about a mysterious twig, which is buried beneath the ground, and it carries the key to happiness for everyone written on it. People had been searching for it for many years till they managed to find it and read the key.

DEVIL. What was written there?

KRČMÉRY. Love each other.

DEVIL. Fucking hell, we're quite far from there! Why would you be in prison, if everyone loved you?

KRČMÉRY. I am still learning too – how to love everyone.

DEVIL. And how is that going?

KRČMÉRY. It's going, though not always. I'm as sinful as anyone else. I don't always find in prisons like this one a priest to confess to. I'm searching at least. Would you be willing to be my spiritual councillor?

DEVIL. Gladly.

KRČMÉRY. And what are you here for?

DEVIL. You really wanna know? (*Bends towards Krčméry and whispers something to him.*)

KRČMÉRY (*Listening unbelievably*).

DEVIL. What would you have done in my stead?

KRČMÉRY. I would have...done the same thing you did. (*They hug each other.*) But you know that you might pay for that tattoo? It will start rotting and a phlegmon will appear on your skin. Those with tattoos on their eyes may lose sight. And some even their lives.

DEVIL. “Mukls“ are gamblers. I can do tattoos! For every “mukl“, I will make any tattoo he wants. Even though I know that you are judging me for it.

KRČMÉRY. As a doctor, I do. But no worries. God will accept even a tattoo as a confession. Actually, I have also got one.

DEVIL. Where have you got it?

KRČMÉRY. In my mind. I have a “tattoo“ of the whole *Saint John's Gospel*. Also in Russian.

DEVIL. Why in Russian?

KRČMÉRY. We must be ready for the time when they will be learning the Word of God from us. (*Says few lines in Russian.*) Ибо так возлюбил Бог мир, что отдал Сына Своего Единородного, дабы всякий верующий в Него, не погиб, но имел жизнь вечную. Ибо не послал Бог Сына Своего в мир, чтобы судить мир, но чтобы мир спасен был чрез Него....

(It turns dark.)

(IN THE CENTRAL CAMP VYKMAKOV)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM NOVEMBER 1959 TO JANUARY 1962 – THE CENTRAL CAMP VYKMAKOV.)

KRČMÉRY (*He is alone on the stage, listening to the announcement of amnesty*).

VOICE OF A RADIO PRESENTER (*Reaching Krčméry from a distanced speaker*).

The decision of the President and the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic on amnesty (n. 54/1960.), dated 9th May 1960. The fifteenth anniversary of our republic's liberation by the Soviet army constitutes a proud exhibition of battles and the victory in building of a new Socialist society. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the workers, peasants and the working "intelligentsia" have achieved, through their hard work, significant economic, class-based and social changes in our country. The victory of socialism has become a pleasant reality in the country. Our republic is strong as never before. Political awareness of the working class and the society in general has increased significantly. The power and the economy of our country have grown. The international status of Czechoslovakia is solid as never before. The unshakeable strength and stability of our Socialist establishment – as well as its humanism, and the trust in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Socialist state among the working class – will provide individuals, who previously committed grave crimes against the political and economic backbones of our republic, with the opportunity to compensate for their guilt with hard and honest work to their fellow citizens. The president and the government have made the following decision: The decision of the President of the Republic: By powers given to me by the Constitution, I grant this amnesty to...

SOUND (*Morse code, being knocked on the wall*).

KRČMÉRY (*Answers by knocking*).

KAUZÁL'S VOICE (*From behind of a wall*). My greatest pleasure and blessing, which God granted me here, was that I could work at this clinic with you, doctor Krčméry.

KRČMÉRY. Though quite often I annoyed you, doctor Kauzál. Once you even scolded me being a snotnose.

KAUZÁL'S VOICE. Yes, I remember. You are a snotnose – you are eighteen years younger than me. And you objected to what I said, that I don't like! It was when we were doing the gall bladder X-ray, and you had a different view from mine. Since we shall depart now, I will tell you a secret – it was me who was wrong back then and you were right. You taught me a lesson. You will make an excellent roentgenologist one day, doctor Krčméry.

KRČMÉRY. It would have been a pity if I hadn't had the opportunity to assist such a great surgeon like you. And all those anti-state jokes of yours! Radio Yerevan receives a question: "When are the good times gonna come?" Radio Yerevan answers: "Good times already came and left."

BOTH (*Both laughing*).

