

Ján Šimko and comp.

MEMORY OF BRATISLAVA I.: STORIES FROM PETRŽALKA (INTERRUPTION)

„In absolute peace and without any noise I make you sure that the only revolution I trust is the revolution beginning by burning out of Paris.“ Richard Wagner, Letter to Uhlig, Oct 10, 1850

Achtung achtung Vigyáz Vigyáz

František:

Already in times of Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic the old Petržalka had the most inhabitants, twenty thousand. I have been growing up in the old Petržalka. I was 11 when the Second World War finished. Petržalka was famous for its beautiful gardens, greenery. There were vegetables growing, Bulgarians, and there was a curiosity about apricots. Trucks from all over the country were arriving and driving the apricots away.

Then some juke joints were well known there. First Lido. Two swimming pools, for kids, always with ice water, and for adults. The Danube was so clean that when we dug up a little hole into sand, the sand fell off and we could drink that water. There were no eczemas, you know. Unfortunately the Second World War came. Jožko, come to help me, I speak about Petržalka... in 1939 Hitler annexed Petržalka to Austria and named it Engerau Niederdonau Grossdeutschland. It's good it's two of us, because he's older and his comments are more authentic.

Jozef:

Besides you could bathe in the Danube. There were wooden barriers, nets, you couldn't drown. In the Danube you could bathe in 20 metres distance.

František:

Lido has an old history. Some were arriving even from Wien and Austria and we used to spy on them through the fence, you know those young nippers...

Jozef:

And there was also a.. how is it.. a nudist beach there, only for women, fenced by wood. Right. We used to spy there too.

František:

And there was so-called Elyzium above Lido. During the first Czechoslovak republic, even in Austria Hungary, there was a pub there, called Amerika. And there were fancy girls there.

Jozef:

Prostitutes. And now up from Lido.

František:

The poorest bareness lived there. In metal cabins. Up from the old bridge it was empty. Woods. And now we are getting near the Petržalka opark. During the first republic a tram used to go from there.

Jozef:

To Wien.

František:

And when we are talking about the Petržalka opark, there was a well-known SC there. Where the Artmedia stadium is now.

Jozef:

No. MDK under the bridge was the first, I don't know how it is in Hungarian. Magyar DK, then it was PT, German, then it was SC Bratislava, Slovak and then Makabia Bratislava – Jewish. Four stadiums where all the football life in Bratislava was going on. During my student years all that shouting was smashing. We met in Bratislava by Manderlak, 300 – 400 Slovaks in SC Bratislava colours and 400 Hungarians in Ligeti colours. And nothing, no fights, we were friends, fans to each other, they cheered for players in Hungarian, we in Slovak, there was no spite like today is.

František:

There was no hate, some sang in German, other in Hungarian, Slovak. Only girls at a dance party could be a reason for conflict. Who will be with who, you know. But now we are touching the famous Au cafe.

Jozef:

Tere were tennis-courts between the Danube bridge and Au cafe. Vlasta Burian played there, famous Czech actors used to go to play tennis there. To the Jewish club. That time it was trendy.

František:

Even Planicka was famous.

Jozef:

He used to hold up for Slavia Praha. Au cafe was a lovely coffee house. Leberfinger was near it. It still exists but I don't know till when. It will disappear in several years.

František:

On the other side of the park there was also a well-known pub, we used to go there for beer. Berger. Classic, wooden, from Austria Hungary. It is already demolished.

Jozef:

I am a builder, we started to demolish Petržalka and I built Incheba. In those times a grammar school stayed in front of Incheba.

František:

And Pečna. A blind arm. When the Danube rose we used to skate there and there was also motor-cycle race on motor cog-wheels. And the dock from times of Austria Hungary. During

the communistic period when they were building the bridge, the dock was taken to pieces, I wish you could see that beautiful wooden boarding. The old Bratislava VIP used to go there, on kayaks. They demolished it, took to pieces to build it again in Rusovce. But you know they only thieved the material and that was all.

Jozef:

It was the largest village in Czechoslovakia. The Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks used to go to Petržalka to buy apricots. It used to be an apricot paradise.

František:

We have no right to overprize. We haven't agreed.

Jozef:

You bought and harvested the tree. And not the poor, but the rich used to come.

