COMINFORMIST

I, VLADO DAPČEVIĆ

SLAVKO ĆURUVIJA

Publisher's Note

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ENCOUNTER WITH A COMINFORMIST

When the guards opened the door to his cell, which was no larger than 10 square metres, he was sitting at a small table with his back to us, having lunch. He looked over his shoulder at us, stood up, smiled, and like a courteous host with well-maintained manners, asked us to wait in another room. He knew who we were and knew we would come.

He was already 70 years old at that time. A hunched, thin old man of average height, with completely white short hair, grey eyebrows, a bent and boxer's broken nose. He was wearing the ugly, humiliating grey prison uniform. Most prisoners I met in Yugoslav prisons had extinguished looks in their eyes. His eyes still shone. I only knew about this man from what had come to me in various situations, usually as ideological and political messages shaped in some official workshop or as gossip and even sensational spy stories, like the one about his kidnapping in Bucharest.

I knew his name was Vlado Dapčević, that he was the brother of the legendary Peko Dapčević, that in historic '48 he said YES to Stalin and the Russians when Tito and the Party said NO, that he then tried to reach Romania, that our border guards killed General Arso Jovanović on that occasion, that he was captured and officially declared a traitor and Stalinist, that he was sentenced and sent to Goli Otok, that he escaped from Goli Otok to Albania, that 15 years later, under mysterious circumstances, he was brought from Bucharest to Yugoslavia, that he was secretly tried... When I started preparing a series about political prisoners for *Borba* and a show with Božo Kalezić for Belgrade Television, I didn't even know if he was alive.

We waited for him in a kind of prison living room. Not

for long. He appeared visibly cheerful and talkative. He immediately took the initiative. He asked who we were, where we were from, why we had come, he joked... Just like someone welcoming guests to his home, someone completely adapted to the environment he lived in. Kalezić is also Montenegrin, so they immediately started questioning each other about other Montenegrins they knew. Enthralled by local patriotism, word by word, they first wandered to the Soviet Union, to some village known to Dapčević where only Montenegrins live, and then to literature. To poetry, as I recall.

I was not in the mood for jokes, poetry or Russian villages inhabited by Montenegrins. Sitting before me was Yugoslavia's number one political prisoner who, spontaneously or intentionally, it didn't matter, was very successfully demonstrating his lively spirit, above-average intelligence, extraordinary memory and broad education. Ten metres away, in another room, sat the entire administration of "Zabela," probably as startled as I was by what could emerge from this suddenly arranged encounter, even though it was officially permitted. Back then, in the spring of '87, the mere entry of a journalist into a prison smelled of something dangerous which, regardless of the consent of the competent ministries, could easily backfire on them. The administration of "Zabela" almost faced such a consequence because of my meeting with Vlado Dapčević.

We talked about his prison days in "Zabela," Goli Otok, today's Yugoslavia and today's generations, emigration, socialism and communism... I was touched by the drama he had lived through, even though he spoke about it so lightly and with a smile that it sometimes seemed simply unbelievable that all that could happen to a living person. Unfortunately, his ideological and political views on things completely disappointed me. Not because he had an extremely poor

opinion of the entire postwar Yugoslav leadership, led by Tito — after all, he had very valid personal reasons for that — but because I couldn't understand how such an intelligent man, at 70, after everything he had seen and experienced in Yugoslavia, Albania, the Soviet Union, Romania and the West, could still believe that the path to communism, to a society of human justice and happiness, to a society without exploitation, could only be led through rigorous collectivism, egalitarianism, forced class struggle, revolutionary violence, the general greyness of the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat... And because I couldn't accept that today's world could be divided only into imperialist and communist, with nothing in between.

True, we did not discuss all this in detail then, but what I heard was enough to make me feel like I was talking to a man from some, who knows which, past time, or with a "man from another planet." When we clashed again last fall precisely because of his political views, he often repeated that he was aware that we "who suckled anti-communism with our mother's milk" saw him as a "man from another planet."

I think we parted ways then in "Zabela" both unsatisfied. He was surely bothered by my lack of deep engagement in his drama of life and my open rejection of his political philosophy, and I was genuinely depressed by his frighteningly one-dimensional and utopian view of the world. True, the circumstances in which that conversation was held contributed to such an outcome. We had very little time, jumped from topic to topic, I constantly steered him only towards what I thought could be published, and I skipped over some very delicate topics because it was clear to me that they could jeopardize the entire effort. Due to self-censorship and political hygiene, I sometimes asked completely stupid questions or occasionally responded to him in a distinctly senseless way.

He understood all this and patiently endured it, even warning several times that the whole effort would be in vain and that probably nothing from the entire story would be published.

In such a mood, we parted. He complained about an ulcer in his duodenum, lamented about the prison administration not giving him Ćimić's *Politics as Fate,* and often expressed doubts about leaving prison alive. Last autumn, he confided in me that during the last two years of his imprisonment, he lived in genuine fear that someone would kill him in his sleep during the night.

All my personal and professional curiosity about Vlado Dapčević would probably have been completely satisfied if I had been able to publish that conversation back then. Even if it were superficial. Satisfied, despite the distinctly provocative nature of Dapčević's personality and the rarely encountered drama of his biography and life story. Expressed in sheer numbers, that man spent 48 out of 56 years of "active political struggle" — as he calls the period from 1933, when he joined the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), until today — in prison, war and emigration. Because of his betrayal of Tito, the Party and the state, he spent twenty-two and a half years of his life in Glavnjača, Banjica, Stara Gradiška, Goli Otok, the Central Prison and "Zabela."

However, the day after our conversation, things started occurring in the office of Toma Tacić, the warden of "Zabela," which greatly piqued and continually reignited my curiosity. First, I was openly accused of deceiving the prison administration and fraudulently gaining access to Vlado Dapčević. A few days after leaving "Zabela," events began to unfold that definitively instilled in me a desire to fully understand the entire "case of Vlado Dapčević." The so-called "state reason" (only the "revolutionary" reason is stronger and more mystical) came into play, and the all-powerful state intervened. In-

itially casually, as a warning, and then quite sharply and efficiently. Already on Goli Otok, where we went after "Zabela," I received a warning that the meeting with Vlado Dapčević was a messed-up affair. Later, on several occasions, I was discreetly, in various situations, advised not to "play with my life" and to stay away from Dapčević. In such situations, a person who values their dignity naturally imposes at least the question: Why? However, no one deemed it necessary to answer that question for me. On the contrary. Everything was shrouded in secrecy and sometimes discreet, sometimes open, but inarticulate threats. No responsible person wanted to explain or suggest anything officially. The Federal Ministry of Justice referred me to the Ministry of the Republic, which simply "did not pick up the phone." It only spoke up on the day I published a brief and dry piece of information in the *Borba* series on political prisoners, stating that Vlado Dapčević was still in our prison, that we had met and talked, that he hadn't changed his political views, and that he was in fairly good physical health. I received a phone call from none other than Dragan Šaponjić, the Serbian Minister of Justice, the man I had been unsuccessfully trying to contact for days. He invoked the law and his authority, and ordered me to hand over all materials related to the conversation with Vlado Dapčević by 5 p.m. that same day. He took everything from me: the tape recording and the transcript of the conversation and suggested that I don't discuss the conversation with Dapčević much. Previously, a federal and a republican policeman came to the newsroom and took a copy of the transcript of that evidently irritating and for some reason important and dangerous conversation for a powerful part of the Yugoslav hierarchy. The material was returned to me only at the beginning of January this year, thanks, among other things, to the understanding of Borisav Jović, the current Vice President of

the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and the exceptional correctness of Sreten Vladisavljević, the current Secretary of Justice of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

The whole matter only partially clarified for me several months later. By a series of circumstances and probably due to poor coordination on some state lines, we were allowed to meet Vlado Dapčević — despite explicit instructions from the highest Yugoslav authorities that even other convicts in "Zabela" should not have contact with this prisoner. When Stane Dolanc, at that time Vice President of the Presidency of the SFRY and for many years before that the main man for security issues in the SFRY, learned that we had met with Vlado Dapčević, talked with him for over an hour, and even conducted a proper television interview with him — it shook some important and comfortable seats so much that their then-frightened occupants, driven by the instinct of self-preservation, immediately lashed out — at whom else — at the one who dared to disturb their comfortable bureaucratic order and peace.

That was in the spring and early summer of 1987. Vlado Dapčević was released from prison a year later. Secretly, without any public information — just as he had been sentenced. Something happened — I didn't know what at the time — and the state reduced his sentence by two years. On the same day he was released, he flew to Brussels on the first plane, accompanied by his wife Micheline, under the supervision of officials from the Belgian embassy. The Belgian ambassador allowed him to visit only his brother Milutin, who was already dying at the time.

Although I hoped to meet Vlado Dapčević at least one more time, I must admit that last summer I was both surprised and frightened by the announcement from my, un-

fortunately now late comrade Staša Marinković, the then-editor-in-chief of *Borba,* that I should prepare for Brussels. I was surprised because I did not expect such an assignment in the middle of the July heat, before the holiday. Staša was, among other things, a grandmaster in the casual, one-move resolution of complicated matters. He simply met me in the hallway, hugged me and said: "Ah, yes, it's time for you to go to Brussels and finish that thing with Vlado Dapčević!" Just like that. And only he, because of publishing that admittedly pitiful piece of information from a journalistic perspective of pride, had to defend and justify himself at least 10 times in front of various secretariats, committees, commissions, working and coordination groups, and their angry and vain plenipotentiaries.

And I was scared, of course, of the potential renewed wrath of the state and its fists — although some longtime drivers of its repressive machinery were already picking pensioners' mushrooms on the slopes of our three-headed and other mountains. I had substantial personal reasons for this. I admit, I was also afraid of Brussels. Actually, of all kinds of networks into which I thought I could fall while looking for Vlado Dapčević. Based on the little I knew about him, I could assume that because of what he had done earlier and because of what he knew, he could be the focus of at least three or four intelligence services and at least two or three political emigrants, not at all friendly to Yugoslavia. I thought that my sudden appearance in that tangle of political and police affairs might resemble something out of those bad spy stories where everyone is out to get everyone else at any moment for some reason. Besides, I didn't even know how Dapčević himself would react.

Because of all this, I just showed up in Brussels at the end of September 1989 — without any announcement, without

even a phone number or address for Vlado Dapčević. I was convinced I would get it at our embassy. I thought there was nothing more natural than for my embassy to give me the address of a man who was still a Yugoslav citizen and who, moreover, was not unknown. However, that was rather naive reasoning. True, people received me more than hospitably — the way compatriots just arrived from the homeland are received abroad — but I was officially immediately told that "the state of the SFRY does not want to be involved in any way in *Borba*'s matter with Vlado Dapčević"!

A bolt struck me in the middle of the elegant office of the otherwise very kind ambassador Kuzman Dimčevski. I wandered around Brussels for two days, visiting antique shops and scrutinizing all the old men who passed by me on the Brussels boulevards and avenues, senselessly clinging, like to a straw, to the possibility of simply running into him on the street. When I had already begun to lose hope of finding him, the so-called "journalistic methods" helped me. They don't differ much from police methods, but they are sometimes more effective. People are not afraid and, of course, prefer journalists over policemen, so they are more willing to help.

I only got Dapčević's phone number on the third day of my stay in Brussels. I called him around 6 p.m., introduced myself as a journalist from *Borba* and requested an immediate meeting. He didn't recognize me at first, so when I mentioned we had met in "Zabela," he even asked, "Which pavilion were you in?" He was curious why I wanted to meet. I didn't want to explain over the phone, so he told me to call back around eight, when his wife would be home, as he wanted to discuss it with her.

They showed up in front of the "Saint Catherine" hotel a little after nine that evening in a small Volvo. Micheline was driving. The meeting was mostly cold, or rather mutually

cautious. He recognized me, got out of the car and shook hands with me routinely, as if we had seen each other just hours earlier. This time, Vlado Dapčević was not the old man in a humiliating grey prison uniform but an elegant older gentleman. He wasn't so much more dignified — he had been dignified even in prison — but he carried himself with more self-awareness. He was two years older but looked younger than during our first encounter.

I sat in the back seat, and after half an hour of searching for parking — Micheline refused to park where it wasn't allowed — we ended up at Grand Sablon Square. As we passed numerous illegal but convenient parking spots, which Micheline simply ignored, it struck me that these people in the West might one day fail, if ever, because of their extreme self-discipline.

We spent four hours that evening in the "Le Zavel" restaurant, talking until 2 a.m. It was a Friday, and the Belgians have a habit of sitting in restaurants and bistros with friends and acquaintances late into the night on Fridays. Actually, the two of us were talking, sometimes very animatedly and probably too loudly for the taste of those nearby, while Micheline remained silent in a way I still haven't figured out. Mrs. Micheline Dapčević is a native Belgian, a lady and a successful woman of the Western European type. She is closer to 60 than 50 years old, dressed fashionably, even youthfully, educated, well-off, highly ranked in her profession — completely emancipated in every sense. However, towards her husband, an old-school Montenegrin, she behaved just as Montenegrin women, traditionally raised to always support their husband's charisma and honour. She watched and listened to him attentively, stopped speaking when he started, and yielded to his argumentative persistence without seeking counter-arguments. Although I asked her several times, she never once

mentioned being tired or wanting to go home that evening, nor did she ever seem bored. The majority of our four-hour conversation was in Serbo-Croatian.

Our first meeting in Brussels was all about mutual assessment. I, of course, tried my best to persuade him to agree to an in-depth conversation about all his battles, while carefully gauging whether his story would be more than just a general indictment of the Yugoslav revisionist leadership this time. He was likely assessing whether it made any sense and if I was the right person to hear, record and publish what he had never detailed to even his family. I concluded that his life story, as an authentic testimony of the "other side," would reveal not just the intensity and tragedy of a dramatic split within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the communist movement, but also the genesis of that split and the later ideological, political and human fate of the defeated side. Vlado Dapčević eventually accepted my argument and agreed to the interview.

However, he regretted it at least once a day in the following days. At the start of the second day, he was even resolved to end the interview. I had irritated him so much the previous day by opposing some of his theses about the changes in the leadership of the CPY in 1937 that he, without taking off his coat, announced from the door of my hotel room, where we were working, that he was quitting and would compensate me for my travel expenses if necessary. No persuasion helped. He only returned, took off his coat and sat down after I almost panicked and shouted, "Don't you realize you might die tomorrow, and all this will be lost with you!"

He spoke for seven days, seven to eight hours each day, non-stop. I listened quietly, endlessly changing cassette tapes, occasionally asking follow-up questions or expressing my differing opinions, though much more cautiously than on the

first day. During breaks for lunch or coffee, I allowed myself the freedom to argue with him a bit more energetically. Our clashes sometimes resembled a mini ideological war, where I loudly accused him of total dogmatism and ideological violence over history, while he just as loudly accused me of inherent anti-communism and complete ignorance. We often weren't aware that such discussions drew the attention of the typically quiet surrounding guests at "Christian's" and "Falstaff," the restaurants where we usually lunched.

We grew close during our constant interaction. His fantastic memory and extensive knowledge about various matters, especially about the situation in Yugoslavia and the world (he regularly receives, reads and studies all major Yugoslav dailies and weeklies, and buys major world newspapers), impressed me again. Everything he had survived, as I listened and later processed all that material, I experienced so deeply from a human perspective that I had genuine nightmares for weeks after our conversations. I came to understand the reasons behind many of his actions, defiance, even his hatred and immense desire for revenge. I also understood this stance of his:

"To understand all my activities and, as some might see it, my unbelievable and foolish stubbornness, this continuous opposition to everyone and everything — some might even think I was a kind of madman or something — I want to say at the end that my actions were, after all, rational and always based on my ideological and political beliefs. Throughout my life, I've strived to remain consistent with what I believed in, regardless of the consequences for me."

So, I understood this stance, but even in October and December, when we authorized the text, despite our closeness, I left Brussels with the same duality towards Vlado Dapčević that I had carried from "Zabela." I couldn't reconcile with the idea that an entire, potentially very successful, life should be

wasted for ideas and political convictions on which he still bases his political philosophy today. And at that, wasted despite almost daily encounters with facts that brutally shattered the imaginary world he constantly sought and never found in Yugoslavia, the USSR or other socialist countries.

I asked him in the end if he thought he had lived his entire life in a tragic delusion. He answered that he did not, that a scientifically based idea cannot be called a delusion, and that despite everything, the ground is now being cleared for new battles, that the struggle for the communist idea is yet to come. He said literally:

"We have been losing to the advance of revisionism for some time. It's time we start winning."

He no longer saw himself in that struggle:

"I am an old man, tired, tormented as no living person on this earth has been tormented... For me, everything is over."