KAUZÁL'S VOICE. And you remember this one? An old man is walking around the hospital from one department to another and asking: "Excuse me, where can I find otolaryngolo-opthalmologist?" "I am afraid we have no such specialist" they answer. "We have ear specialists and eye specialists. You have to choose." "But I need someone specialising in both!" He insists. "But why both?" they are asking. "Because I have this problem, which only a specialist in both of them can treat." "What disease is that?" "Everywhere in the country, I keep hearing one thing but see another."

BOTH (*Both laughing*).

KRČMÉRY. This is a good one too. Son is asking his father: "What's the difference between the Public Security and the State Security apparatus?" Father answers his son: "The Public Security identifies a crime and is trying to find the offender. The State Security identifies the offender and is trying to find a crime."

BOTH (*Both laughing*).

KRČMÉRY. After each one of your jokes, I was laughing for the next five minutes.

KAUZÁL'S VOICE. The judge was laughing too, when he sentenced me to five years. (*He laughs but then turns more serious.*) But I am old and sickly. Such a man has always got one question on his mind: "Am I gonna survive this? Am I gonna survive even if they lower my sentence? I've got a wife and three kids out there. Whenever I think of them, I am desperate. Do you blame me for accepting the amnesty?"

KRČMÉRY. I don't blame you, of course. I don't blame anyone, even though I might stay all alone here in the Central Camp Vykmakov after this amnesty. But that's my own fault, being such a fool, always swimming against the current. But I cannot accept the amnesty.

KAUZÁL'S VOICE. You are no fool, doctor Krčméry. You just look like one, because you are the only normal person in this crazy world – I know too well that when I get out of here, I will simply move from a small cage to a larger one. Good bye, my friend. I left a small notebook for you in the office, as a small souvenir. I wrote something in there for you. Just be careful so that guards don't find it.

KRČMÉRY. What did you write for me, doctor Kauzál? Few of your good old jokes?

KAUZÁL'S VOICE. No, doctor Krčméry! Perhaps it's shameless of me but I wrote for you few of my prayers.

(*It turns dark.*)

(A NEW CELLMATE)

(*When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: A NEW CELLMATE.*)

DEVIL (*Enters and offers Krčméry to shake hands*). Hi. I am your new cellmate. Jano.

KRČMÉRY (*He shakes hands with the Devil*). Silvo.

DEVIL. I know what you are here for. And that you refused the amnesty.

KRČMÉRY. You as well?

DEVIL. Me? I haven't received it.

KRČMÉRY. What terrible things have you done that you hadn't received it?

DEVIL. I was one of them... A colleague... An officer.

KRČMÉRY. I guess you aren't here for that.

DEVIL. No. Not for that. I was a reliable officer. I believed in the party, believed in its ideas, and wanted to build a new and better world.

KRČMÉRY. To believe in ideas is no crime.

DEVIL. You think so? And if it turns that those ideas aren't so good in the end?

KRČMÉRY. If they had given you the power to do good, God will forgive you.

DEVIL. God might! But my superiors won't. I used to work in the regions. And so those working in the regions held together. We were no saints of course, but we did some good too. A small Slovak town – surely you know what I'm talking about – almost everyone is somehow related to each other. So, we helped many.

KRČMÉRY. Helping others – that's always good. God rewards those who do it. Even if you expect no reward, there is always some compensation.

DEVIL. You bet there always was. Not even a priest preaches for nothing. We always asked to be paid for our services and we were clever about it. But at last, it all started to be suspicious to the Central Office. And so, one day, a high-ranking officer came from there. He came to me directly.

KRČMÉRY. Why to you?

DEVIL. No idea. He could have approached any of my colleagues, but he chose me and asked me to come outside for a private conversation.

KRČMÉRY. So, you were also afraid to speak in between the walls?

DEVIL. And why not us? We knew best that even the walls could listen. We were the ones who made them listen. So, that officer took me for a walk and proved to be truly coming on orders from the highest ranks of the security apparatus and the party. And then he told me – what do you think he told me?

KRČMÉRY. I have no idea.

DEVIL. Noone could have. He gave me an order I didn't understand. But he added: "You will understand it later. And you will be proud to have followed the order without understanding it."

KRČMÉRY. And you were willing to follow?

DEVIL. Of course, I was. He promised me a promotion for that. And I jumped up right and promised everything he asked for. I was tempted by the promotion and I knew I had few friends that I could trust, who would help me complete the order.

KRČMÉRY. You still haven't told me what it was.

DEVIL. The guy from the Central Office took a piece of paper from his pocket and said: "The order from the Party is that the following individuals shall be quietly arrested. Follow the order, comrade! Don't ask anything and trust the Party." When I read the list, I couldn't believe my eyes.