František:

The soil here beyond the Danube was fabulous. It was all dampy. We've got one hectare garden from the count Palffy, with 280 apricot trees. In Ovsišťe. Only for amusement I can tell you a little prank – in 50-ties many sneaks helped the police. Somebody reported about apricot spirit distillation in Ovsišťe. It was distilled in every second house, you could smell in the whole street. Two comrades from the committee with typical briefcases came to inspect and punish. In the evening they were coming back home, drunk and with briefcases full of apricot spirit. What humane humans!

Jozef:

Petržalka doesn't exist anymore. I mean the old Petržalka. He is right, it was the largest village in Czechoslovakia. We bathed in the Danube. Under the old bridge we jumped into the water and we swam out at Lido. We used to take tram to Karlova Ves, in our swimming suits, without tickets, and we swam down from there. When I wanted to impress a girl, I jumped down from the bridge to the Danube. A dive! Hey, you saw that, did you? She had to swear.

František:

The most beautiful women are in Bratislava. It's fact, you needn't be bigheaded. In 1968, when the borders were opened, the Austrian unemployed used to go shopping here and exchanging tights for our prettiest girls. And at home they were unemployed.

Jozef:

And how were those smuggled coats called?

František:

Crinkle trousers. And they smuggled radios too.

Jozef:

I tell you – pretty-eyed. We're already old. When Petržalka was occupied by the German, they didn't let us go. Neither there nor here. People were enisled. Bratislava was the Slovak state and Engerau the German empire. And mind you - somehow the German in Bratislava – there were about fourty or five thousand of them - got to know that Hitler planned to visit Engerau. He could go only to the half of the bridge, as the Slovak state started from that point. And those German, about a thousand Bratislava German jumped down to the Danube to heil

from there, to be closer to him. I saw it by my own eyeball, about 500 of them also drowned there. Fanatism. An ordinary man would wave from the beach and not jump to the water.

František:

The Second World War gave us memories that we can't forget. We were sitting in the classroom and suddenly Achtung Achtung Vigyaz Vigyaz Attention Attention – air raid, angloamerican planes, two or three hundred planes, sirens started to roar and we ran to the woods in Ovsište, where the horse fans are now, blockhouses were there before. Apollo was bombed. Into Ovsište they dropped bombs which made about 8 meters deep craters, because there was sand, road metal and water under it. And one lady, Mrs Vojdy... They were not German but mix of Hungarian and Russian..No smoker worse than an ex-smoker, we can say, this Mrs Vojdy once said: „Better to be killed by the first bomb rather than to see Hitler defeated.“ And so it happened. When Apollka was bombed, she got full hit, together with her daughter. She died. Her husband Vojdy didn't come back from the war. He fought in Russia. And his mother would wait for him every day at the station. She went mad. Bad luck. Today we don't know what the Second World War was for. And what the First was good for, where my deceased Dad lost his right arm?

Jozef:

After the end of the Second World War the Germans were ejected with only fifteen kilogram packages. The same with the Hungarians in 1947. These are facts. They were ejected following the Benes' decree. Insted of them „the Reslovaks“ came, we called them „the Unroslovak“ as they came from Unro. For us it was a miscue but both you and me can't change it. What happened. For example the best Ovsiste farmer who also understood the land, was ejected. His name was Bölcs. I don't know how many wagons he had, he could take everything, also his plough, horses, closet. He left but also took his knowledge. His fields were taken by people who didn't understand them. Volunteered from Hungary, who wanted to live in Czechoslovakia. I don't know how to solve it. It's not possible, it's vis major, happened. Today it would be a cause against the basic human rights, everybody can live where he wants. Goethe sad: Homesickness is stronger than love. Place where you were born attracts you forever.

František:

Now when I'm going to visit my nephew to Petržalka, I can't find my way there. It was another place but it's late to think if it is a pity or not.

Jozef:

Everything is in progress, it's necessary to build, it's a trend around the whole world. As people want to live in better consumer culture level. But if it is right and if such a gigant building up will once be useful? It's not about us, the old generation, but about those children in growing.

František:

You'll see. But we older and even the pedagogues don't like it.

Dropping to dropping

Petržalka? It's a big casino. No chance – you are either sitting at home or going to a casino.

Once I was running from Dad down the stairs, he followed me, I cried and our neighbour had just opened his door. When Dad found out that nothing would happen to him, nobody would report the police, simply proceeded running after me and he did to me, what he did.