He summarized his remaining life in three wishes. Whenever I tried to keep him with me after 6 or 7 p.m., he would say, "But I have to spend the evening with Micheline and Milena." He adored them and wanted to spend as much time with them as possible. He fervently wished to transfer his father's remains from Albania to Yugoslavia — his father, Jovan, had been interned in Albania at the beginning of the last world war and died in an Italian concentration camp there. "No one will do it if I don't do it during my lifetime, and you know how sacred ancestors' bones are to every Montenegrin," he said. Finally, he desperately wanted to see his Ljubotinj again and spend at least part of his remaining life there. He still didn't dare come to Yugoslavia. "I don't have a clear situation," he told me last fall. The situation is actually quite clear, although he doesn't believe it. He has paid all his debts to the Yugoslav state, he is still a Yugoslav citizen, and he can come to Yugoslavia completely legally and without any risk to his

freedom. The tragic experience is still stronger. However, he said, "If they allow me to transfer my father's remains, I will come, come what may."

We parted in early December 1989 in front of my hotel — the same place we met when I first came to Brussels two months earlier, in almost the same way. He simply shook my hand and said, "I guess we'll see each other again."

We were quite tired of each other. Micheline drove him home, and I left for Belgrade the next day, never letting go of the life story of this man. A story that begins long before the time when he first became a "traitor," "Stalinist," "Cominformist," then a Goli Otok prisoner, "enemy number one," emigrant, political prisoner again, and recently, once more, a free man.

Vlado Dapčević was born in 1917 in the village of Ljubotinj, near Cetinje. He was born in a year of "slavery, hunger, fear, in the year of Montenegro's capitulation..." as he would say. His father was a teacher and his grandfather a priest. Before him were born his sister Danica, and brothers Milutin, Peko and Drago. Both his father and grandfather were Whites,* and whenever they had the chance, they openly opposed the autocratic regime of the Montenegrin king Nikola. Something constantly kept him restless as well. He mentions pride, truthfulness, defiance, a sense of justice, courage and a desire for achievement...

He was one of the best students at the Cetinje Gymnasium. One day, the *Communist Manifesto* fell into his hands, and not long after, at the age of 16, he put a red tie around his neck...

SLAVKO ĆURUVIJA

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* The Whites, pan-Serbians and pan-Yugoslavs in Montenegro during and after the declaration of the Podgorica Assembly in November 1918.

THE RED TIE

Already in the sixth grade of high school, I completely felt like a communist. Back then, I was reading the first leaflets, things like "Down with the bloody Aleksandar!" and similar, although I was put off by how sloganistic and disconnected from reality they were. As the first sign that I was a communist, I began wearing a red tie. I remember, my cousin and I were once met by Blažo Raičević. I think he was the secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Montenegro. We didn't know that, of course. He looked at us, smiled and said, "Boys, and wearing red ties!"

When I read the *Communist Manifesto,* I completely felt like a communist. Later, I read Plekhanov, Marx and Engels. Simply, I considered myself a communist, even though I didn't know at the time that there were already communist organizations.

I started gathering people on my own. We talked, exchanged opinions. And not just that. In the sixth grade of high school, in Podgorica, I organized a strike against an arrogant professor, a White Guardist, because he was persecuting someone named Radulović. Whenever he would enter the classroom, we would start stomping our feet on the floor and banging the tops of our desks. It was louder than gunshots. We literally forced him to cry in front of the principal. Because of this, I was expelled from high school.

I only knew a few communists, the Ćufka brothers from Cetinje. They were bakers and communists since 1918. Every May 1st, with red carnations, they would go to the grave of Jovan Tomašević, the founder of the Communist Party of Montenegro. They would regularly be arrested, held for two or three days in jail, and then released. There were about 10

more workers, craftsmen. The nephew of those Ćufka brothers was my schoolmate. He probably told them that I had formed several groups and that we were studying literature. This is how Nikola Lekić, the secretary of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Montenegro, Boka, Sandžak and Kosovo found out about my work.

One time, that Ćufka nephew took me to their place in Cetinje. They told me they had heard about my work and that if I wanted, I should start working in an organized manner. First in school. When I agreed, they told me to go outside Cetinje to a certain place, where I would meet a man. As a sign of recognition, he would rub his hands with a handkerchief, and he would explain the rest to me. I thought it would be someone significant, but it was Jovan Marinović, whom I knew well. Among other things, he used to come to give math lessons to my brother Drago. He was the contact. That was when the first Communist Youth League (SKOJ) cell was formed, and I was immediately elected secretary of that cell. This was in 1933. During that time, I also met Nikola Lekić. I formed several SKOJ groups: in high school, the teachers' school and even in the seminary. Later, the Local Committee of SKOJ was formed and I was appointed as its secretary. There were three more workers in the committee with me. We were very active, agitating, propagating the idea of communism, distributing leaflets...

One day, Nikola Lekić informed me that they had accepted me into the Party, even though I was too young and it was against the usual practice. He said, "You have shown exceptional results. You will work for SKOJ."

That was the first time I was arrested. We had the task of distributing leaflets on Armistice Day, the one in the First World War. The Provincial Committee printed them with an anti-war message. They were good, well-written and literate.

Nikola Lekić wrote them and they gave us several hundred. I distributed them to the secretaries of the SKOJ cells, with the task to go to the regions to post them or throw them into some institutions. I threw the ones I kept for myself, met a friend and we went for a walk towards Donje Polje, towards the exit from Cetinje. People usually walked there in the evening. In the meantime, our leaflets caused an uproar. Police were everywhere. Suddenly, two policemen with rifles approached us: "Hands up and come with us to the police station!" As we walked, I put my hand in my pocket and felt that I had one leaflet left. I tore the pocket with my fingers, crumpled the leaflet and dropped it through the leg of my trousers. However, one of the policemen noticed and grabbed the leaflet.

They immediately released my friend, as he wasn't a SKOJ member, but the police chief interrogated me. I played completely naive, acting surprised...

"They saw that the leaflet fell out of your trouser leg."

"That's not true! Maybe I kicked it on the street."

Then I heard Peko. He found out I was arrested and entered the police station with two other comrades, shouting downstairs: "How can you arrest a boy!"

They took me to jail. And the jail was terrible. In the cell lay a Ukrainian. It stank to high heaven! He had escaped as a soldier across the border to Turkey, then was moved from one country to another. No one believed him. I spent the whole night standing by that small opening in the door. I couldn't breathe any other way. That first night in jail was terrible for me. Later, when I became a regular visitor to jail, it became completely ordinary. In the morning, they took me out of the cell. Around noon, they released me. They had no material evidence. They slapped me around a bit, but there wasn't any special torture. My father wasn't in Cetinje at the time. He

had gone to Belgrade on some business, so he didn't know I was in jail. It was such a scandal that no one in the family dared to tell him.

From then until 1935, I was arrested several more times — mostly for fights with the Ljotićites.* In 1935, I was arrested during demonstrations over the murder of that Srzentić at Belgrade University. There were large demonstrations in Cetinje, Podgorica and some other places. I had been sent the day before to Rijeka Crnojevića to inform the committee secretary, Janko Lopičić, when to come to the demonstrations and to prepare well, as we should expect serious clashes with the police. Maybe a month before that, Dr. Vladimir Vinek had come to Cetinje as the police chief. He had been the police chief in Zagreb before, but was sent to Cetinje as punishment due to some connections with the SS or something like that.

The next day, the demonstrations started. There was huge snow in Cetinje. On the streets, although cleared, piles of snow remained. Janko Lopičić, who later died in Pljevlja, was designated as the speaker. He stood up to give a speech. The policemen rushed to stop him and the commander of the police squad charged at him with a sabre. Janko stood his ground and the commander slashed him across the forehead with the sabre. A terrible battle began. We were bloody, but so were the police. And they were badly hurt. Suddenly, my father appeared and tried to take me out of the demonstrations. A worker, Bogdan Laković, a Party member, said, "Let him fight, sir. Without this, he won't become a real man." My father was afraid they would kill me.

We broke through the police cordon and reached the

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* *Ljotićevci* — Paramilitary branch of the Yugoslav National Movement (Zbor), founded in 1935 by Dimitrije Ljotić (1891-1945). It later collaborated with the Germans during the Second World War.

banovina.* Some wood logs were being unloaded there. We had agreed that every time the police dispersed us, we would regroup and head towards the centre again. I followed this diligently, but fewer and fewer people were coming back. The police cut us down. There were about 70 policemen and over 200 gendarmes. We were around 600 to 700 at the beginning. I took shelter in a house. There were 10 of us in it. But the police found us. As soon as they saw me, they grabbed me. While they were taking me away, I broke free and ran, but ran into another group of policemen. When they took me to the police station, about 50 demonstrators had already been arrested. They brought me in. They lined up policemen on both sides of the wall, with the chief at the head of the line. One of the policemen said to Vinek:

"Chief, this one is very dangerous."

"Why am I dangerous? I haven't killed anyone."

"What are you talking about?"

"My mouth is here to talk!"

Vinek slapped me, and I kicked him in the stomach and punched him in the face with all my strength, making him hit his head against the wall. He shouted:

"Hit him!"

The policemen grabbed me by the hair, by the arms... They beat me savagely. Then they took me to the toilet. It was me and another worker, Vujović, from Cetinje, and they continued to beat us with rifle butts. The rifle butt has tremendous force. Half-dead, they took me in a van to the jail in Bogdanov Kraj. They carried me into that filthy place — a communal cell — and I was all bruised, blue, not a healthy spot on my body. They made room for me to lie down and started to splash water on me. Among the arrested was also Nikola Lekić, although he did not participate in the demon-

* Governor's office (Serbo-Croatian in the original).

strations. Around midnight, the cell door opened: "Nikola Lekić, Vlado Dapčević — come out!" I couldn't walk. They took us to the police station. It was around half-past midnight. They put us in a room, tied: my left, his right hand. In that dark room, five or six policemen came in and first started beating me:

"Who did you meet yesterday at Rijeka Crnojevića? You are one of the organizers of the demonstrations!"

Then they turned to Nikola. One hit him in the chest with a rifle butt. Nikola got up, pulling me with him, grabbed the rifle from the attacker and kicked him hard in the stomach with his mountaineering boots. The policeman fell and Nikola started shouting:

"You beasts, how can you beat people!"

He began hitting them with his one free hand. I was helpless, just watching. I thought: "They will kill Nikola." At that moment, Vujisić, the father of the actor Pavle Vujisić and then the deputy police chief, whom I later saved from death on one occasion, and the head of the Administrative Department of the *banovina,* and some Petrović, a Montenegrin, rushed in. The beating stopped. I mention Petrović was a Montenegrin because Montenegrins know how dangerous it could be if they killed one of us. They could all pay with their lives. In any case, I got more than Nikola. Nikola fascinated me then. He showed incredible determination and courage.

We were there for 30 days. After 30 days, we asked to be released. At that time, the police had the right to detain someone for only 30 days...

What is it like today?! That's a story for children. The law was respected in that Yugoslavia, but in this one, it isn't respected at all. Wasn't I under police investigation for twenty-two and a half months in '48?! Wasn't I under police investigation for four and a half months recently?!

We started demonstrations in prison. When we went out for walks, we would shout in unison, "We want freedom!" It could be heard all the way to the edge of Cetinje, to our families. Everyone gathered. They said, "What is this now?" They didn't release us, so we started a hunger strike. We went on strike for seven days. On the evening of the seventh day, they released us...

I continued working. In 1935, the Provincial Conference of SKOJ was held in Podgorica, and I was elected as the organizational secretary of the Provincial Committee of SKOJ for Montenegro, Boka, the Sandžak, Kosovo and Metohija. Until the major crackdown on the Communist Party of Montenegro in 1936, I was imprisoned three more times for a month each and expelled from various high schools countless times.

Even before these demonstrations, I had entered the seventh grade of the Cetinje Gymnasium; they expelled me for communist propaganda and work. The director called my father, who was then acting head of the educational department, meaning the director was his subordinate, and informed him that they had to expel me for two years. I privately prepared for the seventh grade and passed it in Podgorica. The following year, I enrolled in the Gymnasium in Nikšić and simultaneously became the secretary of the Nikšić District Committee of SKOJ. After a month and a half, they expelled me from the Nikšić Gymnasium for a discussion in the literary society. They wrote in my certificate that I was expelled for communist propaganda. In Podgorica, they refused to accept me. I went to Berane — they refused there too. I went to Peć — where not just me, but a whole group that had been expelled — they refused there as well. We heard that in Prizren they accept everyone because, due to the insufficient number of students, they were considering closing the gymnasium.

That was the rule: if there were fewer than 120 students, the gymnasium couldn't continue. They accepted all of us, about 30 in total. However, after a month, they expelled me. They simply called me and said, "You are a dangerous communist; you can no longer be in school..." So I went home to prepare privately.

Somewhere before the final exams, I received a notification from the police that I was expelled from all secondary vocational schools in Yugoslavia — without the right to take private exams. They said it came from the Ministry of Education. Until the crackdown I mentioned to you, I was working on creating new organizations and leading various actions. The crackdown came from above, from the Central Committee of the Party. The secretary of the State Bureau, some worker named Mitrović, pseudonym "Olgica," was caught by the police with reports from all the provincial committees in his briefcase, including all the most important contacts. The crackdown began. First, the contacts were arrested, then the members of the Provincial Committee connected to those contacts. The entire Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Montenegro was arrested, except for Nikola and Risto Lekić. Božo Ivanović, Savo Brković and another group fled to Albania, and Blažo Jovanović hid with some relatives...

Yes, yes, Blažo Jovanović, the last lord of Montenegro. During those mass arrests, Janko, who had his forehead cut with a sabre, I and that peasant who gave a speech at the Cetinje demonstrations were given the task, in the presence of a comrade from the Central Committee, called Mandušić, who was tall, large and imposing, from Bjelopavlići, to take a leaflet against the arrests to the print shop and organize a protest rally in Cetinje.

About 1,000 people from Crmnica, Ljubotinj, Cetinje,

the surroundings of Lješkopolje and Piperi came to that rally. They walked with the Montenegrin war flag. At that time, we had some kind of political alliance with the federalists, not the separatists. We believed that Montenegro should have autonomy within Yugoslavia. A lawyer from Podgorica, Vešović, who later died as a partisan, spoke. Just when we were about to disperse, the police and gendarmerie, who had taken positions in the rocks above us, opened fire on the rally participants. Twelve demonstrators were killed. About 50 were wounded. I don't know who ordered the shooting. Everyone scattered. Some here, some there; I was left alone.

After the demonstrators scattered, the gendarmerie, police and customs officers (even they were there) collected the dead and wounded demonstrators, loaded them into trucks and took them to the Cetinje hospital. When the wounded started arriving, Peko, who was then the secretary of the Party Committee in Cetinje, organized demonstrations and fiercely clashed with the police and gendarmerie in front of the hospital.

Suddenly, Blažo Jovanović appeared. He said:

"I have to go to Košćele."

Košćele is a crossroads: one road leads to Rijeka Crnojevića, one to Ljubotinj, one to Cetinje and one to Ceklin. He needed to meet with some of those from Piperi there. I said:

"Why did you tell him to go there, man, there are always gendarmerie patrols!?"

"I have to!"

Probably to inform his wife and family that he was alive and unharmed. I said:

"I'll go with you, but it's very likely we'll encounter a patrol there."

I had a Colt, and he had a Steyr.

"We must be ready and not allow them to lower their

rifles. You reach Košćele through a narrow passage between rocks, so you don't see anything until you're right at the crossroads."

I went first and said:

"Blažo, if we meet them, immediately shout 'hands up,' disarm them, hide the weapons and run. Agreed?"

We approached, and suddenly, I saw a gendarmerie patrol with rifles! About 30 metres away. I whispered to Blažo: "If they turn and see us, shoot immediately!" No response. I turned around: Blažo was 100 metres behind me, running away! He left me! And I went because of his task, not mine. I ran after him. Caught up to him:

"What's wrong with you? Why did you leave me like that, man?"

"I'm sorry, I got confused."

Blažo didn't know where to go. I took him to Ljubotinj, to my grandfather's house. We spent the night in the attic. In the morning, I heard my uncle had come and was talking about those killings. My grandfather was crying for me, thinking I was left somewhere in those thickets. In the evening, we moved to a hill above our house and stayed there for about 15 days.

We talked about everything. I saw he was severely criticizing Nikola Lekić. I listened for a long time before I started opposing him. I was simply stunned! Nikola was far above him in every quality.

After that, we went to Crmnica at Nikola Lekić's invitation and met with Nikola and Risto Lekić. I thought about whether to tell Nikola what dirty and untrue things Blažo had been saying about him. Especially when I saw how sycophantic he was towards Nikola during the meeting. I didn't tell him anything because Blažo had told me in confidence, and it would seem like I was betraying him. I made a mistake

because that Blažo Jovanović cost the Montenegrin communists more than all the repression by the Italians and Germans combined.

In that crackdown, the organizations connected to those arrested fell. I was given the task of creating new organizations and strengthening the existing ones. We continued working as if the crackdown had never happened. I went from village to village at night, hidden by party members, fed by them. The police learned that Nikola and Risto Lekić were hiding in their home village of Seoci, in Crmnica, and sent seven or eight gendarmes to arrest them and take them to Virpazar. However, the villagers jumped in, started fighting with the gendarmes, some even disarmed them, but the gendarmes in the rear opened fire and killed one of the villagers, wounding Risto's sister and Nikola's uncle. In the commotion, Nikola and Risto escaped. After that, a real war began between the gendarmes and us, although we tried our best to avoid direct clashes.