KRČMÉRY. Was there someone from your family?

DEVIL. If only. All my bosses were there too. But there was no way back. So a moment later I announced that there will be a weapon inspection. I was in charge of that so it didn't surprise anyone. Straight after that my men went office by office and collected all the pistols and machine guns. More of my men followed, put handcuffs on their hands and escorted them to a dungeon.

KRČMÉRY. The same dungeon where...

DEVIL. And so what? Previously they tortured others in there – and now they themselves happened to be in the same place. All of them were there – from the head of the office to the guy at the reception. And I could proudly report to the comrade from the Central Office: "Order completed. All those on the list arrested." And guess what he told me in reply?

KRČMÉRY. "Show me your chest, comrade!" And he decorated you with a medal.

DEVIL. Wrong guess. He said: "Show me your hands!" A moment later, I had handcuffs on my hands and happened to be in the same dungeon with all those men whom I previously ordered to be arrested. Fucking hell, so embarrassing. If you could imagine how they laughed – although otherwise they had no reason to laugh at all. Then they beat me up. But worse things are waiting for me if I happen to meet them outside the prison. Silvo, I'm scared to leave the place. Actually, I am glad that I wasn't included in the amnesty. I'm in a desperate situation.

KRČMÉRY. If you believe in God, hope can never abandon you.

DEVIL. If you believe in the party, hope will certainly abandon you.

KRČMÉRY. Every man has a chance to replace a fake belief with a true one. And hope that once abandoned him shall return.

DEVIL. How will you convince me that this is true?

KRČMÉRY. I will tell you a story. From the *Bible*. From *the Acts of Apostles*. (*Telling a story from the Acts of Apostles.*) When they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities. Taking them before the magistrates they said, "These people are causing a disturbance in our city. They are Jews and are

advocating practices which it is unlawful for us as Romans to accept or follow.' The crowd joined in and showed its hostility to them, so the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be flogged. They were given many lashes and then thrown into prison, and the gaoler was told to keep a close watch on them. So, following such instructions, he threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, while the other prisoners listened. Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. All the doors flew open and the chains fell from all the prisoners. When the gaoler woke and saw the doors wide open he drew his sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped.

DEVIL. And so what? Of course, they fled.

KRČMÉRY. But they hadn't escaped and Paul shouted at the top of his voice, 'Do yourself no harm; we are all here.' He called for lights, then rushed in, threw himself trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas, and escorted them out, saying, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They told him, 'Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and your household too.' Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his household. Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was baptised then and there with all his household. Afterwards he took them into his house and gave them a meal, and the whole household celebrated their conversion to belief in God.

DEVIL. Your story is much nicer than my own. But mine might lead to the same end as yours by the time it comes to its end.

KRČMÉRY. It's not the end yet?

DEVIL. No, it isn't.

KRČMÉRY. Tell me.

DEVIL. Silvo, I need to tell you the truth – I am here to report on you. And I will have to report what I find out.

KRČMÉRY. So, do it.

DEVIL. I won't. But if I don't do it, you will.

KRČMÉRY. I won't do it either.

SOUND (*It thunders*).

DEVIL. An earthquake!

KRČMÉRY. Don't be afraid. It's just a thunder.

DEVIL. Silvo, I beg you, do something for me. So that I can feel to have achieved something at least.

KRČMÉRY. What do you have in mind?

DEVIL. I promise that I will accept your faith – and you, since you didn't accept the amnesty...Accept at least a permission for vacation.

(*Offers to shake hands.*)

KRČMÉRY (*Shakes his hand*).

DEVIL. And by the way, you know that Kauzál didn't make it home?

KRČMÉRY. He didn't? Why?

DEVIL. He had passed out in the street and didn't get back on his feet. A heart attack. Some people walking by even kicked him few times. They probably thought he was some sort of drunk pig lying in the street...

(*It turns dark.*)

(ONCE AGAIN IN THE CAMP PROKOP)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: FROM JANUARY 1962 TO 21st OCTOBER 1964 – ONCE AGAIN IN THE CAMP PROKOP SLAVKOV NAD OHŘÍ.)

SOUND *(An extract from a song Missa Luba, part Kyrie. A shot interrupts the music).*

DEVIL *(With a rifle)*. Stop, or I will shoot again, and I promise it won't be a warning one!

KRČMÉRY. Calm down! It's me.

DEVIL. Who me?