Who didn't sign the expropriating contract on behalf of the Czechoslovak republic, didn't get an alternate lodging. I agree with 40 hellers price for a square meter.

You can't protect that kid, only with locking him at home, taking him to school and hobby groups. I used to live in this way two years, I nearly went mad.

You can hear everything in a block of flats. I live in quiet because only old people live here, so there's nothing to hear. Before I lived in a place where somebody had a dog, it was still barking above me and plus those two who were making noise below me.

We have a dog, too. But a little one. But neighbours have those huge aggressive dogs that make those huge shits. But the owner doesn't pick it up.

The street is good, it's as long as you sustain to run. But behind the house entrance there's no chance, you get all the bullets and moreover somebody from the ground floor calls the police.

Petržalka is amazing by its anonymity, it makes genius loci. I feel safe as nobody knows me there, I can enjoy existing without anybody knowing my soul or anything else.

Although the dog is little, dropping to dropping make a mound like from a wolfhound.

We all grew apricots, some were better and some worse, but there was an apricot that was really typical. Simply it had its pulp, sauce, sweet smell. That was The Petržalka apricot.

When you are from Petržalka you have to be better, much better than the others. But you can't be excentric, that would harm you.

There was one man here, Čajka. Even though he moved in Petržalka, he really grew together with people, surroundings, conditions. He had a beautiful idea to keep two of three streets that sink into the rest. But nothing humane was agreed here. And Čajka after three heart attacks came to a sticky end. In the grave.

When you have no job you wash dishes after the breakfast also a half an hour.

Petržalka has no culture. We wanted to spend the New Year's Eve here but it was so strange, without gear, without swank.

There's nothing worse than bringing up the child and it's totally different as you were expecting. Here in this anonymity and unconcern it's OK even if your son is a murderer.

It's not possible only to hang around Petržalka, you need some direction, purpose, otherwise it will take you down. Blocks will teach you to have a system.

The old Petržalka people are smarties. They married because of a flat, they got a flat, their parents also got a flat and now they all sell them for millions.

Twelve floors, six flats in each one, about three people in a flat, that's a horrible number. These are four streets in a district I lived before.

Today you already can't step in the grass, sorry, it's full of shits. Little children have no chance to play here.

Formerly a neighbour associated with a neighbour and today they don't greet each other. As one starts running a business and the other starts envying. I can't imagine how these new people will speak to each other. There are no name badges on these new houses. And it's said there won't be any.

So honestly I picked up our dog's shits, even the paper bags were not here yet, I put them into plastic bags. But I saw nobody did it... Have I to do this? I'm treading on all the shits around here and can't find the mine!

They should have never built Tesco and Carefour in Petržalka because everyday my girlfriend is there, she's already sick of it. She's reading the leaflets all the time. Some time ago there were only small shops here and it was enough.

Mum, tomorrow you ought to go to the psychologist, I said. And she looked at me, like what I meant. Me: I use pervitin and she: What is it? So I explained.

Behind our house huge constructions began, the excavator was digging a hole for several days. „Sir, what are you digging here?“ I asked. „A swimming pool“ the worker answered. Long time I was dreaming about a swimming pool right below our window. But it came to nothing. They built only a subway behind our house. I haven't asked any worker what it would be since then.

Somebody said these blocks of flats would be usable for about thirty years. So they should be broken down very soon.

What was Big

The Stewardess:

I tell you, what was big. We were rather important and we are important up to now, although many people moved out. Seventy-seven, seventy-eight, eighty. Three strongest years, the most children born. Petržalka. The first modern blocks in Czechoslovakia, mass blocks. Although in Prague people tried it before because there are some, but it's not important. We all grew up together, we all were friends, we all went to schools built only for us. We lived in Petržalka, where only houses stood, no trees, no greenery because everything was stubbed. I remember wires sticking up from mud, the red post was being built, where I don't know for how many years color wires were still around everywhere. I used to make bijouterie jewels from them. And there were so many pupils in the classrooms that we were the school with the highest number of pupils in Czechoslovakia. I went to 1.K. I think it's quite important. We were all friends. Doesn't matter where we are from, if our parents are from Bratislava or not, if they are intellectuals or workers. A real socialism. Being a child I liked this world without differences.