In 1936, about 400 Montenegrin communists were arrested and handed over to the court. Further conflict was senseless. Somewhere in September, it was decided to end all this and surrender to the authorities, provided the court directly took us and we didn't go through the police.

That's when I argued with Peko. Luka Ivanišević and I reached Cetinje and met Peko. He started:

"What kind of communists are these, members of the Provincial Committee, all betrayed!"

"Don't say that, Peko, the police had all the materials."

"What materials, they are not communists."

At that time, he was the secretary of the Committee in Cetinje. He came from Belgrade and wasn't exposed, nor could he be exposed in Montenegro because he was a member of the Belgrade organization. When he came to Cetinje,

the Organizational Committee appointed him as secretary of the part of the organization that remained unexposed. For example, everything related to me, Luka Ivanišević and Nikola Lekić was not exposed. They weren't arrested because no one discovered them. I was still the organizational secretary of the Provincial Committee of SKOJ and simultaneously a member of the Organizational Committee of the Party in Cetinje. Angry, I went straight to town, without hiding, and surrendered myself. My father arranged for court guards to be sent for me and to take me to the court prison, not the police prison. The prison was divided into two parts: the right was the police part, and the left, completely separate, was the court part. Judge Krstajić, who later joined the partisans and even became an Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council member, interrogated me. He died recently. After just two days, they took me to Sarajevo under guard.

I WANTED TO GO TO SPAIN

I was not convicted. Such a massive arrest and all those tortures couldn't go without international intervention. For instance, from France and various other countries. The Party organized it. Therefore, at the beginning of '37 — January or February, I'm not sure, I think the end of January — the government decided to release all of us. Only about 20 were convicted. They released me as well. I returned to Cetinje and continued my work the very next day. I became the organizational secretary of the Party Committee in Cetinje. The political secretary was Branko Petričević-Kada, and the members were Peko and a worker named Durutović. We started to rebuild the organization. It had been largely destroyed in that crackdown. Once, we received notification to prepare for departure to Spain and that one of us had to go. Immediately, Peko and I argued over who would go. Peko wanted to go, and so did I. I told the committee members that Peko was intervening because I was younger, that he was subjective on a brotherly line and that they shouldn't consider it at all. Peko cut in: "Then go!"

It was decided that I would go and take a group of 35 people with me.

Oh, what a departure that was! I called the people to a meeting. The meeting place: two kilometres outside of Cetinje. We headed to a general meeting at a peasant house on the Sozina mountain above Sutomore. I remember there was torrential rain. I didn't tell anyone about going to Spain. I simply told them to come so we could discuss some matters. I was afraid they might tell someone: a girlfriend, a brother, a sister... Everyone gathered and I announced: "We are going to Spain!" No one objected. And we set off for Spain in the pouring rain. We had a contact at some Vaso Vukman-

ović's place in the village of Podgor. He led us to the gathering place. Wet as mice. Hungry. We found Nikola Lekić there, along with groups from Kosovo, Nikšić, Berane, Podgorica... There were about 140 of us. We immediately started descending towards Sutomore. We were a bit late because we waited for a group arriving in Virpazar like they were going to a wedding: by taxi, one after another! Night, we descended towards the sea, and somewhere halfway, Nikola began giving the agreed signals. The ship was already offshore. They responded that they couldn't pick us up but would come back the next evening. The storm was terrible. We descended to the beach in Čanj and crammed into some fishing huts. The next day, waiting. The day passed, night approached, we watched the sea through binoculars, and at one point, we saw warships surrounding our ship offshore. And, coming towards us from above, were at least 400 gendarmes!

Nikola immediately said:

"Vlado, you take responsibility for the whole group. I don't need to tell you about conduct. Head towards them in groups so we can escape."

Have you ever been to that beach? There are huge rocks. You can pass between them without being seen from above. We started moving. When we had gone about 200 metres, the gendarmes shouted: "Stop, we'll shoot!" Mandušić, Nikola, Risto and two others who were supposed to lead them got away. They had to. They would have been criminally liable if they hadn't. The gendarmes surrounded us. There was shouting, commotion, and since they didn't want to take us to Bar at night, they kept us there and allowed us to light several large fires. The next day, they led us away. We sang Spanish and revolutionary songs. We came across an old peasant; I remember him well even today. He was old, over 70, and was hoeing around his olive trees. When he saw us and all

those gendarmes, he took off his Montenegrin cap, his eyes filled with tears, and shouted: "Forward, forward, my falcons, without effort there is no resurrection!" That old man gave us strength.

They held us in some railway workshop for about a week, and called us for questioning. No one wanted to admit anything, although it was obvious what it was about. They didn't give us food; our sympathizers bought and brought us some bread, bacon and cheese. Then they distributed us by trucks to different districts. My group and I were transferred to Cetinje. They kept us together in some police classroom, and then they took me to Vladimir Vinek, the head of the Cetinje police. I mentally prepared myself for the worst:

"Hello Vlado," he stood up from behind the table, similar to a lectern, approached me and extended his hand. "How are you?"

"I'm fine."

"Vlado, I have to tell you that you impress me and that I respect you. You didn't go to Spain for a wedding, but to die."

I stood there, looking at him, thinking: there must be some trick.

"I know who led that group from Cetinje and that you are a member of your Committee. Still, I won't take measures now. The main thing is we prevented you from going. And even if we hadn't, you wouldn't have succeeded: you would have been sunk by Italian guns."

I believe that would have indeed happened. The Italians were doing that at the time. He continued talking: about how he could make me talk, how even those who graduated from the Red Professor School — the communist university in Moscow — confessed to him... Suddenly, he said:

"So, Vlado, can you and I be friends?"

"We can. That depends on you."

"How on me?"

"Well, like this. You can start doing us favours and atone for the crimes you've committed by torturing communists, beating them..."

Imagine, he asked me, a communist, he who had bloodied his hands on communists, if we could be friends! What else could I have answered him!

That Vinek had a special respect for me and Nikola Lekić. Once, he stopped me on the street:

"Let's go for some pastries."

There was a pastry shop right next to the police station. The only one in Cetinje. I think it was called "Adriatic." It was run by two brothers, Muslims from Sarajevo.

"Why would you treat me to pastries?"

"Oh, are you afraid I'll compromise you with your people?"

"I'm not afraid. I've proven myself enough as both a person and a communist."

We sat in that pastry shop, and he ordered pastries, *boza* and lemonade. I ate two or three pastries and drank two or three bozas with Vinek. He started talking. On my honour, he said:

"I observe you communists here. In my opinion, there are only two ideal communists among you: you and Nikola Lekić."

He knew the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern better than I did. He knew Marxism well. He said to me then:

"You can only win if a war breaks out. In no other situation."

"If you know that, and war is inevitable, you know that too, you're a smart man, why don't we agree to fight for a progressive cause?"

"That's out of the question. I hate communists from the bottom of my soul, and I would enjoy walking over their corpses."

That's what he told me. Yes, over pastries. After the war, I heard from some comrades from Croatia that Vinek had been appointed by the Ustaše authorities as the head of police in Slavonski Brod, and that in '42, or '43, he connected with our people, started working for us and did us great favours. The Ustaše discovered this and cut him into pieces. You see how a person's fate can sometimes be paradoxical!

BULLET TO THE HEAD

The happiest period of my life was from 1933, when I was accepted into the Party at the age of 16, to 1941. I lived life to the fullest. Party underground work, battles, actions, demonstrations... I was a professional revolutionary. I put my whole heart and soul into all of it and continuously felt the results of that work. I created revolutionaries. During that period, I brought over 200 people into the Party. And imagine how much time each person required, how many discussions and agreements... I felt like I was fighting for a great, just cause, for a future where every person would have equal opportunities, where exploitation of people would be abolished. I knew I was one of the fighters in this great cause and that my contribution made it stronger, more powerful and brought our victory closer.

All those arrests, beatings and tortures did not discourage me in the slightest. On the contrary. They steeled me. It was, in a certain sense, a matter of honour. I was always ready and able to face new, greater challenges. It was a kind of psychological training. Like in football: the more you train, the more you can handle.

In '39, however, I got permission to take my final exams, thanks to a friend of my father's who slipped the papers under the minister's nose for signing. I graduated in Kotor and went to study in Belgrade. My father begged me to enrol in the technical faculty, mechanical engineering. I went into engineering even though I had neither much aptitude nor desire for it.

I immediately joined the work of the Party organization and the fierce and bloody battles that were taking place at the time. Not just with the police, with the Ljotićites. It's hard for you to even comprehend it today. I'll just tell you a bit of it.

After long clashes and fights, the Ljotićites burst into the Technical Faculty one day, armed. Each one carrying two pistols. Masalović, the chief of Nedić's cabinet and later the commander of the Serbian State Guard, gave them the weapons to kill communists at the University. There were about 40 of them. They wanted to get to the balcony, make a speech, and then smash the Jewish shops on Aleksandrova Street, now the Boulevard of the Revolution. At that moment, I was speaking to the students. It was at the exit of the hall. As soon as they saw me, they fired at me. The bullet holes are still in that marble wall today. They charged at us with pistols, and we fought back with technical chairs. They wounded a guy named Vukadinović in the hand — he later worked for the UDB and committed suicide — and my guys wavered. We first tried to get out through the main door, but they opened fire on us. Upstairs, the student action committee had barricaded itself and was throwing iron benches at the Ljotićites from above. At one point, I saw two of them sneaking towards the wall, I threw a chair and hit them. But the heavy beech chair swayed me, and I slightly came out of cover. In that instant, I looked left and saw another guy sneaking. He opened fire on me. The bullet hit me below the cheekbone, passed above the palate and lodged in my throat. Had it been a centimetre higher or lower, I would have been done for. Six of us were wounded that day. Five Montenegrins and one from Vojvodina. The rest of our students from all over Belgrade saved us. It lasted an hour and a half, and not a single policeman in sight.

The leader of the Ljotićites at the University was a guy named Lunjo Lazarević. He lives in New Zealand today as a multimillionaire. His father sensed the war coming, transferred his capital to England, then from England to New Zealand, bought some factories there, and now Lunjo is one of the richest people in New Zealand. He looked like a real

gorilla. He beat up our people at the faculty whenever he could. Even before the shooting, we in the Party organization decided to teach him a lesson. We assigned two people. One of them, Blažo Marković from Piperi, was also a boxer. We called him Blažo Tank. Lunjo was the Yugoslav champion in the light heavyweight category. He was all muscle. With three or four punches, he took down both of our comrades.

Once, we were holding a meeting in the large hall of the faculty. I was speaking on behalf of our students. We were protesting against the measures introduced by the university senate: increased tuition fees, the presence of a professor at all our meetings, a ban on socializing... By increasing the tuition fees, they were preventing the poor from attending the University. We decided to fight against it to the last man. The University of Belgrade was known at the time for its struggle. The question was whether it would be a people's university, which also meant autonomous (the police did not have the right to enter the University during the time of the old Yugoslavia), or would it become fascist and anti-people. I addressed the professor present: "The students of Belgrade have been bathed in blood many times defending the autonomy of the University. This time, not just one, but all of us, are ready to shed all our blood to prevent you from abolishing the autonomy of the University."

We signed a petition and I took it to the dean. With me were three or four others. We entered. I started reading the petition to the dean — he was a scoundrel, some Nešić — when, before I finished, Lunjo entered with the Ljotićites and a petition from the "national students" fully supporting all the university senate's measures. He said: "Let the communist den be destroyed at the University," and so on. He interrupted me!

"Listen, please, you are, if nothing else, at least formally

academic citizens. I started first, and let me finish. You can speak after that. Dean, why do you allow him to interrupt me?"

Lunjo really did stop and I finished reading. We gave them an ultimatum: if they don't revoke those measures, we will start a strike and fight to the end!

When we got outside, Lunjo said:

"I'll show you."

"Lunjo, whenever you want. It can be now."

"Not here. We'll meet somewhere else."

Realistically, I had no chance against him. I told you, he was a boxer, and on the other hand, a fool. And armed. We didn't have weapons. We weren't allowed to carry them. For that, you could get 15 years in prison. We communists were the most persecuted people in Yugoslavia at that time.

One day I was leaving my apartment, Stevo Lopičić was with me, he's still alive — when here comes Lunjo! By the way, I was only afraid of an attack from behind. And the Ljotićites knew how to kill from behind. That's how they killed one of our students, Žarko Marinović. We looked at each other, and I immediately said to him:

"What are you looking at, you dog? Do you want to beat me up?"

"I'm not a bandit who fights on the street. Wait for me at the faculty. I'll show you there."

I went there immediately. For me, it was a matter of honour. Imagine, I'm some leader, giving speeches there, and now I back down, run away from some Lunjo Lazarević!

We went to the faculty, and there he was. With him were about seven or eight of those Ljotićites. All highborn children. Well-fed, athletes, tall and built. I told him:

"Lunjo, here I am, get ready."

I took off my scarf and winter coat and handed them to

Stevo. Stevo shouted:

"Are you crazy, man?!"

"Stevo, listen, go to hell! I want to fight. Come on, Lunjo, take off your coat!"

"I don't need it for you."

We moved towards each other. It was completely clear to me that I only had a chance if my first punch succeeded. If it didn't, I knew I was done for. He'd beat the hell out of me. I moved cautiously, tense like a spring. He dodged. I knew he'd trick me somehow. Suddenly, he jumped at my thigh with his legs. But, since I was tense, he bounced off me like rubber. Some of our female comrades saw the commotion, ran downstairs where our associations were, and shouted: "The Ljotićites are beating Vlado!" Fifty of them rushed upstairs. All of them were either communists or our sympathizers. When they reached me, Lunjo said:

"See, you are only able to fight fifty against one!"

I didn't let them touch Lunjo, so it wouldn't seem like fifty against one, and the Ljotićites left.

Two days later, I went to the faculty to see if my money had arrived. My father regularly sent me 1,000 dinars on the first of the month. It was a lot of money, but I was left with no more than 400 dinars. I gave to the Party, helped comrades, ate in the cafeteria and was half-hungry. My only expenses were cigarettes and food. Nothing else. I checked the list of payments to see if I was there, and in the hall stood Jaša Almuli — my Montenegrin from near Cetinje, Vlado Adžić and one of our sympathizers.

That Jaša Almuli later became a correspondent for *Politika* in South America. Now he's some kind of financial expert. Jewish, by the way. Two months ago, I saw his article in your *Borba*. Something about Kosovo. Like: what do those Albanians want, they have all the rights, and similar things.

I expelled him from the Party on December 15, 1939. And I told him: "Get lost!" Imagine this: we are preparing demonstrations, and he — a Party member — runs off to Niš! His sister was our sympathizer, learned there would be demonstrations, told his mother, and she took our Jaša to Niš. To some Jewish relatives. At that time, 14 of our people died. From the Technical Faculty, Živan Sedlar died. We led 300 people from the Technical Faculty then. Among them were only 11 Party members. The rest were sympathizers, ordinary students. They died, and Jaša Almuli fled like a coward. The next day: a commemoration. I spoke there. I came out of that commemoration and there was Jaša! And I said: "Jaša, where have you been? Do you even have any shame, you scoundrel? Our sympathizers are dying, and you, a Party member, are making speeches here, but run off as soon as you hear there will be demonstrations. Get lost! Never show up again. I am expelling you from the Party right now!" Truth be told, I didn't have the right to expel him on my own, but the others later agreed.

So, I'm reading that list, they're standing in the hall, and suddenly I hear some screams. I turned around: Lunjo entered, recognized Jaša and the other two, and started beating them. All three were lying on the ground! I run and shout: "Lunjo, brace yourself, you bloody bastard!" As I ran, I hit him with all my strength right on the chin. He fell like a sack. I shout: "Lunjo, get up!" Lunjo got up, but he was dazed, shaking his head, trying to get his bearings. I hit him again. And again... I beat him all the way across the front hall, then up the stairs, through the back hall, all the way to the dean's office. The skin on all my knuckles was peeled off. He couldn't get up; he crawled to the door, leaned against it and told me:

"We will kill you, you bastard!"

"Screw you and your boss Ljotić!"

They tried something soon after. They set up an ambush above the Svetosavska Church. I was living in Kotež-Neimar at the time. They didn't know where I lived, but they knew I passed through there. When I stepped into a well-lit area, I heard someone say: "There he is!" I immediately understood what was going on. I pulled out a large hunting knife I was carrying, brandished it, someone shouted "Knife!" and they scattered.

Another time, I was heading to the faculty — October, a beautiful, sunny day. I'm passing by the University Library and see about 50 students in front of the faculty. Suddenly, someone behind me shouted: "Stop, you bastard!" I reached for the knife again. I turned around: It was Lunjo with a gun pointed at me. Everyone who was standing behind me ran away. We stood two or three metres apart, staring at each other. I held a knife, he held a gun. He cursed me, I cursed him.

"I will kill you!" he says.

"You don't have the guts to kill me because even if I'm mortally wounded, I'll slit your throat like a goat." And I shouted: "Back off, Lunjo!"