KRČMÉRY. Prisoner Krčméry. Coming back from an authorized vacation.

DEVIL. Where were you?

KRČMÉRY. I went to see a friend. He lives in Slavkov.

DEVIL. What's his name?

KRČMÉRY. Jozef Černý.

DEVIL. What were you doing there?

KRČMÉRY. Nothing special. Just listening to some music.

DEVIL. Aaah! You let the gramophone play so that nonone could listen to your anti-state conversation.

KRČMÉRY. We didn't talk at all. We just listened a mass called *Missa Luba*. It was beautiful. Just sitting and listening to it without saying a single word.

DEVIL. It was so beautiful that you forgot to come back, and I was about to shoot you without saying a word. Why are you coming so late?

KRČMÉRY. There was a snowstorm and as I took a shortcut across the fields, I got lost.

SOUND *(The clock on a tower strikes midnight).*

DEVIL. You are lucky. It's midnight now. We are expecting another amnesty. But had you returned even a minute later, you wouldn't be alive to wait for it.

KRČMÉRY. I'm not guilty of anything. I'm not waiting for any amnesty.

(It turns dark.)

(CONDITIONAL RELEASE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: 21st OCTOBER 1964 – CONDITIONAL RELEASE WITH A TWO-YEAR PROBATION.)

KRČMÉRY. Why are you re-opening my case if I haven't asked for any conditional release?

DEVIL *(In a judicial robe)*. Your family has right to make such an appeal too.

KRČMÉRY. I have no knowledge that they appeal.

DEVIL. They might not have told you.

KRČMÉRY. If they did so without my consent, I protest. I have prepared a written statement justifying the refusal. I would like to read it and enclose it to...

DEVIL. No need. Why would you read it? Just say it.

KRČMÉRY. I insist on reading my statement.

DEVIL. Why do care so much whether it's read or not?

KRČMÉRY. I want to make sure that my statements are no more twisted or interpreted only in a negative sense.

DEVIL. Alright, go ahead, read it.

KRČMÉRY (*Reading from a paper*). The lawful condition for a conditional release is that the condemned had acted unlawfully and that his sentence has shown correctional results. However, since I had never committed any act of high treason and my fourteen years of imprisonment had lacked any legal base, I couldn't have had the opportunity to "amend" and to begin with a "proper life of a working citizen", because I never stopped living such a life. In this regard, I consider the transformation of the remainder of my sentence into a probation as an attempt to demonstrate that my imprisonment has had anything to do with the law. On the contrary, for the last thirteen years I have been trying to achieve an objective investigation of high treason convictions I was accused of. The very fact that I have refused any mitigation of punishment or personal benefits of any sort proves that I had never committed any of the acts I was accused of. Accepting the conditional release on probation could be therefore interpreted as confession to accusations and acceptance of the verdict, which is why I refuse. In Horný Slavkov, 21st October 1964. Condemned Silvester Krčméry. I ask for this statement to be enclosed to my file.

DEVIL. Very well. Your request is accepted, and so your statement will be enclosed to your file. And now you listen to me. Our Socialist society has left behind all the sins of the past, associated with the cult of personality. The rule of law was fully reinstated – in such light the reopening of your case was enabled. You have served nearly all of your sentence and if we remit the remaining part of it, you will be able to live a life of a proper working citizen.

KRČMÉRY. I don't need to start. I have always lived such a life.

DEVIL. Condemned Krčméry, don't pretend to be a saint. Noone is.

KRČMÉRY. I don't pretend. I have never breached a law. Neither the laws of God, nor those on earth.

DEVIL. Don't bring the laws of God in here. You breached the Socialist law.

KRČMÉRY. Freedom of religion is also guaranteed by the Socialist constitution. Therefore, I never breached the Socialist law either.

DEVIL. You haven't? Socialist law either? This statement of yours leads us to a conclusion that you respect the Socialist law. And by respecting the Socialist law, you have proved to have amended.

KRČMÉRY. Don't pounce on what I say. I repeat once more that my acceptance of the conditional release could be interpreted by you as acceptance of the verdict, which I still consider unlawful, and therefore I refuse the conditional release.

DEVIL. That's not an option, condemned Krčméry. I'm looking at your assessment right now, which the court received from the Camp Prokop. It's highly positive and it also states that you have amended.

KRČMÉRY. I must insist that's not true.