Our childhood was difficult in Petržalka. Houses and roads. We really were in mud when we wanted to play. Or then in the concrete terrace. And then they built Bocaccio. Bocaccio came, didn't it? The first Slovak disco. It was apparently built by some homosexual mafioso who would hit on some young boys there, everybody knew that, and god knows where he is now, surely in VIP, some kind of celebrity. And there came first drugs, first alcohol, there it started. Those who started to sell it, of course targeted Petržalka, where all the psychology of the whole blockage was and all inclined to drugs, and we really were a very strong generation related with this. However the old town was more mixed, many older people, we didn't see it, we had two-three older neighbours but in twelvefloor house, where on each floor four flats were placed. So it's different proportion, that's why I think it went like that. People needed to find their own place and started to meet each other in groups where it started. I have never recognized the idea of feeling myself badly there. Because if you do it once, you would never be happy there. You can feel ashamed for Petržalka or be proud of it. And knowing also the old Petržalka, having rootage there, I was proud of it. Rootage.. Otherwise I'm not from there... But the first three years I have lived there. In the old Petržalka, the village, and only then this new concrete world came. About 5 years after they ejected us and parents got a new flat, we used to go walking in Petržalka with my Dad. Streets, orchards, houses remained but it was already a dead town. My mum hated those blocks. When I was a kiddy and the others found out Mum was a stewardess, they shouted at me: „stewardess, stewardess“. They were children like... simply working class. Evident envy. But only one or two, I had no problem with the others. Everything was mixed. We were really deliberately mixed, it was so well-specified system, I don't know how they could do it, but each kid from each floor was from different class. It was funny for us, but in principle we had a real military system, maybe not such as in fifties, but those eighties were rather hard. We were bullied, permanently oppressed, they called us by our surnames, we were not people. Our teachers didn't trust us, even our own parents trusted more teachers than us. My classmate wrote his parents a card from a pioneer camp and he signed it by his surname. Vorel. In the old town it couldn't be like this.

The Monument

Mr. L.:

To look into the sunset. The concept of „blocks“ is really exciting. From archeological point of view it indicates the place of permanent address of a population, generally it indicated any place intended for settling down. Today our blocks make home for hundreds thousands of people. They are places of permanent addresses. A man can object to this kind of house building. It's talked about absence of estetical qualities but that crude concrete effuses enormous power. Piece after piece, prefabricate after prefabricate, put at each other effuses safety and provides a man a shelter in archetypal meaning. They speak about the monotony and greyness of these residential constructions. But their neverending copying evokes trust like they'd talk to a man: I'm here, a pure form and I'm performing my function. If you look closer at a concrete wall, it must fascinate you. It's said this architecture badly influences people's interactions with the world. But specially this kind of house building redefined social interactions of our modern society. If a man looks at the block of flats as at neutral platform that provides all possibilities of selfrealization, it must entrance him. It's said about a bad urbanization without marks of town structures, which fatalized its inhabitants forever. But exactly thanks to it a new inhabitant level with completely new assertive energy was generated up! In our country blocks were not built for social living; that's why their citizens are more various and with much more fruitful inner capacity. If artists like Christo and Jeanne Claude were here, maybe they would close Petržalka as German Reichstag, temporarily cancelled and changed into a gigantic sculpture of disremembering, we could free ourselves for a while and look into the sunset with a genuine sentiment. The collective mind is temporal and the concrete..... will be revitalized. Be it as it may.

Children need a larger flat

Juraj:

I would never go to Petržalka. I've lived in the Old town for 35 years and I wouldn't go there. But children need a larger flat. Every time I come here, I feel it all will fall down on me. There are high flats in the Old town. Spacious. And it's very hot here, normally oppressive.

Henrietta:

But it's in every block of flats. Nothing new.

Juraj:

Petržalka always reminded me of human hatchery. There is too much of them there, the houses built in criss-cross, from the beginning it was like this. To get used to this place will take years.

Henrietta:

Do you remember my daughter running away once? She was three back then. I was looking for her. It was raining before and there were puddles on the road. I found her on the road. She took her sweater off and wiped the puddles.