My nerves started to twitch. I had decided to jump on him. I thought: I'll have enough strength, even if he shoots, to stab the knife into his throat. If I manage to stab him, no doctor in the world will save him.

"Back off, Lunjo, I'm telling you for the last time!"

Suddenly, he lowered the gun and just says:

"Remember, we will kill you this year!"

Ten days later, they shot me in the head. That incident in the hall. Although, two days before that, we attacked their meeting. They held it in the "Triglav" tavern. The task was to break in and disrupt the meeting! We gathered iron rods from bed frames, cobblestones — they were everywhere — and set

off. We agreed that five of us would go in first and that the others would attack from outside once we caused a commotion inside. We entered the tavern, crowded into a corner, and when Ljotić's deputy, some priest, stood on a table to open the conference of Ljotić's movement, a Party member, Milovanović from Jagodina, a medical student, shouted: "Down with Ljotić! Down with the meeting!"

As he shouted that, they turned towards us and a crazy fight broke out. Our people outside started throwing those cobblestones. They smashed the windows and bombarded the tavern. Inside, we fought with chairs and rods. Chaos, like in a movie. I hit the priest, and he fell off the chair. We smashed everything. Mirrors, bars, bottles, tables. We got out, and there were four or five cars of armed Ljotićites, led by Lunjo. When he saw me, Lunjo jumped out of the car, pulled out a gun and started shooting at me. I ran down Vojvoda Brane Street — there were some brickyards, open fields, holes — and he chased me. He fired nine shots at me. He made a mistake by running after me. If he had stayed put, he probably would have hit me.

When they shot me in the head two days later, I barely survived. A doctor saved me, a communist. He was the secretary of the hospital's party cell. I was in treatment for that wound for a long time.

IN THE PARTY, NONSENSE BEGINS

In 1940, I participated in two plenary sessions of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Montenegro. Already then, I saw that some intrigues, careerism and nonsense had begun in the Party, which simply shocked me.

After those plenums, Ivan Milutinović came and fiercely attacked Krsto Popivoda and Vlado Popović. Krsto wasn't present then. He was touring party organizations in Kosovo. Milutinović attacked them in the most vile way because the Provincial Committee for Montenegro had independently issued some leaflet against mobilization and involving Yugoslavia in the war. This was during the time when Tito first spent six months in Russia and then six months in Istanbul. They were completely disoriented, and all communication with the Central Committee had been cut off. The Montenegrin party organization was then the strongest in Yugoslavia in every way. We were the only ones with a party base in the countryside, in some municipalities even in every village. Our bright peasants had learned many things remarkably well.

Milutinović attacked Vlado Popović shamelessly. Among other things, he said to him, "We thought you knew something, but you know nothing and are worthless!" But Vlado was not at fault at all. Our only orientation at the time was an article from *Rundschau,* the organ of the Comintern, which published a resolution characterizing the upcoming war as an imperialist war between Germany, France and England. So a war that had nothing to do with us. Plus, the CC of the CPY Proclamation from 1939, after the start of the Second World War, also characterized the war as imperialist. Based on that, the Central Committee of the Party issued a leaflet in the same spirit. For months after that leaflet, we received nothing.

So we were against Yugoslavia getting involved in the war, and all our actions were directed accordingly.

In Boka Kotorska, there were over 10,000 mobilized soldiers. We had party organizations there, not only in every battalion but almost in every company. I, for example, organized the breaking of discipline, the spilling of cauldrons and singing revolutionary songs there based on that stance. And now, suddenly, Milutinović comes and says that stance is completely wrong. Tito came from Russia and told them, according to what he was told there, that it was the wrong stance, that each country should be looked at concretely, and that Yugoslavia should be defended against fascism.

We were very pleased that the stance was changed and the line of defence of the country was adopted. I remember Nikola Lekić — who was no longer the secretary but a member of the Provincial Committee because he had been imprisoned before — once said to me, "Vlado, do you see that people are distancing themselves from us because of our stance?"

Milutinović, therefore, attacked Vlado Popović, and Blažo Jovanović — who was essentially everything at the time, because the secretary was Božo Ljumović, a soft man without revolutionary energy and without enough theoretical and general knowledge for such a function — turned to Milutinović, rubbed his hands together and said:

"I fully accept the decision of the Central Committee."

Imagine! As if we don't accept it! I said to him:

"Blažo, you only lack a napkin. You know, like a waiter when he bows."

Then, the Bureau of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Montenegro was entirely composed of people from one village — Piperi. And Ivan Milutinović was from Piperi. When he came, he first met with them and made an agreement. Because the Fifth National Conference was being pre-

pared and the question of who from Montenegro would be in the Central Committee was raised. Since he was proclaimed a hero of the Party due to his stance with the police and because of his organizational activities and work, Krsto Popivoda was the most dangerous competitor to Ivan. And this is why he sought to discredit him. Ivan Milutinović was a great careerist who did not choose the means to secure a place and position in the highest leadership. He favoured sycophants and flatterers on one hand, and did not refrain from any means to politically and morally destroy those who were better than him on the other.

Before the Provincial Conference in Montenegro, Savo Brković, the organizational secretary at the time, came to see me in Kotor. I was leading the party organization in Boka Kotorska. Without any exaggeration, from something that did not even resemble an organization, I built a very strong organization. I organized the first demonstrations in Boka after 1918. He told me: "There will be a Provincial Conference with special statutory importance. You need to send one delegate from Boka." The best and most popular person in every way in Boka at the time was Nikola Đurković. He was later killed by the Chetniks. Someone betrayed him and the entire Committee. They were surprised by the Chetniks and Italians in the village of Kuti above Herceg Novi, killed, taken to Herceg Novi, and later played around them in the square. You must have seen those pictures of Chetniks dancing around the dead bodies of Nikola Đurković, Šarenac, Dašo Pavičić and Ilić. I considered that Đurković should be the delegate. Brković replied:

"First, Vlado, do not nominate yourself, because you will otherwise be invited to the conference, and second, a worker must be elected."

Meaning, someone who can be manipulated. He also

added:

"That is the directive of the Central Committee."

We proposed and elected Mato Petrović, a shoemaker. He later became the minister for social policy and public health in Montenegro.

Vlado Popović told me that Mato gave an excellent report at the Conference and praised me highly. He said that I had done a lot for that organization, that I had taught them how to work...

The conference was being prepared, but they didn't call me. They didn't call me because they anticipated how I would act. At the plenum, I strictly criticized idleness and favouritism, where things were resolved based on personal friendship lines rather than on principles. This is how the ones from Piperi operated. All one to another. The organizational secretary of the Provincial Committee, Savo Brković, had no idea about the situation in any district except the Podgorica district. Secondly, he had already shown himself as a coward, so I criticized both Savo Brković and all those like him.

At one plenum, I and some others attacked Savo Brković precisely for his cowardice. He then jumped up and started shouting, "You want to overthrow me!" Careerism leads to a struggle for power, even in an illegal party. Indeed, if it hadn't been for Čvorak's intervention, we would have cleared out both him and Blažo at that time. Čvorak was Ivan Milutinović.

Tito attended the Provincial Conference. Vlado Popović and some others proposed Nikola Lekić as the secretary of the Provincial Committee. However, Čvorak prevented this thanks to his influence on Tito. He said, "Nikola is very compromised and cannot handle such a responsible position." Before that, he was already preparing the ground for Nikola's overthrow in Cetinje.

In connection with this, a member of the Party, a tailor, later told an interesting detail. That man is still alive — he can confirm it. They assigned him to follow Čvorak when he, as a member of the Central Committee, came to attend the Cetinje district conference where delegates for the Provincial Conference of Montenegro were being elected. Čvorak insisted on electing someone named Đurović at that conference. That man had done nothing but was his personal friend. He was arrested in 1929 in Belgrade, beaten up there and since then hadn't moved a finger. Nikola Lekić, as a man who thought independently, proposed a peasant and put both proposals to a vote. Everyone voted for the peasant. Ivan Milutinović then said to the man who followed him, "Don't tie yourself to this leadership and Nikola Lekić because they will all soon be under the ice." So, Nikola Lekić was not elected as secretary, but he was elected as a delegate for the Fifth National Conference. Božo Ljumović was elected as secretary, and Blažo Jovanović as organizational secretary. Savo Brković couldn't even present the organizational report; Krsto Popivoda had to do it for him. And Blažo Jovanović didn't even attend the meeting; he sent his wife Lidija instead. That Lidija, who would chase us communists away when we came to ask Blažo for something so he wouldn't be "sent to prison."

No, no. I wasn't personally tied to Nikola Lekić. That's wrong. I valued him highly as a communist. And not only I but all the people who knew him. He was an exceptional man in every way. We Montenegrins are fiery, and he was calm, thoughtful, and carefully weighed things before making a judgement. He was a favourite of the people, not just the communists. When he came to Montenegro after finishing his studies in Zagreb, the Communist Party for Montenegro practically didn't exist.

There were only some small groups. Thanks to his activ-

ities, his exceptional organizational ability, his courage, the most powerful party organization in Yugoslavia was created. We supplied cadres for the whole of Yugoslavia — from Zagreb to Skopje. These cadres were created under the leadership of Nikola Lekić.

Ivan Milutinović attacked him because he realized that Nikola was far better than him and that, in a normal situation, Nikola should be in the Political Bureau, not him. He could have been the General Secretary of the CPY. He had all the attributes for it: theoretical knowledge, practical ability and organizational abilities. Ivan Milutinović was completely devoid of theoretical knowledge, and as for his other qualities, I mentioned them. He managed to eliminate Nikola Lekić from the leadership because of his great ambitions. Nikola Lekić had great ambitions but for revolutionary work, not for positions, while Milutinović sought position and authority at any cost.

Because he was superior to Milutinović, as a communist, as a man, and as a capable organizer and leader, Milutinović eliminated him from the leadership.

During the war, in December 1941, the Fifth National Conference of the CPY was held in Zagreb. For some reason, which I don't know, Božo Ljumović wasn't there. Because they didn't call him or he didn't want to go, I don't know. For Montenegro, Blažo Jovanović, Savo Brković and Nikola Lekić went. Savo Brković was not elected as a member of the Central Committee because of my and Božo Ljumović's attack on him. Krsto Popivoda wasn't elected either, although he should have been due to his arrest by the police and their treatment of him. He didn't betray anyone. To be fair, they didn't beat him either. He told me himself that he didn't sign anything for the police. But Milutinović threw such mud at him that he was never elected as a member of the Central

Committee. Nikola Lekić was elected. So, Milutinović didn't achieve much there.

But he managed to create confusion, division and discord in the leadership of the Provincial Committee for Montenegro. I witnessed this during my first meeting with the illegal Provincial Committee at the beginning of the uprising, at the end of 1941.

It happened in the following way: in 1941, I was the organizational secretary of the district committee for Boka. In August, the district committee transferred to the territory of the district. We were underground at that time. I didn't come back from the territory until March of the following year. Before leaving, I received an illegal call to attend a meeting of the Provincial Committee at the end of 1941. Savo Brković came to tell me.

The meeting took place somewhere near the village of Zagarač, in a ruined old house. When we arrived, I saw that Krsto Popivoda was there. Božo Ljumović didn't attend either. I told them, "Božo Ljumović has to be present; otherwise, I don't recognize this meeting." They told me that Božo was an illiterate man, unable to read and write, a simple peasant. I asked them, "Did you elect him? Is he a secretary?" They confirmed he was. Then I told them, "He must be present." Since he was somewhere nearby, they called him. And indeed, Božo Ljumović came.

I was shocked by the discord among them. They would each come and pull me aside to talk. One would tell me about the other. In particular, Savo Brković, who was a remarkable slanderer and flatterer. When he came to the village, they first shaved him, then slaughtered a lamb and so on. I had never experienced anything like that in the Party until then. I didn't recognize such comradeship.

The most terrible thing was when Krsto Popivoda came

and told me, "Savo Brković ordered our group of soldiers to shoot me in Šahovići. And they were about to shoot me when some more reasonable soldier intervened and said, 'Krsto, get lost!' And that's how I got saved." I was shocked. I said to Krsto, "What did you do then?" He said, "Nothing." I didn't ask him anything further. I was utterly confused.

Krsto Popivoda, therefore, left for Lješanska *nahija** and stayed there. Božo and Savo went to Danilovgrad. I accompanied Božo Ljumović. We passed by a highland area of a house and approached Podgorica in the evening. Božo went to one hut. I went back to Boka Kotorska. I met someone, and we slept in a barn where we were found by a member of the local committee of a Boka village. I went to Dubrovnik and, in March 1942, returned to Boka. I had to go underground because the Chetniks intended to kill me.

So I had nothing to do with Nikola Lekić. I never mentioned it to Božo Ljumović, but he once told me: "If it weren't for you, I would have killed Krsto." I didn't ask how or why. I knew enough. I didn't want to hear any more.

Savo Brković later removed Božo Ljumović in a very ugly way, without any reason. But he managed to gain trust in 1942 because he was an old communist and the masses trusted him. We had such a rule at that time: the secretary of the Provincial Committee and the commander of the National Liberation Partisan Detachments (NOPO) couldn't be the same person. So Božo Ljumović became the commander of NOPO, and Savo Brković became the secretary. This allowed Savo Brković to take over Božo's role, and since he was capable and a good speaker, the masses followed him. However, his authority was destroyed by his cowardice and inappropriate behaviour.

That man, however, knew how to worm his way into the

* Ottoman subdistrict or county (Serbo-Croatian in the original).

leadership. For example, he met with Milovan Đilas and presented himself as the victim of factional work in the Provincial Committee. He even accused me of cooperating with the Gestapo. Specifically, I had given refuge to the widow of a German communist who had fled to Yugoslavia from Germany, where the Gestapo had killed her husband. He said, "If he cooperates with them, it means he collaborates with the Gestapo." He was so vile and unscrupulous that he didn't hesitate to discredit his fellow fighters using the lowest means.

Later, Savo Brković rose to high ranks. For a time, he was a minister in Montenegro, and then he came to the Federal Government. As soon as he took power, he dismissed Nikola Lekić from the position of Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro, putting him in a less important role. In the Federal Government, he couldn't climb higher, so he resorted to blackmailing and sabotaging his comrades to maintain his position.

I had the opportunity to encounter such things in our movement more than once. People were simply being destroyed. There were means to destroy anyone who was thought to be capable of taking a position. At that time, I still believed that these were just individual occurrences and cases, that the Party as a whole was healthy and that it would find the strength to overcome them.

Well, if that's not enough for you, take the example of Petko Miletić. The first time I heard about Petko Miletić's expulsion, I was in the army. In the prison on Ada Ciganlija, I met the secretary of the Osijek committee, someone named Anić. When I came to the army in Osijek, I found that Anić. I knew he was a carpenter and where he worked. He was, by the way, my party contact in the place. In 1938, he told me that Petko Miletić had been expelled. The Central Committee expelled him. To me, the Central Committee was

something great and unreachable — like the Pope in Rome for devout Catholics. I had absolute trust in the leadership at that time. I saw that he disagreed with it, but he didn't dare to tell me openly.

Petko Miletić wasn't expelled by the Central Committee. He was personally expelled by Tito, even though he didn't have the right to do so. Petko Miletić was a member of the Political Bureau, just like Tito. According to the Statute, he didn't have the right to expel Petko. He simply staged a coup in the Party and took power. When I think about it today, I can't understand how those people could allow such a thing. Because our entire emigration abroad, in Paris, was against Tito, as were all the prisoners. In other words, the best communists. Except for Moša Pijade and three or four others, everyone was decidedly against him.

I remember a conversation with Radovan Zogović. When the new leadership was formed with Đilas in it — he and Radovan were great personal friends — they tasked Zogović with visiting Radovan Luković in prison after Petko Miletić's expulsion and the rebellion against that expulsion. He, like Zogović, was from Peć. A law graduate, poet and secretary of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Serbia. He was caught in some crackdown and sentenced to 10 to 12 years. Something like that. Zogović was supposed to convince Luković to accept the Central Committee's decision to expel Petko Miletić. At that time, anyone could visit you in prison, not like today. The bourgeoisie was much more tolerant of political prisoners than the Yugoslav revisionists were towards communists. He spoke with Luković and, among other things, said: "We have a new General Secretary. I hope things will go as they should. You should accept that too." Zogović and Luković were also personal friends. Luković had brought him into the Party. Zogović later wrote about this in two of

his poems. Radovan Luković replied: "Maybe he's a new General Secretary for you, but for us, he's an old opportunist and a very suspicious type!"

Can you imagine saying that about Tito! And he said: "There can be no discussion about this between us. This is the most ordinary intrigue. How don't you understand, Radovan, that they want to throw all the genuinely valuable communists out of the Party? I'm not defending Petko because of Petko, but because Petko is a person of great value!"