DEVIL. Be quiet now! District Military Court, Karlovy Vary, 121/64. The verdict. During the public hearing that took place on 21st October in Horní Slavkov, the District Military Court Karlovy Vary discussed the case of the condemned Silvester Krčméry, previously residing in Bratislava, Pilárikova street n. 1, at present serving a sentence in a Correctional Facility of the Ministry of Interior Horní Slavkov. The court has made the following decision. The court believes that the condemned is well-behaved, hard-working, and obedient and that he demonstrated amendment, which is why the court finds it reasonable to approve his conditional release. Horní Slavkov, 21st October 1964. Presiding Judge: Lieutenant Colonel of Justice L. S. JUDr. Josef Příhoda, sgd.

KRČMÉRY. I wish to exercise my right and want to file an appeal against this verdict with a suspensory effect.

DEVIL. Your appeal is acknowledged. The court finds it ungrounded and therefore it is dismissed.

KRČMÉRY. And I find ungrounded your dismissal of my appeal. It was well-grounded and therefore, I wish to file an appeal against dismissal of my first appeal.

DEVIL. Your appeal against dismissal of your first appeal is acknowledged. However, since your appeal against dismissal of your appeal has no suspensory effect, and since circumstances regarding your amendment have not altered, you shall be conditionally released with an immediate effect.

KRČMÉRY. But I have not amended!

DEVIL. Causa finita. The trial is over.

(It turns dark.)

(HE WOULD EVEN BUILD A CHURCH IN HERE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage announces: 21st OCTOBER 1964. WE HAD TO DRAG HIM OUT OF THE PRISON.)

KRČMÉRY *(With a suitcase)*. Since I had done nothing wrong, I couldn't have amended. And so, as I hadn't accepted any amnesty, because such acceptance would have equalled to confession of guilt, and so I also refused the conditional release. I made an appeal against such verdict and then even an appeal against the verdict rejecting my initial appeal. By the time it's properly investigated, I have got every right to be here.

DEVIL *(As a director of the prison facility)*. Don't make it complicated, please, leave the camp Prokop today.

KRČMÉRY. But it's a matter of principle.

DEVIL. If you don't leave voluntarily, we will put handcuffs on your hands and I will take you out of this camp, together with your principle. But just before I do that, here is a little formality. Please sign this in here. *(Giving him a paper and pen.)*

KRČMÉRY. What's this?

DEVIL. A gag order. You will remain silent about all state secrets of public interest you have come across or gained knowledge of during investigation as well as your sentence.

KRČMÉRY. I shall remain silent about all state secrets – even those I had experienced myself – including inhuman treatment and unlawful proceedings exercised by the investigative and imprisonment bodies?

DEVIL. It's only a matter of formality. Until now, every single person leaving our facility was obliged to sign and did sign the document.

KRČMÉRY. I won't.

DEVIL. Then I'm afraid you will have to stay here.

KRČMÉRY. I want nothing else. Keep me in here. May I unpack?

DEVIL *(Screams)*. Get out of here! Out! *(Pushing him, together with his suitcase, out of the stage, where the gate is located. Both leave the stage.)*

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. But my conditional release is unlawful!

DEVIL'S VOICE. Take your foot out from that gate! Come on! Do you want us to cut it off below the knee?

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. But I have not amended!

DEVIL'S VOICE. Move out that fucking foot!

SOUND. *(The gate shuts. Then hitting on the gate.)*

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Open at once! Let me back into the prison!

DEVIL (*Returning to the stage*). Let you back? Sure, we want nothing else, you unamended saint! (*Speaking to the audience*.) He would even build a church in here.

(It turns dark.)

EPILOGUE

(IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE)

(When the lights turn on again, the voice from behind of the stage: IN KRČMÉRY'S OFFICE IN PODUNAJSKÉ BISKUPICE. A shadow-play is taking place behind the canvas.)

DEVIL'S VOICE. Thank you. If it gives you any comfort, I paid my own price for all the suffering I caused to you.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. What price?

DEVIL'S VOICE. On 21st August 1968, I signed a protesting statement against the so-called intervention by the allied forces.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Almost everyone signed back then.

DEVIL'S VOICE. But I was kicked out from the security apparatus.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. You were also beaten up by some guys with rolled up sleeves?

DEVIL'S VOICE. Not really. Not back then. But for many years I couldn't find a proper job. My wife couldn't either. And perhaps...from all that stress... *(His voice trembles.)*

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Calm down! It will be alright!