Juraj:

Petržalka was always too crowded. What would you do if you met an Eastern? Or somebody from Bystrica? It reminds the time when everybody moved to Kosice when iron-works in Kosice was in construction. From one day to the next they built a large city here. That's the biggest problem. And those glass balconies where the mess is well seen. Those arrived from villages. Ordinary people stored their things in their cellars but these didn't, they wanted their things on hand so they leave it all on the balconies.

Henrietta:

But the balconies are not glassed-in.

Juraj:

But they are. In Petržalka they are glassed-in. It's glass. Bottom isn't concrete but glass.

Henrietta:

It's not, these are all concrete.

Juraj:

There's glass, girder glass. That stitched.

Henrietta:

But where?

Juraj:

But it was!

Henrietta:

It was not. These houses are standardized and all bottoms are from concrete.

Juraj:

Petržalka stands on water and scrap-heap. Once there was the Danube arm and then a scrap-heap, a dump.

Henrietta:

And also an old cemetery. Recently my friend told me that she buried her husband here and he was sinking little by little. People say it's all waterlogged.

Juraj:

Do you remember, we were here to visit our friends when they got a new flat here? There were only thick walls and floors. What did we say? We wouldn't live here – not for worlds! And how did we do?

I don't mind Petržalka. I absolutely don't mind it. But if I should die for it, I so won't.

People are scared

Lady from the downtown:

My first daughter is in Petržalka, the second, younger, is still living with us in the centre. I perceive those differences in social area quite expressively. There are people really dissociating themselves from the criminals. It's said that also drugs were found there, in the evening by my own eyeball I saw young people using drugs. But my daughter lives in another location, two bus stops from the Safarik square, she gets off by TPD, there are some coloured houses, it's Sustek's street, there's a clinic and those houses and flats are very expensive. It's a paradox that basically decent people live there, but there's a casino on the other side. And the criminals go there.

As I know the decent people defend from it and the newest info from my daughter is that her block agreed montage of safety system – hidden camera, they want to know who is hacking around their cars through days or nights.

So that's it. People defend from it. Somewhere like this and somewhere in some other way. In another part of Petržalka, my colleague lives there, people have code keys and you don't get in. I often visit her. Other day I had to wait out as she didn't hear the doorbell. A man went around and said: I don't know you.

And he didn't let me in.

Right.

My husband is an architect so he recommened our daughter what, where and how. That location is favourable, it's close to the centre and then, there are services. But there are no more positives.

I think the other locations are crowded. Nearly every second has a dog. Because people are scared. This I say. Finishing and leaving.

Good sources

Small fish:

Everybody living in a block of flats knows in principle everything about himself. Like in a village. But it's a little more lively. My friend from Jarovce says it's dull there. All people sit at home and play on PC. We buy alcohol and drink in the car. You're out, in warm, what damned smoked pub should we look for? In Petržalka you can easily catch it. Less you beat up going alone than in the group. How many times those junkies from Sevcenko's street were after us with a meat beater... One took out a batt, second the meat beater, my friend got one on his head, another on his back, started to run, I stayed there becoming dumb and them, stupid junkies, went on. Hardcorees, skinheads, it's neverending, everybody needs to belong somewhere. Formerly I also wore like an atypical rocker. My classmate metal fan listens to satanist bands, national socialistic black metal, these are national socialist black metalists. And hip-hop, it's trendy now, kiddies go mad from it, they don't know what the base is. My sources are good. Our housekeeper's son is my mate from childhood. You can see the private things. For example, we called one street here „hot“. As some boys from there used to go to shoot porno to Wien. Even I know one of them, Darius. We used to go to Alfa wanting to be a mafioso. But then he realized his useful life would be short. So he started shooting porno. Those little dealers are everywhere.

Here above us one Bastur lived but I suppose he's not on drugs anymore. I knew one gipsy musician, mafia visited him with baseball bat but I don't know if he had drugs troubles. One boy living above was taken, he had a hand in dealing. Another, called Srb, I talked to him from time to time, we tried green together. Going out with people like him I'd be completely another man. There's a group I go playing football with, normal people but they dragged before the match to enjoy it more. But they play madly then. To get dragged before football, I'm not sure. When I tried green, everytime it was nothing. But in spite of the last New Year's Eve! It was some fucking skunk. I took one drag and it disconnected me for all evening. Even I didn't drink only some bears. I took no vodka, it would break me down completely. After this I told myself to finish with green. Those bad orders were enough.