How was it not a coup? What mandate from the Comintern? What do you know about all this today? These things will be revealed. At that time, Tito hadn't yet received any mandate. He was hanging on. A trial was even being prepared for him based on a lot of material. He was accused of being a Trotskyist, and that of the German Party. He was accused of failing to send volunteers to Spain. He was in charge of that. He was accused of debauchery and personal spending of party money. And the older communists knew that. He went to the most expensive restaurants, bought the most expensive suits, wore rings and similar things. These were all serious matters. Mustafa Golubić was also against him. In Sarajevo, he even said that Tito couldn't remain the General Secretary, that he would soon be removed, and on that occasion, and once more, he said that of all the Yugoslav communists he had met, talked to and worked with, he was most impressed by Petko Miletić. That was our highest intelligence: Miletić, Prica, Keršovani... They couldn't be easily manipulated or made into subordinates. Prica, for instance, was the greatest theoretical mind of our Party.

And what about those Tito gathered? Let me tell you specifically about Lola Ribar. After all, Tito himself talked about it. Lola constantly informed him about who was saying what. He informed him that it was being said in prison that Tito

couldn't be the secretary, that it had to be Petko Miletić in any case and that they were just waiting for him to get out of prison, so it would be settled that way in Moscow. Lola was in a position to know such things. He moved in such circles. Tito abundantly repaid him for such services. Imagine, he even took him as the secretary of the Central Committee of SKOJ. Mita Miljković was the SKOJ secretary for Kosovo. He came to Belgrade once to establish contact with Lola. When Mita met Lola Ribar at Kalemegdan, he was simply shocked to find out that this was the SKOJ Central Committee secretary. Lola noticed this and said to him: "You probably expected some worker with calloused hands!" I know you may not understand this today, but imagine how it was possible to take a man, a salon communist, who had not proven himself in any way before that — as the secretary of the SKOJ Central Committee!

I don't understand what you're talking about. Sorry to have to say this again, but you young people in Yugoslavia don't know this part of our history at all. Admittedly, you didn't have anywhere to learn it from. What they served you is mostly not true. It's not true that the Comintern negatively assessed the work of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. At that time, a very unpleasant blow happened to our Party: the arrest of Gorkić, who was the General Secretary at that time. But a General Secretary appointed by the Comintern. We Yugoslav communists didn't elect him. Therefore, Gorkić wasn't our cadre, but a cadre of the Comintern. The Gorkić case is shrouded in quite a big mystery. I tried, while I was in Moscow, to figure something out, but I didn't succeed at all. They didn't let me! We'll talk about that later.

After his release from prison, Petko Miletić went to the Soviet Union via Bulgaria and Turkey. Tito also went to the Soviet Union at that time. Sometimes they even sat next to

each other in the Comintern while waiting to be called. With the difference that Petko Miletić had a permanent pass and Tito didn't. Someone from up there had to come down to let him in. For six months, it wasn't known who would be the secretary. One day, they came and arrested Petko! No one knew what happened to him. A Yugoslav woman who was in the camp there told Radonja Golubović, the editor-in-chief of that socialist Yugoslavia newspaper, that Petko Miletić was with her in the camp and that he died there. He didn't talk to anyone, always kept his head in his hands, looked ahead and simply faded away.

No, no. Stalin had nothing to do with that. You don't have the correct understanding of the Stalin-Comintern relationship. Stalin absolutely didn't interfere in personnel policy. That's absolutely not true. You see things simplistically. In the Soviet Union, I talked to a large number of people who were officials in Stalin's time. You probably know that Stalin had great reservations about the Comintern. Moreover, he had a hundred times more important problems than who would be the General Secretary of some Communist Party of Yugoslavia. He once even told Dimitrov that the Comintern was a nest of imperialist agents and that the imperialists had managed to infiltrate men who were leading a policy of breaking, not strengthening, the international communist movement. I remember Tito mentioned this once too. Besides, I just read in *Borba* yesterday that during a conversation in Moscow, Stalin told our delegation that only Dimitrov thought it was possible to lead the entire international communist movement from one centre, and he never believed in that.

If what you're saying were accepted as an axiom, it would mean that all communists in the world were just ordinary puppets. Take me, for example: I was never some top leader, but if I considered something wrong, there was no force that

could influence me... Now you're being mean. Okay, maybe that's why I wasn't a leader and maybe that's why I ended up the way I did.

After everything I learned before the war, my attitude towards the Party remained completely the same. I told you earlier why. But I began to observe the behaviour and actions of people much more critically. The earlier conviction that every communist was an ideal person — like that Stalin quote that communists are people of a special mould, made of special material — started to leave me somewhere around 1938. As time went on, practice increasingly convinced me that communists were as sinful as all other people and that in the communist movement, along with good people, bad ones also joined. People of very weak character, careerists, pathologically ambitious, cowards...

Like Savo Brković. When the Provincial Committee in Montenegro was dismissed (they should have been tried for those disgraceful acts in 1941: shootings, killings, which Đilas started, and Ivan Milutinović and Blažo Jovanović completed and took to an even higher level), they were all sent to various units. Savo Brković was the commissar of the 3rd Krajina Brigade. Once, in front of the entire brigade, Nikola Karanović, the commander of that brigade, told him: "You, Savo Brković, are the biggest coward in our National Liberation Army. And if you create panic one more time, as you have done several times before, I will shoot you. I won't ask anyone, even if I lose my head afterwards." Read Mihailo Lalić. In his books, you will find a lot about what I'm talking about. Especially about the then Piperi government in Montenegro.

However, the real problems and greatest disappointments began only at the start of the revolution. What happened before was nothing. The uprising in Montenegro was organized amateurishly, and we had ideal opportunities. We had communists, SKOJ members and sympathizers armed to the teeth. Perhaps we could have taken all of Montenegro without firing a shot. But we rushed into the uprising without organization, headquarters, commands or a plan. One doesn't know what could be worse. I led the party organization in the Katunska *nahija,* the area between Cetinje, Nikšić and Kotor. We were weakest there, and the influence of separatists was strongest. And then, that *nahija* was far below other parts of Montenegro in culture and every other aspect. Some old hatreds remained, as they had fought with weapons against unification until 1923. They even attacked Cetinje once. One evening, I held a conference in Cuce for newly-admitted Party members. Around 11 p.m., I don't know how he managed to reach us, Vukašin Mićunović arrived. He was then a courier for the District Committee for Cetinje. He called me and whispered: "Germany attacked the Soviet Union this morning!" I announced it to those people like this: "Comrades, the homeland of workers and peasants all over the world, the fortress of world socialism and the future of humanity — the Soviet Union — has been attacked. The task for us communists all over the world is immediately to make maximum efforts, sparing no labour, blood or life, to help the Soviet Union defend itself and defeat the fascists! The freedom of our country is closely tied to this. It can only gain freedom with the help of the Soviet Union! Therefore, from this moment, I declare all Party members mobilized and demand that they be ready to go into battle at any moment! We must start the uprising

these days! Organize immediately and teach those who do not know how to handle weapons because a terrible struggle awaits us!"

But this story must start a little earlier to better understand what follows. When the District Committee in Cetinje, led by Nikola Lekić, was dismissed, I was in Belgrade and knew nothing about it. One day, Vlado Popović, who was then a candidate member of the Central Committee, came and told me:

"Vlado, I came on the order of the Central Committee. You have to complete a task. You need to go as the secretary of the District Committee in Cetinje."

"Why? Nikola is there."

"No, he isn't. Nikola, Kada, Bogdan, Savo, the whole Committee, they are all expelled. There was a conflict between them and the Provincial Committee. First, the Provincial Committee dissolved them, and when the entire organization opposed this and complained to the Central Committee, they were expelled from the Party. You need to go there and save the Cetinje organization because Blažo apparently intends to disband it."

"I am absolutely against this. It means that anyone senior can expel someone at a lower level regardless of whether the latter is probably right. Vlado, I believe that both sides should have been temporarily removed from the leadership position and brought — thank God there are communists from Montenegro all over Yugoslavia — some of them to temporarily lead and impartially judge the whole matter. I absolutely don't believe that Nikola Lekić gave any reason to be expelled. You, like me, know that he is one of the best, if not the best communist we Montenegrins have."

"I agree with you, but that's easier said than done."

Vlado thought like me, tried to do something, but faced

resistance and backed off. He was afraid that the organization would be ruined, and knowing that I was one of the oldest communists in that area, he sought me to go there and prevent the liquidation of the Cetinje party organization.

He also told me that the Central Committee believes that they are good communists but made mistakes and had to be punished for those mistakes. It was April 5, 1941. A task is a task. I got ready to go.

The next morning, when I was supposed to leave, the bombing of Belgrade began. I lived near Slavija. I fled Belgrade and met a group of Montenegrin students near Ripanj. Among them was Jovo Kapičić, former assistant to Ranković in the police line. We called him Jovo Kapa. He was a particular character. They chose me as the leader of the journey, and we set off for Cetinje. At that time, it was not simple to get to Montenegro. I immediately said: "Everyone who has money should give it to one person who will pay for everything." We all gave money, the most my brother Drago and I, each about 1,200 dinars, but Jovo Kapa gave nothing. He said: "I don't have any." Throughout the journey, he was causing issues, and I insisted we not spend too much because I knew what awaited us. For example, we had to pay 10 to 15 times more than usual for a taxi from Raška to Rožaje. Somehow we arrived, and after two days, I stopped by the village of Ugnji, where Jovo's family lived because I needed Jovo. His father said he had gone to Cetinje and started praising him:

"See how good my Jovo is. He returned all 700 dinars I sent him on the first day."

Imagine, he told us he had no money and spent ours. But that's not all. You'll hear more about Jovo.

At that time, Jovo Kapa was the least of my problems. The troubles were just beginning. I went to Ceklin. It's a village near mine. There was Moša Pijade, with another comrade, and

Nikola Lekić. I approached. It was the first time I saw Moša. I greeted Moša, the doctor who was with him (later killed by the Ustaše) and Nikola. Moša had fled from Belgrade by the doctor's car, as long as they had gasoline. Then they somehow transferred to Montenegro because they deemed it the safest. When they reached Cetinje, Moša remembered the Ćufka brothers. They had been in prison together. He found them easily as they were bakers. He contacted one of them, and through the wife of Branko Petričević — Kada, connected with Nikola Lekić. Kada's wife was Nikola Lekić's sister. As soon as they met, they went to Podgorica and stopped by Ceklin, at a communist's house, to have lunch. I happened to arrive there. I was heading to Podgorica to connect, to get directives from the Provincial Committee, and to take over the duty. Nikola had just gotten engaged and was going to Podgorica, among other things, to visit his fiancée. They had lunch, and the four of us — Moša, the doctor, Nikola and I — set off on foot.

In Podgorica, everyone went their way. First, I met Božo Ljumović. Božo was in a hurry and said: "Discuss that with Blažo. I'm glad you came..." and left. I found Blažo. Blažo looked at me darkly. I started:

"You are surely informed that I have been appointed by the Central Committee as the secretary of this Cetinje organization. I came to see if there are any directives. The secretary of the interim leadership told me they had gathered enough weapons to arm 3,000 to 4,000 people..."

I also said that the comrade from the Committee told me about the relationship with Nikola Lekić and the expelled people. He said this and that... And Blažo responded:

"We dealt with Petko Miletić, who was something more than Nikola Lekić and his group, and we will deal with Nikola Lekić too!"

You should have seen the hatred with which he said that. I was stunned.

"Man, let's talk normally, without raising the temperature..."

"You, you deliberately brought Nikola Lekić from Cetinje to talk to Moša Pijade and convince him of your stories. We will discuss this!"

Thus, the accusation was brought forward. Nikola, indeed, as far as I heard, did not talk to Moša about any political matters. I yelled:

"Wait, Blažo, that's not true at all."

But it didn't help.

I arranged with Nikola to wait for me in a café so we could go back together. We met and returned to Cetinje. Neither then nor later did I tell him a word about what Blažo had said to me. Nor did I tell him that I was appointed as the Committee's secretary. Two or three days later, I received an invitation to go with the former secretary of the interim leadership to Velje Brdo, to Blažo's house. We arrived, and there were Đilas, Vlado Popović, Đuro Strugar, Božo Ljumović... Vlado Rolović also came, the one killed by Ustaše as an ambassador in Sweden, as he was appointed as the interim secretary of the also dismissed Bar Party Committee. It was evening. They gave us some *kačamak** to eat, and a few of us were led by Blažo to the stable to sleep while the others held a conference! They didn't trust us. I was furious. In the morning, Đilas gave us a report on the political situation in the country and the world...

At that time in Cetinje, there was a company of Blackshirts, a small company of carabinieri and an artillery battalion. If there had been any sense in that uprising, we could have taken Cetinje then. We could have captured a member

* Corn porridge (Serbo-Croatian in the original).

of Mussolini's fascist party's inner directory, the governor of Montenegro and Albania, five Italian generals, even an Italian prince, and all those separatist fifth columnists and the weapons the Italians had seized in Albania. All of them had gathered in Cetinje for the proclamation of an Independent Montenegro.

I was telling this to Vule, knowing I would carry out the orders given. I also told him, "As soon as the Italians start with punitive expeditions in a counter-attack, they will crush us with tanks. We will suffer defeat because we don't have good organization, we don't have headquarters. Moreover, we are now entering the time of the greatest trials, where everyone will show their true worth. Do you know that it's summer and all the families are in the *katuns,** in the mountains with their livestock? This is Katunska *nahija,* a vast area. It takes a day to cross it on foot. How can I notify Party members in one day across various *katuns* to gather and start the attack?"

I used the people present at the meeting, including Vule himself. I told Vule not to return to Cetinje but to go to Blagota to see his cousin — an exceptional hero who died in '42 — and tell him to come with his men from the Cevo area, so we could attack together. The day before, there had been about 30 carabinieri and a few gendarmes there. What you saw in the film "July 13" was our attack on the school in Cevo and the carabinieri.

Cevo is a small plateau, a village where the Vukotići come from. It had been the site of many large battles. At Cevo, Nikac of Rovina once made a great feat, greater than the feat of Miloš Obilić. Before the attack on Cetinje, the Turkish army had camped at Cevo. Nikac and his group put on tur-

* The form of pre-capitalist self-governing community in the Balkans, persisting in the village among families and settlements during the 20th century (Serbo-Croatian in the original).

bans and entered the camp at night. They reached the tent of the pasha, the Turkish commander, and opened fire from all sides, then drew their sabres and started cutting. There were about 70 of them, but they killed the pasha, all his officers and a large number of Turks. After that, the Turks did not attack Cetinje but retreated. Nikac of Rovina was an exceptional hero. Njegoš had decreed that the highest Montenegrin order would be the Order of Nikac of Rovina. He had already made the design and invited the Montenegrin chieftains from other tribes for a discussion. However, the chiefs from other tribes — the Ljubotinjans, Cetinjans and Crmničans — rebelled: "We won't wear the order of that *katunian* on our chests!" They agreed to create the Medal of Miloš Obilić. Thus, the Medal of Miloš Obilić became the highest Montenegrin order. It was made of pure gold.

We surrounded the school-barracks in a horseshoe shape and cut the telephone lines to Cetinje. I was above the school, near a small church. With me were Nikola Popović and Aco Vukotić. I sent a message to the others through a courier: "I will fire the first shot. When they hear the shot, they should all fire over the roof. If the Italians do not surrender, the second shot will be at the roof, and if they still do not surrender, then at the windows." It was exactly 3 a.m. on July 13. I raised my rifle and said to Nikola and Aco: "Good luck, let's start!" Then the first shot was fired in Montenegro.

Everyone started shooting, but the Italians did not surrender. We fired at the roof. Still nothing. They started shooting through the windows. We broke all the window glass, but the Italians still did not surrender. It was already dawn. I saw Andro Lompar going straight to the Italians. Suddenly, he started shouting: "Vlado, they are ready to surrender if we leave them their weapons and let them go to Cetinje." How could we leave them their weapons when that was the rea-

son we attacked them! I had a Kragujevac bomb in one hand and a pistol in the other. I ran down among the Italians and shouted: "Hands up!" I don't know how I looked, but I know they all raised their hands. I looked: only nine Italians! We expected at least 30. Indeed, there were that many, but the previous evening they had gone to Cetinje for that Montenegrin assembly proclaiming independence.

Savo Burić and his group went to Danilovgrad, and we led those Italians straight down the road to Cetinje. It's about 35 kilometres from there to Cetinje.

I am telling you this to show how naive we were. We prepared for an ordinary strike for months before the war, but we entered the armed uprising like this. That's how it is: generals from the library and the pharmacy are worthless! It's no coincidence that at the beginning of the war, we constantly lost battles: against the Germans, against the Ustaše, against the Domobran, against the Italians, against the Chetniks, against all possible formations. We were not seasoned. When we became seasoned, our shepherds, semi-literate or illiterate, beat them like livestock!