DEVIL'S VOICE *(Starts crying)*. How could I possibly calm down if there is no hope for me and soon enough I will leave my wife, children, and grandchildren all alone? If only you could see how cute they are. But all this is starting to disappear very soon in an undefined moment. Suddenly, I perceive my life as some sort of house of cards that is soon gonna fall apart.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. But you don't need to worry about any of this.

DEVIL'S VOICE *(Stops crying)*. What do you mean I don't need to worry? What about the diagnosis? I was diagnosed a malignant lung tumour with a hundred percent certainty back in the hospital in Cukrová. And they sent me here just to confirm the diagnosis. You saw my lungs and surely you have also written into my file that I have got the tumour on my lungs.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. I wrote nothing of that sort.

DEVIL'S VOICE *(Suddenly turns to a cold tone of voice, which he had used during interrogations)*. Are you telling the truth? What did you write in there? Can you show me?

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Of course, I can show you. I have got nothing to hide from you. Please, feel free to read it. *(Hands him his file.)*

DEVIL'S VOICE *(Reading)*. Well-rounded oval effusion, resulting from cardiac decompensation. I am a laic, I don't understand this. But even to me as a laic...it appears there is no...

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. I am telling you – you don't have the tumour. Even a hundred percent certain diagnosis may be wrong.

DEVIL'S VOICE. It really means that I don't have...?

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. No, you don't.

DEVIL'S VOICE. Thank you, doctor. You gave me hope. Thanks to you, I have got a new spirit to enjoy life.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. And what do you do now?

DEVIL'S VOICE. After the Velvet Revolution I was rehabilitated. And for all those years that were taken away from me I have received a financial compensation. And they also promoted me. So, I work again...But of course with a higher rank, and in a higher position. I don't do investigations anymore...I only share my experience...Perhaps it may seem to you...that now when we have got freedom...but what is freedom? Even you had refused to be released...striving back into prison.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. A doctor enjoys freedom wherever he can help those who suffer.

DEVIL'S VOICE. You are a blessed man if you believe that. I am afraid there is no ideal form of freedom. But once again, doctor, thank you for giving me hope back.

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Don't thank me, thank the God.

DEVIL'S VOICE. Good bye, doctor. I am not sure if we'll meet again. (*His shadow disappears.*)

KRČMÉRY'S VOICE. Perhaps at the heaven's gate, good bye.

KRČMÉRY (*alone, deepened into prayer. He prays in silence for a while, then out loud, Psalm 23*).

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me

to restore my spirit. He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name.

Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life. I make my home in the house of God for all time to come.

(It turns dark. While it's dark in the hall, a recording narrated by the author is played – it is in possession of the Slovak National Theatre.)

AUTHOR'S VOICE. MUDr Silvester Krčméry (1924 – 2013), once released in 1964, fearlessly continued in the activities he had been doing before imprisonment, while at the same time working as a doctor in a hospital in Podunajské Biskupice. He organised evangelisation of university students, apprentices, drug-addicts, alcohol-addicts as well as former prisoners, and in 1974 he was one of the founders of a secular institute, Fatima. As a part of the institute's activities, he contributed to publishing of "samizdat" literature and to organising of evangelisation societies, the so-called Secret Church circles. In 1980s, Silvester Krčméry, together with Vladimír Jukl, further expanded and developed activities of the Laic Apostolic Movement, which formed a basis for the subsequent creation of the Movement of Christian Families in Slovakia, the Movement of Christian Youth Societies, and the Movement of Christian Children's Societies. Also thanks to his initiative, the Candle Demonstration took place on 25th March 1988 in Bratislava, which constituted the largest pre-1989 public protest against the Communist regime. After the Velvet Revolution, the Pope John Paul II. invited him to the Vatican, and according to eye-witnesses, he treated him with so much admiration and respect as if not him, but Silvester Krčméry was the Bishop of Rome.

Silvester Krčméry died at the age of eighty-nine on Tuesday 10th September 2013. His last words were supposedly the following: “I beg you, Father, give me time and allow me to amend.”

(When the lights turn on again, the real Silvester Krčméry appears on the canvas – an extract from a documentary MUDr. Silvester Krčméry, part Legacy, is played.)

AUTHENTIC FOOTAGE OF SILVESTER KRČMÉRY. “We need to begin with and lead people towards courage. That means...if people were able to stay faithful to the Church even when crackdowns had been going on, then why cannot they remain faithful today, when there are no crackdowns...The most important thing is that we love and forgive one another, and that we are able to address and help the most impoverished, those most in need, the last of the last...”

(It turns dark.)

SOUND *(Missa Luba is played).*

THE END

The most important sources:

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