There are some places that you wouldn't go to or you would but scared. Actually not scared but with backdoor open. It works for the dealers, they have those small fish and then bigger fish. And that's true – a small one speaks till it may and if it may not, it goes to jug, as has no information.

Engerau Niederdonau Großdeutschland

List of culture and history monuments in Petržalka expressed by means of movement and sensational theatre.

Statue of mother and her child, Zaporozska str.12, in front of the Health Centre

We used to go to hospital there, when I was a child.

So did we.

The Memorial of Slovak emigrants and abroad Slovak, 2000, Janko Kral's Park

I've never understood what is this memorial for. What's here for remembering?

That there's more of us!

And this is fabulous, my friends!

Janko Kral, poet, 1822 – 1876, Janko Král's Park

Three valleys – in first black row
In second green beech woods grow
In third dense maple woods green
Maid and Johnny sit under maple tree

If somebody's deadly skinning
Somebody's by devil bringing
Only listen noise in fields
Saint Nepomuk Help him please

The Memorial of the Armenian holocaust victims, Wien drive

Absolutely don't know where it is.

The Red Army Landmark – the monument, Rusovce drive

I'd withdraw some memorials. Some things simply shouldn't be reminded. Or we've forgotten about memorials, too?

Taras Sevcenko's Memorial, 1989, Vlastenecke square

Sorry but who was that?

A painter, wasn't he?

I think he was a poet. Streets are not called after painters.

Epitaph and bust of Moyses and Bernolak, Lenardova street

I never understood why these two are together on the bust.

Once I pissed them! Both!

The Memorial and Mass grave of Jewish fascism victims, Hrobarska street.

In November 1944 approximately 1600 Jews were entrained and taken to Petrzalka. They were placed into cold barns and in lofts. Some of them wore only wooden shoes. But it was in November. Gestapo was in charge of the camp. Break-out was not possible. A man had nowhere to go. In March the camp was emptied. All had to line up at Semperit and then they were ordered to march. It was early evening and SA officers were drunk. When marching started, the drunks started to shoot the prisoners. From behind. We could hear crying of the wounded. It was so terrible sound, I couldn't explain myself what it is. I was ordered to clear up the road from the dead. We put into the wagon about 27 dead bodies. Some of them were still alive. Gestapo officer Hartheasser came and shot everybody who was still alive, shot into the head. All the Wien drive was full of dead bodies. One of them, about 65, was still alive. We put him into the wagon too, I thought he'd die by the way. After unloading he was still breathing, I couldn't bury him. I was a sanitary in Kopcianska, after all I'm compassing. So I beat his head with the shovel to finish his suffering.

What was that?

Let him be. Let's go on.

Sculpture of a woman with a dove, Lietavska street

The Pope's Statue, The Holy Family Church, 2003, Pajstunska street

The stone – A Worker, the author – Hucko, 1982, Bulikova street 17

The Memorial of Daniel Tupy, Tyrs quay

Jesus Christ's Statue, Dalibor square, section 4764

You know when Jesus was killed?

... everybody knows it!

So when?

The Table – the basic panel of building, 1973, Hraniciar's square

Memories are created by each own

The Medium:

I think memories are created by each own and they are such as you want them. My Petrzalka memories are pleasant.

When I got married we got this beautiful flat. It was a new building and Petrzalka plans were very nice, there should have been trains, cinemas, theatres here. It was presented everywhere how it would be beautiful and basically from the beginning it also was built like that. Only later we noticed it was going in its own different direction.

While it was in construction, we used to cycle here as the roads were beautiful, perfect swampy grounds. Drazdiak was basically a swampy ground. There was mud all around, no roads, no paths. We wore rubber shoes and plastic bags on shoes, it wasn't possible to walk with buggy, as when was rained the wheels sank through the mud. Children had to be brought by arms, we enjoyed it much. No schools were here, shopping was done in the old Petrzalka. You could find kindergardens only in the old part, there was nothing in the new. Blank construction. We were here among the first, could be said we came to suffer from all the building. When a kindergarden was finished in front of our block, my little girl was four. A school was opened when she was seven. I can say it became to be suitable for living after ten years, relatively. Because everything was already on hand, shops, doctor, culture centres. In the beginning our neighbour relations were very good, everyone was welcome, invited for visit. It was different, familiar. Everyone knew everyone from this big house and there are ten entrances! We got to know each other on the terrace. Today you can't see anybody. We are friends with the family living opposite and we also meet with the family on the eighth floor. They are here from the beginning as we do. The others change and we don't know anything about them.