So, down that road, we reached Šimunje. From there, Ceklići begins, and it's about an hour's walk to Cetinje. Suddenly, a small Italian three-wheeler truck appeared. There were three Italian soldiers on it. They were signalmen going to repair the telephone lines we had cut. I shouted: "Stop, drop your guns!" Behind me were about 300 people, all armed. The driver, some postman, stopped the truck, jumped out and immediately started running towards Cetinje. The Italians raised their guns and aimed at me! If I hadn't fallen down those banks, one of them would have killed me. Our men fired a volley. All three Italians fell. All in all, it didn't last more than five seconds. We didn't kill them, just wounded them. The Italians were crying, begging us not to kill them. I

felt sorry for them, so I took one, and two other guys took the other two. We carried them two kilometres back to the school in Resna, where we had left the captured Italians. I also left a medical student with them to help. I went back and headed to Čekanje and Bukovica, where we organized ambushes for the Italians, whether they came from Cetinje or Kotor. On the way, I wondered: "What to do next? Should we go towards Cetinje to attack the Italians?" I dared not. I didn't know the plan. If we went alone without a plan, we would all die. Should I go towards Njeguši and Kotor? Or should I stay there? I waited. Nothing. I couldn't find out anything from anyone. Imagine: people are waiting, and I don't know anything. Andro Lompar had earlier told me in which village behind Cetinje the headquarters and the district party committee with Bajo Sekulić would be. I went there. It wasn't far. An hour and a half walk.

When I got there, there was still a big battle going on at Košćele, 11 kilometres from Cetinje towards Rijeka Crnojevića. It's a very convenient place for ambushes. Our people, commanded by Peko, had intercepted an Italian reinforced machine gun battalion there that was supposed to go to the Eastern Front, along with a motorcycle company. Then a regiment arrived, and the battle lasted 10 to 12 hours. In the end, the Italians surrendered. They had over 180 dead and over 250 wounded. We didn't have a single wounded, let alone killed.

So, I arrived in that village and waited again. No one received me. They were holding a meeting. There was a courier there, whom I had recruited into the Party. I said: "Baro, go there, tell them I've come and that I need to talk to Bajo." He went and returned. He said: "They told you they're in a meeting and can't receive you." Imagine, as if I could wait! I waited further. And Baro understood things; they treated

him criminally later. They sent him back to the rear, and he was killed by Chetniks from his village at a wedding. Baro smiled sourly and said to me: "Vlado, what can I tell you, you see how it is." They didn't receive or talk to me at all, and I commanded an entire sector. At the meeting were Bajo Sekulić, Niko Rolović, Vojo Ražnatović and Danica Marinović (later the wife of General Pejović, Ranković's assistant). She is the only one still alive from that district committee. Luka Ivanišević, my good friend, came out of the meeting and conveyed the message that I should go back immediately. No plan, no directive, nothing. I went back and thought: "If they don't trust me, why don't they put someone else in my place. I commanded such a large sector, and they brushed me off like that. They could have simply said that someone else was taking my place."

In the meantime, an Italian unit was advancing from Kotor towards Cetinje — three tanks and several trucks. My people, acting on their own initiative, intercepted them, killed a considerable number of Italians, and captured some more. The three tanks and one or two trucks managed to reach Cetinje. When I returned, I had lost the first four hours, and we began to organize ourselves: for communications, food and so on. According to old Montenegrin custom, families played the biggest role in this. The Montenegrin army previously did not have commissaries; instead, their women, mothers and sisters brought food to the positions.

However, there was no food. The Cuce did not send any. They were the largest tribe there. What was going on? Krsto Popović, the father of my friend Nikola Popović, was at Mojkovac, in that famous battle in the First World War, as the commander of the reconnaissance detachment. He was a well-known commander, known for his feats. He was fully supportive of King Nikola and the dynasty and later commanded

both the Green* and separatist detachments. He fought the later authorities extensively even after the First World War, until around 1923. The communists from Cetinje also participated in the fight against him. I told you: the communists were for unification. Krsto participated in the assembly on July 12, the day before the uprising, where independent Montenegro was declared, and a new Montenegrin government was elected. In that government, the Minister of Internal Affairs was my uncle, an old Green, who had even been a Montenegrin police agent among Montenegrin students in Belgrade before the war — Mihailo Lalić writes about this. Since Krsto knew all those trails and paths, he managed to get through. Both of his sons were with us, both communists. Nikola had been a Party member for five to six years, and the younger son was a Yugoslav. As soon as he arrived in Cuce, Krsto Popović held a meeting and called on the people to prevent our fight with the Italians. Around Krsto gathered all his former comrades, all well-armed and experienced.

My brother Milutin was a prewar officer, so thanks to him, I studied some military matters. He was a bit lazy, so when he had to take the captain's exam, I had to read all his materials aloud to him, and I learned a lot by heart. Those three tanks that went to Cetinje were coming back and we were planning to capture them. I was working out how to set up an ambush when suddenly Krsto appeared with several of his fighters! He came to persuade his sons to return to Cuce because the Ustaše had already broken through to Grahovo and were heading towards Cuce. At that time, the Ustaše had already started massacring Serbs in Herzegovina. The sons

* The Greens (1918-29) were reactionary loyalists to King Nikola and the Kingdom of Montenegro, consisting of the members of the Rightist Party and responsible for instigating the Christmas Rebellion of 1919 against a unified Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

refused, so he blocked the food supply. No one dared to bring us food.

I was up on the position, among the rocks, when a fighter came and said:

"A comrade is looking for you."

I ran down and there was Bajo Sekulić. He said:

"I am going to Njeguši, then to Lovćen, but I came just to tell you to release those prisoners."

He meant the ones we captured first and the three wounded Italians. Remember, we left them in that school.

"How can we release them?"

"Send them to Cetinje."

"We have the whole of Cetinje under siege, and now we should send them reinforcements!"

He said: "That's the directive" and left! He added:

"Manage as you know, so far, it's good."

"But, Bajo, man, the Cetinje prison is full of our comrades and patriots. They are executing people every day. Why don't we ask to exchange them? Why not get our people out of prison?"

It all smelled like capitulation to me, but I still ordered them to go to the school and help make some stretchers for the wounded. I explained to the Italian brigadier and soldiers that we were not fighting against the Italian people, least of all against the Italian working class and peasantry. We were fighting against occupation. How would they feel if someone came and occupied them? The brigadier said:

"I don't meddle in politics."

"How can you not meddle in politics! What are you doing here then? Is this Italy?"

I gave them an escort to Cetinje; they took the wounded and left. The fighters around me were very dissatisfied. I said:

"That's what Bajo said."

Not two hours had passed since we escorted those Italians when two comrades from Cetinje arrived: one Biljanović, the other Ivanović. Both were youth activists. Somehow they slipped through, came and brought a notice taken from a post in Cetinje, calling people to Cetinje to witness the execution of Milica Dapčević! My mother. Imagine. And I am releasing Italians according to Bajo's directives!

First, they sentenced her to death. Then she said: "I am proud to have taken the path of men" — meaning she had taken a man's path — "I have four sons, and I know they will avenge me well." They took her to be executed. The women were crying, but she said nothing. At the last moment, they changed her sentence to 30 years in prison. Even today, I don't know why they did it. Maybe because she was a close relative of Jelena, the Italian queen. Maybe someone told those officers. Or maybe because they knew that Peko and I were commanding members of the uprising and they feared terrible revenge. I believe the second reason prevailed, and the first was a good excuse.

Both my mother and sister were hostages. Others were executed, but not them, fearing possible retaliation. She was only released from prison by the German general von Keiper. He wanted to recommend himself because we were much stronger. He even told her: "I am sending you home. No one can harm you. If the Chetniks cause you any trouble, stop the first German soldier or officer and tell him to take you to von Keiper."

After the liberation of Belgrade, Cetinje was not yet liberated. Five or six of the most notorious Cetinje butchers broke into our house. They had those Italian bombs and knives. My mother was lying down. They said to her: "Get up, bitch. Lying here like a queen and your son is in the White Palace!" You know, Peko was the commander of the units that,

together with the Russians, liberated Belgrade. They insulted her, cursed, and when she told them that von Keiper said they must not touch her, they picked up and left. Von Keiper would indeed have had them shot.

And my sister Danica escaped from the Cetinje prison with a group of women. Formations of American and British bombers often flew over. The Germans would run to shelters as soon as they appeared. The women noticed this, called the men who were separated by wire, and told them they should take advantage and escape. The men didn't dare, so the women did it themselves. They threw blankets over the wires, climbed over and fled uphill. Only two were killed, and that was when they were later crossing the road. There were landmines set in that area.

When I released those Italians on Bajo's directive, I had no idea what was coming next. The Italians launched a major punitive expedition with artillery, tanks and a huge number of planes. And we had no food, didn't know what others were doing, and people started to waver... We needed to regroup. We decided to hold a meeting. Vlado Abramović spoke because he was born there and was one of them. I was a stranger to them. And Krsto Popović spoke out against me, using the fact that I was the son of a White Guard. He even said that I had received 12,000,000 dinars from the Serbians to create chaos and lead the Katunska *nahija* into bloodshed. Somehow, we pulled ourselves together and headed to Šimunja. There were still doubts, but people came with us. They wanted to defend their villages and homes. That is a special sanctuary for Montenegrins. Even though those houses were more like caves than homes, 95 per cent of them were covered with straw.

At Šimunja, we held the position and waited. The Italians came out. There were about two divisions. They had set up

about 50 cannons at Čekanje, all in a row, one next to the other, aimed at us. They started advancing. Tanks first, then infantry. They had already set the first Čeklić villages on fire. In the meantime, we had slightly reinforced discipline and agreed not to let them get closer than 50 metres. If every bullet of ours didn't hit — we were finished. Next to me was Blagota Mićunović. He commanded the Čevski detachment. We watched everything and observed the mood among the fighters.

Suddenly, behind us, about 150 fighters appeared, led by Krsto Popović! They came within 30 metres. All with rifles, bombs and bandoliers. All moustached. They were all about 50 years old. Krsto looked at Blagota and said: "If you fire a single shot at the Italians, we will kill all of you here!" Blagota turned around, as fiery as ever, and shouted: "And who will stop us, you traitorous motherfucker!" And he raised his rifle to kill Krsto. Imagine, he said that to Krsto Popović, a general of the former Montenegrin army and leader of the fighters. At that moment, I jumped after Blagota and pushed the rifle upwards just as it fired.

If the Italians had caught our scent, who knows, they might have opened fire on us. The moment Blagota fired, an Italian shell fell about five or six metres in front of us. After it, hundreds more shells rained down on the rocky terrain, and about 30 bombers appeared above us. Our men scattered, and so did the fighters. Everyone went their own way. The fighters were also called wingsmen. They were supposed to be the core of the new independent Montenegrin state's army. Wingsmen, named after the prewar Montenegrin gendarmerie that wore the emblem with an eagle with spread wings. It's incredible: despite all that firing, no one was killed. But we all dispersed. With some Miso Popović from Cetinje, I headed uphill, barefoot — I had given my shoes to one of the

fighters. I wanted to connect with some Party members above Bjelica. Along the way, I thought: "We will form guerrilla detachments, hide in the mountains, observe the enemy and attack when it suits us best."

In the meantime, punitive expeditions were heading from Podgorica to Cetinje, and their main goal was to unblock Cetinje because all the smaller units they sent, we destroyed. Now they sent entire divisions. Look at our situation. Practically the whole population rose in uprising. The only genuine popular uprising in 1941 was in Montenegro. We had taken all the towns except Cetinje, Podgorica and Nikšić. We had taken Šavnik, Žabljak, Kolašin, Berane, Andrijevica, Danilovgrad, Virpazar and Petrovac na Moru... We were well-armed, had gained experience from the first battles and could fight much better than at the beginning. The conditions, terrain and everything else were ideal. Despite all the doubts and everything else, their seven divisions, that's about 70,000 men, we could have destroyed with 30,000 fighters... But listen to this. I had just started organizing those guerrilla detachments when, again, Vule Mićunović appeared. He brought a new directive. This time, not just from the district committee — I told you, he was a courier for the District Committee of Cetinje — but also from the Provincial Committee of the Party for Montenegro. He said:

"All fighters should return to their villages!"

I looked at him and couldn't believe my ears.

"Wait, Vule, you must be mistaken? If I didn't know you well, I would think you were an Italian agent, a spy. Such a directive could only come from the Italians!"

This meant that we should capitulate to the Italians without a shot and fight, that all those who returned to the village would be taken by the Italians and sent to camps, among them selecting those who were most active in the uprising and

executing them. I said:

"Vule, I will not execute that directive. It is a betrayal. I will take all the fighters up to the mountains, organize guerrilla detachments and continue the decisive fight with the Italians. And I will demand, most resolutely, that those who issued such a capitulating directive be put before a revolutionary court and tried for treason!"

And I didn't accept the directive. Most others did. Eight thousand fighters, probably the best in Yugoslavia, surrendered without a shot and were taken to prisons and camps. The core of our later partisan army in Montenegro were those who, like me, didn't want to accept the directive and hid in those caves. To make the absurdity even greater, two days later, the directive was changed as a mistake. But it was already too late. Vule returned to the committee and probably told them how I reacted. They knew that at the first opportunity, I would demand that the culprits be punished, and I was already buried.

Judging by what I will tell you now, it seems that I was also buried by the others. I went with Nikola Popović to the Katunska *nahija* to organize a detachment. We spent the night in the hut of Krsto Popović, Nikola's father. Early in the morning, Nikola's sister came and brought us food. Krsto's situation was like this: his two sons, Nikola and the younger one, both communists, both partisans, his daughter our sympathizer, and his wife, of course, on the side of the sons. We ate bread, cheese and some meat when we heard sheep. We looked to see who it was and Nikola said: "Well, that's Krsto with the sheep." We didn't expect him because men rarely stayed in the mountains with the sheep. They were in the village. He must have found out that his son was there and came. He probably didn't know I was there. Nikola looked at him and, imagine, said: "Vlado, should I kill him?" He asked

if he should kill his own father! I shouted: "No, Nikola!"

That's what I wanted to tell you. We had differentiated ourselves so much, to use that modern term, from those who collaborated with the occupier that Nikola was ready to kill his father Krsto. And he would have killed him if I had said: "Kill him!" That Krsto continued to fight against us even after the war. He killed Mugoša, a national hero, and then in 1946, he was killed by Veljko Milatović, the one who resigned from all functions a few years ago. The whole people protected Krsto. The people have their logic. According to that logic, Krsto saved the Katunska *nahija* from being burned by the Italians. That's what the people believed, and thanks to that, all our postwar organizations — Party, youth and OZNA agents — until 1946, could not track down Krsto Popović. And he stayed all the time around his village. Someone found out that he went to the water in the morning. Mugoša and Milatović prepared an ambush for him... They were in some walls. Mugoša was asleep when Krsto arrived. Veljko nudged him with his elbow to wake up, this one started from sleep and lifted himself a little above the wall. And Krsto, an old outlaw, immediately noticed and cut him down with a machine gun. Veljko killed him. Many of our good people were killed by Chetniks and Ustaše after the war. For example, right there at Čekanje near Cetinje, Krsto Popović's Chetniks stopped a car with Veljko Vlahović's brother and four others and killed them all. After the war, I once even told Nikola: "If you want, let Krsto know through someone to surrender. I will do everything on my part to ensure he is not sentenced to death." Nikola said he had no contact with him.

So, I didn't let Nikola kill his father, and we headed towards Bjelice, through a village called Proseni Do. Just as we passed the village, someone fired, and the bullet literally went through my hair. It was a man we had expelled from the

Party because he had fathered a child out of wedlock with a girl. It was a great scandal. When we distanced ourselves from him, he joined Krsto. And Krsto ordered him to kill me. But he also warned him: "Be careful not to kill Nikola. If you kill him, I'll kill you like a dog!" So, probably out of fear of hitting Nikola, he missed me too. Nikola immediately said: "This was surely prepared by Krsto."

However, I had been threatened by the fighters before. When I was creating those Party organizations in the Katunska *nahija,* I stayed at the house of Nikola Popović's cousin. One evening, two fighters broke into the house. One said:

"Dapčević, you have until tomorrow evening to leave Cuce and the Katunska *nahija.* That is our decision. If you don't, I swear to God, we will kill you and bury you on Lovćen."

"Listen, I am a member of the CPY, and my Party sent me here on a mission. Only if the Party orders me to leave, I will go. You can kill me, but the Party will send another in my place, if necessary, two, five or ten. You cannot kill them all. I only hope you will be men enough not to shoot me in the back."

They got up and left. For them, killing a man was like drinking a glass of cold water. And I kept my hand on that Vujisić's pistol the whole time, waiting.

Yes, yes. That Vujisić, on whose orders I was beaten to death in Cetinje. Probably to recommend himself, two days after the Italian capitulation, he met my father and gave him two pistols. He said: "Take these to Vlado and ask him to forgive me." I told you that I saved his life after the war. In '45, our people arrested him in Belgrade. Mainly because of what he did to me. They wanted to sentence him to death. Some Vidak Popović, an investigator from Cetinje, called me one day to inform me. He said:

"Vlado, do you know who is here in prison and now it's

time for him to pay? The former police chief of Cetinje, Vujisić!"

"Why? How did he behave during the occupation?"

"The hardest charge is what he did to you."

I demanded that he be released immediately. They released him.

Once, I met him after that near Cvetni Trg in Belgrade. He was walking somewhere with his son Pavle. Even then, Pavle was fat. He looked at me, lowered his head, and when he passed by me, he only said: "Thank you very much, Vlado."

So, I escaped the fighter's bullet in Proseni Do, but the time came for me to pay for refusing the directive and for what I said to Vule Mićunović. Nikola and I came to Bjelice, to Kosača, to our comrades. We were sitting and talking when Vojo Biljanović appeared. He was then a member of the district Party committee. Before the war, he worked in the Zagreb Party organization. He was the secretary of the University Committee in Zagreb and a member of the Zagreb Local Committee. He was also in prison in Kerestinec with our comrades but escaped the massacre. He was released a month earlier thanks to the brother of his girlfriend, who bribed some Ustaše there. That's how they let him go...

It wasn't a failed escape! It was pure crime. And a crime by the communists. It would have been easy to free them. Especially in that period when Ustaša authority hadn't yet consolidated. They were guarded by three or four guards. They weren't even real gendarmes or policemen but those from the so-called peasant guard. I consider it a crime in any case, and not just a crime of negligence. Because it's impossible that those who knew those people were there and how valuable they were for our movement didn't do anything to free them. When they did try — and that on their own, Kopinić and Rob, the secretary of the Zagreb Local Party Committee — it

was done so poorly as if someone consciously wanted to ruin everything.

One hundred and twenty-seven of the greatest intellectuals of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Croatia were killed there. I already told you: we didn't have a theorist equal to Ognjen Prica, a man in culture equal to Otokar Keršovani or a publicist equal to Božidar Adžija...

The escape from the Sremska Mitrovica prison could be described in the same way. Just as it could be said about leaving the Party members who were completely compromised in cities because they had been arrested, imprisoned and well-known to the police. Many were killed because of them, and the organizations in all those places — Belgrade, Osijek, Zagreb and Karlovac... were practically destroyed. I will mention only a few: Vukica Mitrović, Mrsa Matijević, David Pajić and Todor Dukin... Under the conditions of occupation and terror, such people should not have been left in cities under any circumstances.

When I thought about it, I had the impression, and I still have it, that perhaps someone consciously exposed these people to death. Especially knowing that many of these people, one way or another, did not agree with Broz and the policy he pursued. Moreover, many other questions remain unresolved. For example, how did Srebrenjak, the head of the Soviet intelligence service in Zagreb, fall into the hands of the Ustaša police, known only to two people — Tito and Kopinić? Or, how did it happen that in Belgrade the Germans captured and executed Mustafa Golubić, a man from the top of the Soviet intelligence service, known only to two or three people? And those who were designated to assist him.

So, Vojo Biljanović came and informed me that I should go immediately to Stavor, a mountain in the Cetinje district, for another duty. He said: "I will stay in your place." You

hear, he instead of me! And that was a wrong decision. Vojo Biljanović was not Montenegrin and had no relatives in those villages. And that was extremely important in Montenegro, especially in that situation. The most unsuitable person was chosen. It would have been normal to send Veljko Mićunović, who was from the Katunska *nahija,* or Krsto Popivoda, or someone else who knew all those intertribal and other relations. But, all right, a directive is a directive. I went to Stavor, got there and reported, but they didn't let me up — the headquarters was on the top — and the secretary of the Cetinje committee, Niko Rolović, came down. He hadn't been in the Party for more than eight months. But he supported the decision to expel Nikola Lekić from the Party, so they rewarded him. If I had been in Cetinje when he was admitted, he would never have entered the Party. He didn't want to do anything, was a very distant sympathizer and only launched fashion trends in Cetinje. True, he was handsome, liked by girls. Once, I offered him to take a package of leaflets to a Committee member in Crmnica, and he said: "I'm not crazy to go to jail and get beaten like you!" And now, he was the Committee secretary, and with great power.

He said to me:

"You are dismissed from this duty." Probably Vule had conveyed what I told him.

"You are going," he said, "as the secretary of the Municipal Bureau in Ljubotinj."

I said:

"All right..."

When? When I cried? No, they didn't exclude me then. That was just a trick to get us to accept the decision to expel Lekić. Whoever accepted stayed in the Party. I accepted too. What else could I do?

Niko and I sat down and talked. I said:

"How was it possible that I was not informed about anything? I didn't know what to do. People were crying, some even tried to commit suicide because of your directive to return to the villages. They were torn between discipline and obedience to the Committee's decision and common sense. You left us at the mercy of the Italians..."

Everything I said, Niko took as a great insult to himself. I asked:

"Can I talk to Bajo?"

He said:

"He is not here."

But he was there. Bajo Sekulić simply feared facing me. Among other things, because those Italians we had captured in the first attack, then released on his directive, later massacred a village where we had left them. When they returned to that village with the punitive expedition, all the children who had fed them while they were our prisoners gathered around them, and do you know what they did? They caught 11 boys, aged between 10 and 13 — and shot all 11 of them there. Among them was the youngest brother of Vlado Abramović, the Committee secretary in Boka Kotorska.

I asked Niko:

"What am I supposed to do as the Bureau secretary there?"

From that village of mine, Ljubotinj, 90 per cent of the insurgents surrendered on orders, and the Italians took them to a camp. He said:

"Organize a battalion!"

It didn't end there. When the preparation for the new Provincial Conference for Montenegro began, one of them from up there came, asked us to elect a delegate and said: "You, Comrade Vlado, should not run, because you will otherwise be summoned to the conference." When he said that, I remembered Savo Brković's words before that confer-

ence. I saw again some plot. But this time, I didn't listen and ran for the election and won, although he proposed another candidate. When he saw that I was elected, he asked for a re-vote. But this time, secretly, plus he would count the votes. Imagine! He was tasked with stopping me and simply didn't choose means. I didn't allow him to count the votes alone; we added one of ours, re-voted and I won again. Unanimously. They wanted to prevent me from attending the conference at all costs because they feared what I intended to say there. I was preparing to say everything I promised Vule then. That one left angry, unsuccessful. The conference time came. They didn't call me. I saw delegates from Crmnica and other municipalities passing through our territory to the conference. I went with them. Interestingly, even then, they only chose delegates they knew in advance would support them. They had a hundred ways to avoid people who were ready to speak critically.

While waiting for the conference with those delegates, Niko Rolović called me. He said:

"I inform you on behalf of the leadership that you cannot attend the conference because we have already made a certain decision about you!"

"According to the Statute, during the elections, you cannot make any decision, and I will attend the conference because I was elected as a delegate, and unanimously."

"You cannot attend, I inform you again, and that on behalf of our and the Provincial Committee. If you try, we will stop you with weapons!"

If I had returned to Ljubotinj then and told the people there that they didn't let me in, I guarantee we would have wiped them out like scum. It was necessary to deal with those people with weapons then. I made a mistake by not doing so. If I had, they wouldn't have done all those evils and wouldn't

have ruined the uprising in Montenegro. The next day, Branko Lopičić, one of the delegates — he died nine months later, burned by the Chetniks along with other wounded — passed through Ljubotinj, and I asked him what happened at the conference. He said: "You were expelled from the Party." And he added that Blažo Jovanović said: "Vlado Dapčević tried to force his way into the conference and we stopped him. He left. God forbid he brings the Italians to us, because he is capable of even doing that!" Imagine!

That same day, some Đoko Vukićević and Mišo Radoman, also delegates, came to officially inform me of this.

Then, as later, expulsion from the Party meant complete degradation. Here's an example. When new detachments were formed in Ljubotinj, they insisted that I be the commander of a platoon. However, Jovo Kapičić passed by, and when he heard that, he shouted at the Party organization secretary, who was my cousin: "We expel him from the Party, and you elect him as a platoon leader. Remove him immediately!" And they removed me.

That Jovo Kapičić was actually going to Lovćen to organize the murder of Nikola Lekić, and together with him, Bogdan Laković and Savo Popović, because these two would defend Nikola to the last drop of blood. One of the couriers, prewar Party members, heard this and told me. I immediately sent a comrade to fetch Nikola, Bogdan and Savo, and they came to me. I told Jovo:

"If a hair on his head is harmed, we will talk through guns!"

Jovo looked at me and asked:

"Who told you that? It's not true."

In those constant conflicts with the leadership, one detail about me and Peko is interesting. A few days after my arrival from Katunska *nahija* to Ljubotinj, Peko came. We hadn't

seen each other for four and more years, and as is customary, I went to kiss him. He did nothing. He just said:

"Vlado, you must immediately go to Stavor, to the headquarters, and criticize yourself."

"Why?"

"Because of the things you said."

"Peko, is what I said true?"

"Yes, but that doesn't matter. They are stronger than you and will destroy you. You should buy, not sell."

He had already been through Spain, had more experience, judged things more realistically than I did. But I kept pushing:

"Listen, Peko, if you learned to trade in Spain, I haven't. I am not a trader, but a communist. You may trade, but I will never say that something isn't true if it is true, regardless of the cost."

Peko already knew then that there were a thousand ways to eliminate someone without shooting them. You simply send them on a mission where they have to die.

They tried that with me two months after my expulsion from the Party. They called me to Stavor, and when I arrived, they didn't let me into the house again. This time, it wasn't Niko Rolović who came out to meet me but Jovo Kapičić. In the meantime, Niko Rolović had been killed by someone from Bajići. The Italians recruited him, gave him a gun and he first killed some Laličić from Prekornica, then Niko Rolović. He shot six bullets into his forehead. Kapičić informed me on behalf of the Committee that I had to go to Cetinje to kill Jovan Belov-Vujović. He said:

"If I were in your place, I would do it."

I replied:

"Listen, Jovo, we know each other well, you don't have the guts even for much less, let alone to go to Cetinje."

And I was the most compromised man in Cetinje, wanted. All the collaborators had fled to Cetinje because we controlled the surroundings and were killing those spies. Plus, there was a curfew in Cetinje. I, therefore, had to pass through the centre of Cetinje in broad daylight to reach the person I was supposed to hide with before killing that spy. Moreover, they knew in Cetinje that we had sentenced him to death and guarded him well! Veljko Mićunović was against sending me, and the Committee secretary from Cetinje, Milovan Vujović, cried not to send me because I would surely be killed and guaranteed them that the communists from Cetinje would kill Jovan Belov-Vujović within 10 days.

I still went to Cetinje. I went through various tragi-comic situations, but I didn't manage to kill Jovan. Even the revolver I trusted fell into a toilet. I hid with Blažo Kusovac for days, waiting for them to tell me Jovan was coming. The plan was for me to come out when he arrived and kill him. One evening, Voja Ražnatović's brother really came to inform me that he was leaving the tavern with Italian officers. I came out, stood behind the entrance and waited for them, ready to kill all three. However, they turned the other way. The matter ended with Veljko Mićunović, then the commissioner of the Lovćen detachment, ordering me to return immediately. Jovan was later killed in my village. My cousin killed him.

When I reported back to Stavor, Veljko Mićunović informed me that I was assigned to the Lovćen battalion.

In Žabljak, in the fall of '41, the Montenegrin detachment was formed. The commander was Arso Jovanović, and the political commissioner was Bajo Sekulić. On the way to Žabljak, when we were in Jezera, I somehow found myself next to Jovo Kapičić. He was appointed commissioner of the Lovćen battalion. He must have forgotten that I was expelled from the Party and declared a factionalist, and suddenly said:

"And Nikola and those factionalists — we will kill them all!"

I was stunned! Do you understand? My impression, normal and logical, was immediately that he had received a task from someone above, as a battalion commissioner, to find a way, somewhere during the battle, to eliminate Nikola, Bogdan and Sava. I immediately went to the third company, found them and told them what Jovo Kapa had said. They said nothing. Nikola only said:

"It would be terrible for me to die from comrades, but if so..."

Savo Popović said:

"Let it be on their conscience."

As we descended towards Pljevlja, I had volunteered for the bomber squad. I met Nikola again.

"How are you, Nikola?"

"I will surely die tonight. It's not terrible or sad because, as a communist, I always expected I could lose my head at any moment. But it's sad to die as if dogs ate me..."

That night, all three of them died. They were found next to each other. Imagine: the great Nikola Lekić, the famous leader of the Montenegrin Party, delegate of the Fifth National Conference, who couldn't see anything — Savo Popović led him because he had minus seven dioptres in one eye and minus nine in the other — they sent him into a night battle! It was pure murder.

And do you know what Jovo Kapa did? He ran away. He didn't even participate in the battle. He fled while we died like cattle. We attacked the barracks head-on. Since all of Montenegro knew we were going to Pljevlja, of course, the Italians knew too, so they barricaded themselves and prepared well to receive us. I threw the first bomb at that barracks. As I threw it, it bounced back and almost killed us. When we threw two

or three more bombs, hell broke loose: searchlights lit up, and they showered us with fire from all weapons and artillery — rifles, artillery, mortars... Those mortars made a massacre. And these, our people, as if going to a demonstration: "Hooray!" Straight at those barracks. People fell like sheaves. When dawn broke, I went to our battalion commander, Pera Ćetković, who died near Nevesinje in '43 as the commander of the 3rd Division, and said:

"Pera, man, do you see we will all die, pull the battalion out while you can still save something!"

He said:

"I can't without Jovo!"

Yes, Jovo Kapa. He said:

"He didn't even come with us, he went to the Bijeli Pavle battalion to ask for help and coordination."

Do you hear this: the battalion commissioner, like an ordinary courier, went supposedly to ask for help. He ran away. The Italian counterattack began. Two or three hundred Italians took Glavica, a hill behind our backs, and cut off our retreat. In front of us were the barracks, and from above, they showered us with artillery mortar shells from Stražica. You couldn't stick a finger out. It was a massacre in a cauldron. At that time, our battalion had 341 fighters. Pera, however, with about 60 people, managed to push those Italians on Glavica, to reach Glavica, but was immediately pushed back from the other side of Glavica. So they divided us. Only there, outside this hell, Jovo Kapičić appeared from somewhere.

We got burned here. The Italians tortured us all day and we suffered terribly. I was wounded. Only when it got dark, what was left alive managed to escape. Probably because I lost a lot of blood and threw off my coat, it was too heavy. I got pneumonia, and how wouldn't I: I broke through the snow from Pljevlja to the village of Krnjača barefoot. And

Jovo Kapa, besides running away, committed two more serious offences there. When our people, with Pera Ćetković, pushed the Italians on Glavica and separated them from us, they wanted to return, to retake Glavica and open the way for us. But Jovo didn't allow it. He said: "It's enough that they died, I don't want you to die too!" Although the fighters persistently demanded it, and many even cried because they knew we were dying in the barracks and that we would all die if they didn't open a path for retreat over Glavica, Jovo prevented the attack on Glavica because he knew that he, being there, would have to participate in the attack and expose his ass to danger. So they left us in that cauldron. Besides, all our things, rucksacks and the rest — which we had left in one place before the fight — he gave to the Piva battalion. Our things were given to the Piva people, who couldn't take Stražica from which the artillery was hitting us!

Over 60 of our Lovćen battalion members were put out of action then. The best comrades and many relatives died.

And all the surviving fighters who attended the battalion meeting in Krnjača two days after the battle know this about Jovo Kapa. I publicly asked Pera Ćetković then why he didn't pull the battalion out when he saw that people were dying unnecessarily and why he didn't retake Glavica. He publicly answered me that Jovo Kapa didn't allow it. Jovo was the commissioner, and commissioners had the right to veto the commander's decisions. Pera also said: "I am a former officer, I am not in your Party, and I was ordered to listen to him." Then the question was raised: "And where were you, Jovo Kapa?" The fighters asked. Jovo Kapa was silent. Someone shouted: "Speak, you coward!" He remained silent again. They almost killed him then, and they should have killed him. He betrayed us and showed himself to be the most ordinary coward.

As if nothing had happened then or later, Jovo Kapičić constantly advanced, regardless of everything he did. It seems to me that the secret is in the following: his girlfriend before the war in Belgrade was Davorjanka Paunović-Zdenka. Do you know who Zdenka is? Tito's war secretary and common-law wife. Yes, yes, wife. That was a public secret. It was more dangerous to cross Davorjanka than Tito himself. In early '41, the Belgrade organization received an order from the Central Committee to send two female students, Party members, to train as coders for the Central Committee's radio station. The choice fell on her and Vjera Planojević. Vjera later became Sreten Žujović's lover. That was when Davorjanka became close to Tito. Maybe Tito and Davorjanka felt a bit indebted to Jovo Kapičić — she left him for Tito — and so a lot was forgiven of him, and he even advanced. He finished the war as the commissioner of the Vojvodina Corps. After the war, he was an advisor at the embassy in Paris until Marko Ristić wrote to Ranković that he didn't know the language or anything else, that he was completely unfit for the job he was appointed to, and asked for another person. Ranković brought him back to the country and took him on as an assistant.

He was responsible to Ranković for Goli Otok. Everything that happened there was by his instructions. At that time, Jovo Kapa decided the fate of thousands of people. We Goli Otok survivors will remember him for life. Later, he was the Yugoslav ambassador to Hungary, then Sweden. I heard from several people in Belgrade, I don't know if it's true, that he was declared *persona non grata* in Sweden as the Yugoslav ambassador and was even beaten in the Swedish foreign minister's house because he allegedly tried to rape his wife, whom he had met at a reception. They say it was a big scandal at that time. He was brought back to the country and did nothing for a long time as punishment. Later, at Veljko Milatović's

suggestion, he was elected to the Federal Council.