Everything changed after the revolution, two or three years it went the same way but then started to change. Relations started to change, the life too. It started to be quicker. In nineteen eighty-nine we expected everything going well, we expected something like Switzerland as it was presented to us. We always trust medias. As they presented Petrzalka as a beautiful place for living, the same after revolution – they promised us everything being beautiful but everything went some other direction. Now the young know nothing's ideal.

Perhaps if we all do our best, everything would be better.

Petrzalka grew on me, I have no interest in changing the flat. If I changed, only for another in Petrzalka. It's already grown on me also with the bad and good what is here, simply Petrzalka is mine. The good what is here is the nice surroundings and it's close to the centre and shopping parks. What I don't like are drugs and those vices that are trying to squeeze here. Also in our house there are people like this. Yes, we already have various classes, and this is already not good because some people rent flats, some inherited them from family and some who got them don't care. But we, who are owners, would like to live in nicer surrounding and suddenly there's no time for it.

My first watch

I don't feel myself being a Petrzalka man. I was born in Zvolen. Everybody says to me I'm not from here. My Dad was a dancer in SLUK and here they got a flat for the excellent results in art. My parents were travelling and me and my brother stayed at home. I remember how we started to go fishing with our friends. I don't know how old could I be, maybe eight-nine, we were fishing, throwing stones as typical kids. We were coming back with my best friend Lukas and suddenly he says: Let's run. And I say: What is, what's happened? A gypsy group was coming up near to us, the same age or a bit older. There were four of them and cried: Hey guys, exchange us money. We felt stressed and said: We have no. They ran back to blocks, typical Petrzalka, blocks of flats, a man can't recognize, and we happy going home being safe and suddenly twenty member gypsy group. They ran. We saw there was nothing to do, simply helpless. They came to us and they were between fifteen and eighteen, simply gang and one of them came to me: What's the time? I had my first watch with Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, a nice yearlong calendar, simply my first watch. I said: Half past two. And he got it out my hand. I started to cry: What are you doing and give it back. And he started grumbling that he doesn't give it back and they would beat us and started leaving. I cried terribly, so unhappy, and he came to me and said: If you want I'd give you another. And I was disappointed, heartbroken and since that day I hate Petrzalka!

Dad fell in love with a dancer. He became a top choreographer and went to the Netherlands with her, I'd never forget how I was looking at him leaving through the rolltop. And what could I do? Mum remained lonely, she went to the National Theatre. She met a man. Actually it was Johny, a tubist from the theatre. Of course it was rather difficult for us to accept him, he was a new member of our family, but we accustomed quickly, we liked him, simply we terribly fell in love with each other and everything. He was like a Dad and is up to now. He played the tuba and our family wanted me to try playing the tuba at the conservatory. But it absolutely bored me. A boy doesn't have the faintest idea about an instrument, so I simply tried the drums.

I can't forget, in the fourth class I was admitted to athletic group for four years but I was immediately bounced as I fired the class-book up and ran with it around the stadium. And I always was a bad boy and simply I did things like this.

But that our Johny started discovering my talent, he taught me in this way and he would put me closer to this and I said: OK, OK. That time I also met Jergus who soon became my best friend. We fit each other unbelievably well. We were not only relative instruments, he – the trombone, me – the tuba, but there was also a great sympathy when in a second you are sure you'd die for each other. We go into an orchestra playing movie music. I talked to myself: My God this is the stupid movie Mum watched with my brother, Star Wars. But later when we started playing it and all instruments were roaring... shit, damn.. I have such an instrument and when all started to play, simply it was trumpeting and I started to like it. I forgot all unimportant things and sounds people hear in the radio. There's nothing to take from it and they can't enter into the spirit of it. I got myself into a world seen by nobody else and that is hardly understood. That time my life took a totally different direction. Exactly.

I attended about 3 conservatories because I had problems starting with one girl. She was the daughter of an important conservatory professor. People didn't trust me and didn't like me as I learnt bad. Consequently a man doesn't make a good impression. I played but I didn't attend the subjects. I started to express my opinions, like what I thought about the school. Also the I told director and the gremial board that nobody can play here and that it could be better to change all the professors as they teach bad. So my problems began. I befriended Pali, a trombonist who that time didn't have the faintest idea about anything. I was in the fifth and

he in the fourth or third class. He was an „always loverboy“. Thinking of actresses all the time. I fell in love with a girl that refused me because I was absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing doing with myself, it was really absolutely nothing, I really don't know what it really was. And I found out that she was in love with a boy. All the day I was crying in the lobby, nobody came, nobody spoke to me. Suddenly silence fell in the lobby. I sat with my head down on my knees and voice: Are you Lubo? I picked my tearful eyes up: Ye, and who are you? I'm Palo. Terrible anger inside: are you the boy enticing my girl away?

I was being in love with her for 2 years, her name was Henrietka, he passed me his hand: Come and let's talk. He told me he didn't want her and since that moment we were friends. I showed him the music world. „Look at your fab instrument what it achieves“. I gave him the headphones, listen to this. Music changed his life too, it was the same as me when I was in the beginning. This way I met my best friend and we simply started to do fitness. Music went aside.

I hate that place.... the blocks. It was spoken, where're you from? Petrzalka? And it was considered mocking or something humiliating. Because gypsies, junkies, groups live there and people just like them. It's a dangerous place and everybody acts to be important. Everybody hip-hop, everybody's got wide trousers. The values are upside-down in Bratislava and whole Slovakia, but mostly in Petrzalka. For me it's effected by those blocks of flats and that it all looked like a prison, houses one like another.

But I believe in change of Petrzalka, when there will be more normal people because now there are children sending education to hell. They're influenced by medias and some stupid songs. They don't do anything. They wear hoods and go to pub get drunk. And we're only laughing that being older you'll understand, hopefully. I was a skinhead too, but things happened, and thanks to them I'm sitting here now and telling all this, hoping once it'll be better.

With the capital D

The Priest:

When the Roman Catholic Church and its masses, Divine services, are mentioned, I always ask to write it and think about it with the little s and the capital D. We celebrate our Divine services in our new church in Strecnianska street. The process of building was not easy. We were in the same street in a block of flats in the basement for bicycles and buggies, made able for Divine services. Eighty square metres, lower ceilings. In cooperation with young people and churchmen my predecessor arranged it. It was a compensation for clearing rooms by the Danube. The Church council had always only rented rooms and that's why the desire for building somewhere an evangelic church was logic. These efforts could be finished only after 1989. From the peripheral localities we wanted to get into the middle, to be among people and now the church is lost among thirteen floor high blocks of flats in Znievska and Strecnianska street. But on the other hand it's not important to be sticking but to be found by people.

From our point of view it was a mission opportunity because Petrzalka was projected as a socialistic city without churches. Only what already stood was respected, it means the little Roman Catholic Church built by Baťa.

The majority of people were immigrants, like without roots. If they also had their roots in some church council, they came to Petrzalka, saw no church, they broke their habits and finally rooted out. We worked hard to look for them. But there were also people who looked for the God honestly.

This, what is happening on the spiritual level, is going to manifest outside. Look at the photographs from 1988 and look now. You can see it reviving. Reviving in colours. Of course there are some given things – those blocks of flats you can't demolish easily, although there are some plans like in past DDR. It's reviving also in the spiritual level. I can see the change among people, they are like a big family. Several times a year they take the immobile people by cars. Nobodz can order it. It's spontaneous, people grew accustomed to things that were not normal before.

It's nice to speak about the spiritual community where buildings and walls are not important. But only when you have place for living. We had to care also of the practical things, it means of the building. There was a lack of finances, we started with a few ten thousands but poeple saw something was happening and they helped us. If you do something together, you appreciate it more. Many people lived a long life to see a dreamt church in the end. A change like this can influence further generations. After the change in 1989 a priest told me that changing things inside would take two generations. I was optimistic but my older brother in God was apparently right. That process is different from demolishing a house and building a new one. They're already waiting for me.

The text was created by editing of the interviews with the real people. The names of the characters are fiction. The interviews were led by: Marián Balážik, Lubomír Bukový, Petra Fornayová, Juraj Igonda, Henrietta Rab a Ján Šimko.