The defeat at Pljevlja was not only a heavy military defeat for the partisan movement in Montenegro, where our best cadres died, but also a severe political defeat. In fact, the defeat at Pljevlja and the leftist mistakes made by Ivan Milutinović and the leadership of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Montenegro created conditions for the formation and development of the Chetnik movement in Montenegro. It would have been normal for those who decided to attack Pljevlja — Ivan Milutinović, Blažo Jovanović and the leadership — to be brought before a revolutionary court because objectively it was nothing other than a crime. It had to be known in advance that in such an attack on a fortified town, we could only die and nothing else.

After that defeat, we were supposed to head towards Rudo. However, no one wanted to. People lost trust and didn't want to. Plus, everyone had their reasons. They didn't want to leave their homes, etc. A battalion meeting was called — I was still very weak — and the battalion commander read that we had to go to Bosnia. No one said anything. Everyone was silent, meaning no one agreed.

Before that, when the battalion headquarters received orders from the Supreme Staff that the battalion was designated to head towards Rudo, Jovo Kapa came to me, I was still bedridden with pneumonia, conveyed this order to me, and added that the battalion was in a very bad mood and he feared that almost no one would want to go. He said: "You have great influence on people, and I beg you, in the name of the Party and the battalion headquarters, to step up and call on people to go. They will listen to you."

In that silence, people didn't say a word, Jovo and Pera only looked at me and simply called me with their eyes to speak. I got up, weak as I was, they supported me while I

spoke, and I said:

"Comrades, we face a dilemma: either to return to Montenegro or to join the 1st Proletarian Brigade. What to return to Montenegro with? Should we tell our brothers, comrades, relatives and friends that we left our best comrades and brothers unavenged in Pljevlja? Joining the 1st Proletarian Brigade is the best way to avenge them and fight properly against the occupiers. I am convinced — because I know you all and know you are heroes — that you will all join the 1st Proletarian Brigade. I am going."

Only five refused to go, among them Kada Petričević. Three were justified. They were ill.

LOLA'S LEATHER JACKET

The day after the formation of the 1st Proletarian Brigade in Rudo, our battalion was tasked with capturing Međeđa. We had heard that the Chetniks were there. However, in Međeđa, we only found one sleeping Chetnik out of the 120 who had been there the previous day. However, an interesting detail emerged. We heard that a train from Goražde was arriving with one carriage and inside it was Lieutenant Colonel Cvetković, the commander of the gendarmerie in Užice, along with two others. We were ordered to arrest them. The train arrived, we switched the track, the locomotive stopped and we entered that one carriage. On the platform was Lieutenant Colonel Cvetković. Suddenly, Pero Ćetković froze and began to report: "Mr. Lieutenant Colonel, Captain Pero Ćetković, commander of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Proletarian Brigade, reporting..." Pero, a prewar officer, hadn't yet shaken off the authority of those lieutenant colonel epaulettes. Imagine, reporting to Cvetković who commanded the gendarmerie under German occupation. And Cvetković said, "Throw away that star! How dare you wear it as an officer of the Yugoslav army? Everyone has already joined the Chetniks!"

I lost my temper. I approached Cvetković, slapped him, twisted his arm, took his pistol and tore off his epaulettes... As we entered, the two men with Cvetković hid something. We didn't have much experience at the time. They were two dangerous Ljotićites and Gestapo agents, and we let them go! We only kept Cvetković because we knew he had killed several hundred captured partisans. We handed him over to the Supreme Headquarters.

The Supreme Headquarters arrived in the afternoon, accompanied by the 4th Battalion of the 1st Proletarian Brigade. There was heavy snow and a terrible blizzard. We had settled

in a small hotel, the only building that hadn't been burned in Međeđa, but when the Supreme Headquarters arrived, we had to vacate it for them. We spent the entire night in that blizzard. I saw the two Ribar brothers in leather from head to toe, dressed for the North Pole. I thought: They lived their whole lives in luxury, educated in Switzerland and France, never lacked anything, every wish was fulfilled, now dressed like that, they go to a warm house, and we fighters, in that blizzard, have to go to Podromanija to prevent the dispersal of partisan units! At that time, as a consequence of the fall of the Užice Republic and the defeat at Pljevlja, and the increased activity of Draža Mihailović's Chetniks, there was significant desertion in our units in Eastern Bosnia.

People who were joining the Chetniks or the Chetniks in our units, like in the Zvijezda detachment in Okruglica, were staging coups, taking over and leading entire units away. They would first kill all the commissars. We attacked those in Okruglica on the morning of Christmas and captured them. Most of them were drunk. Koča Popović personally interrogated them. Four were sentenced to death. Our company was ordered to execute them. We executed two, but two escaped.

In Okruglica, we heard that a German offensive was beginning, that they were surrounding us. We were ordered to escape through forced marches over all those mountains. Koča then promoted me to commander of the 1st Company of the vanguard. You're familiar with the Igman march, right? Well, my company and I were breaking through that snow. The temperature was 37 below zero. It was so cold that if you stopped for 10 minutes, you were done for. Strangely, whoever was in traditional peasant shoes, their feet didn't freeze as much as those wearing boots or shoes. The entire brigade followed us except for the 2nd Montenegrin Battalion, which stayed with Tito on Romanija.

Koča was good. When we reached the top of Igman, we entered a partisan cabin, drank some brandy, the first time I tasted alcohol, and fell asleep like the dead. The whole company. Not even 15 minutes passed, and Koča arrived. He shouted:

"Vlado, Vlado, get up! Lead the fighters, they'll listen to you. You must move on. The wounded are coming, we need to make room for them."

"Where to?"

"To Veliko Polje."

I asked how far it was. He said:

"A good cigarette's worth."

Do you hear, a cigarette's worth! And we walked for two hours without stopping. We had just entered a fox farm, lit a fire — the wet wood smoked — and rested a bit when the brigade arrived again. It was a sight: people walking frozen, black as coal... The flesh that turned black like that started to decay the next day and smelled like a corpse. From there, they immediately sent us to Presjenica, three hours' walk from that farm. You should have seen how they welcomed us in those villages around Kalinovik. Only women, children and old people were in the houses. All the men had been slaughtered by the Ustaše. Even those from Ilovice, where the people from Konavle were relocated. For seven days, those people literally hosted us, even sewing and giving us underwear.

In that Ilovica, imagine, this happened to me. One day, two girls waited for me in a house. One was 16, the other 18 years old. Angry. I asked them what was wrong. They were silent.

"What is it, speak up!"

Only then did the younger one speak. She said:

"You despise us, and that's why you don't want to court us!"

And for us, no matter how much we wanted to court, it was strictly forbidden. For such things, you could lose your head. I started to explain that we were the people's army and that it wasn't allowed... Then the older one said:

"After you leave, the Ustaše will come and rape us all. Both we and our parents would like to have your children."

You can't understand that now, of course. But in those regions, such dramas happened relatively often. The Ustaše would come and rape Serbian women. Then the Chetniks would come and rape Muslim and Croatian women. So Serbian women bore Ustaše children, and Muslim and Croatian women bore Chetnik children.

From what I'll tell you now, you'll see what a terrible mutual slaughter it was. These rapes were the least tragic part. In Foča, with the help of Mitar Bakić and at the request of Ranković and Žujović, I was readmitted to the Party. I protested and demanded that the decision to exclude me be revoked, but they didn't want to. Žujović said: "We don't want to quarrel with those in Montenegro. It's easiest to take you back." They took me back so they could send me as the political commissar of the Drina Volunteer Detachment. They sent me straight into a hornet's nest.

At that time, several detachments of so-called volunteer forces were formed. These were Chetniks we had disarmed. And they were the ones who had slaughtered thousands of Muslims. Their commander was Gojko Krezović. Once, the Ustaše had captured him, led him to be slaughtered, but he broke free, seized a gun from one of the Ustaše, killed several of them with just the butt of the gun and escaped into the woods. Later, he started taking revenge. When they carried out that massacre, they were avenging the crimes committed by the Ustaše in Foča and some other places: they slaughtered Serbs above huge vats until those vats were filled with blood.

When we disarmed them, we politically processed them for a while. We explained that not all Croats and Muslims were like the Ustaše, and so on. We persuaded them to join the volunteer army and fight on our side. So they agreed...

How could you punish them? If we punished them, we would have had to kill them all. Every single one of them had slaughtered. And there were over 2,000 of them. It was said that a certain Pljevaljčić had slaughtered over 1,000 Muslims, another, Đurđevac, around 800, and their commander Krezović and his two brothers had killed over 300. We couldn't execute anyone because then the rest wouldn't join our side. We even had to appoint Gojko Krezović as the commander of the detachment where I was the political commissar. He later behaved very well. He and his two brothers died fighting the Chetniks.

It was tough. First, among the 2,000, I only got two battalion commissars. Vlado Bojanić and another one. Second, it was very hard to convince them that Muslims weren't Turks, therefore the enemy. In the battles around Rogatica, in early '42, we captured some Domobrani. At that time, there was an order that prisoners couldn't be killed, especially not slaughtered. However, at a stream, they began slaughtering the captured Domobrani. Someone informed me and I galloped there on a horse. I saw: the Domobrani were standing in line, waiting to be slaughtered. They had already slaughtered 15. I drew my pistol, and they aimed their rifles at me. They wore caps with our tricolour. I barely saved my head and those prisoners. Most of those Domobrani later joined the partisans.

At that time, Nedićites* and Chetniks from Serbia had crossed into Eastern Bosnia to assist the local Chetniks. My

* *Nedićevci* — Serbian State Guard, the paramilitary force of Milan Nedić (1877-1946), head of the German-backed Government of National Salvation in occupied Serbia during the Second World War.

main task was to engage this volunteer detachment in fighting against the Chetniks, and I eventually succeeded.

By then, the Third Offensive against us had already begun. Ivan Milutinović came to Goražde to report on the situation in Montenegro. I listened to him, and although he was full of optimism, I could tell from his story that we had lost Montenegro. He requested that at least the 1st Lovćen Battalion of the 1st Proletarian Brigade return to Montenegro. Suddenly, I was overwhelmed with nostalgia for Montenegro. Besides, I thought I could help improve the situation there, so I went straight to Tito and asked him to send me with that battalion. Tito said, "If you want it so much and believe you'll be more useful there than here, then go ahead." So, I was appointed commander of the 1st Company of the Lovćen Battalion.

While still in Goražde, as the commissar of the volunteer detachment, I met the deputy commissar of the Lovćen Battalion, Vlado Šćekić. He was a man of very limited intelligence, but very cunning and skilful. That was probably his compensation. He never exposed himself to danger. He told me, "Vlado, I strongly insisted that you be reinstated in the Party and given a leadership role, but Jovo Kapa and Risto Lekić were against it." Jovo was then the commissar of the Lovćen Battalion, Šćekić's superior. Hearing this, I told him everything I knew about Jovo, including the money and cowardice at Pljevlja. I also told him he could verify it with at least 100 people in the battalion. That was the end of it.

So, I returned to the Lovćen Battalion. The fighters welcomed me enthusiastically. We set off back to Montenegro. We settled in a village near Žabljak. One day, I was called to the battalion office, and based on Vlado Šćekić's report, I was informed that I had slandered the battalion commissar and they decided to expel me from the Party again! Imagine that. No one asked if it was true or not. They simply informed me

and wouldn't discuss it further...

What could I do but stay in the battalion? Where else could I go? To Tito? Who knows where Tito was. Besides, if I left, they could declare me a deserter and have me executed. Oh, the humiliations I endured then. I was a bomber again, charging at bunkers.

When we retreated to Herzegovina and then to Tjentište, I complained to Mitar Bakić. He had just been appointed commissar of the newly-formed 4th Montenegrin Brigade. Peko was appointed commander. He said, "What can you do, there are all kinds of people. Endure, and we'll see." He promised to later request a commission to investigate the matter. I was appointed as a squad commander in the 2nd Battalion. I participated in all the battalion's actions, always as a bomber. This continued until November 1942 when one of our men accidentally shot me in the foot in the woods above Jajce. The doctor, a certain Mihić from Durmitor — later I became his godfather — almost amputated my foot. I was treated in a Dalmatian hospital run by a Russian émigré. Despite the terrible conditions, the Dalmatian women maintained the hospital so well that it was cleaner and more orderly than any later clinic.

As soon as I could stand, I sought out the Supreme Headquarters. I found them and went straight to Crni, Sreten Žujović, then the Party's organizational secretary. It was early 1943. When I reached Crni, Ranković was there too.

Bakić? He didn't do anything because I had somehow offended him in the meantime. I always operated on the principle, as I thought was right, that we were all comrades and it was normal to tell a comrade what you thought, especially if something was wrong. I was naive. In the Livanjsko Polje, in the village of Čelebić, where everyone had been slaughtered by the Ustaše and thrown into a large pit, Mitar Bakić

gave a speech to the villagers. His speech was full of foreign words and bombastic phrases. At one point, he said, "Whoever slaughtered will be slaughtered!" Afterwards, he asked me what I thought of the speech. I told him, in front of the other comrades, that he could have prepared a bit and that the speech was not entirely appropriate, referring to the part about slaughtering. We always talked about brotherhood and unity, separating the killers from the people, and now suddenly, "Whoever slaughtered will be slaughtered!" And in a village with mixed populations!

The second time, in the brigade headquarters — where I worked after being released from the hospital, publishing a newspaper and such — Mitar Bakić, the brigade commissar, was making vulgar jokes about Peko, the brigade commander. Imagine that! And there was even a directive to protect and elevate the commander's authority. I kept quiet, only so no one would say, "He's defending his brother." I kept quiet, but I didn't like it at all. After that, he started talking about sending our female fighters to be nurses. These women had fought through all those battles! Some of them were better than most men. And he wanted to send them against their will. He said, "I'll give a speech and trick them!" I said, "In my opinion, that's absolutely wrong. These women are a huge asset to us. They'll feel terribly humiliated and degraded. How can you trick them, man? They're Party and SKOJ members. Tomorrow they'll be Party leaders, municipal presidents..."

The third time, I offended him over a horse. He took money from the brigade fund and bought himself a horse from some *bey.* The horse was extraordinary. He had himself photographed on the horse and, through some connections, sent the photo to his wife in Zagreb. A wife who, as I heard, only agreed to marry him after he converted to Catholicism. Despite that, she left him later. At that time, new divisions

were forming and higher positions were being assigned. One day, he took that horse to the Supreme Headquarters and gave it to Tito! Can you believe that? A horse to Tito, who already had four or five such horses! Probably to recommend himself for a divisional commissar. It was known that Peko would be the division commander, but it wasn't known who would be the commissar. He got the position, but even then, I couldn't keep quiet. I asked him how he could treat brigade property as his own and added that it had nothing to do with communist morality.

And it came back to bite me. Once, Mitar called me and, in the presence of Stana Tomašević and Milo Jovićević, told me that the communists in my battalion had demanded my reinstatement in the Party, but he disagreed. He added: "Vlado, let me tell you: First, you're not as much of a hero as they say. Second, in my opinion, you're insolent and disrespectful to the leaders. You're better off outside the Party than in it."

I replied: "Mitar, I never paid anyone to promote me. As a communist and a fighter, I did what I could and as much as I could. I don't acknowledge your authority to judge me as a fighter because you were never closer to the battle than five rifle shots away. A cannon barely reached you."

Where were we? Yes, at Crni's place with Ranković. We greeted each other, and Crni asked why I came. I explained that I had been unfairly expelled from the Party again and requested a Party commission to investigate the case. Crni asked, "How could you let yourself be expelled again?" Then he asked Ranković, "How was Vlado in the Belgrade Party organization? Should we reinstate him in the Party?"

Ranković, usually stingy with praise, highly commended me and agreed that I should be readmitted to the Party. They didn't mention the commission because they knew about

the Kapičić-Davorjanka-Tito connection. Finally, Crni said, "When you recover, return to the battalion, and we'll handle it."

"But the division commissar is Mitar Bakić. I criticized him for some things, and I'm afraid nothing will come of it."

Žujović just said: "Mitar who?"

They already saw him as nothing but a sycophant.

Peko? No, he avoided getting involved. He thought they could seriously hold it against him if he raised my issue. He kept silent, never said a word. He kept pushing me to prove myself. Again and again, I was the bomber. It got tiresome. Once I even had to tell him, "Listen, Peko, I can't keep testing my luck a thousand times. I can't keep proving myself as a bomber. Once, it's luck, the second time, it's luck, the tenth time, it's luck... One day, I'll die like a beast."

He said: "I can't help you with that."

We went through the entire Fourth Offensive, returned to Montenegro, captured Žabljak and Šavnik. The Fifth Offensive began, and we retreated from Montenegro again, but they still didn't reinstate me in the Party.

One day, under Mount Javorak near Mratinje, while waiting for some supplies, the Supreme Headquarters came up to me: Tito, Ranković and others. Tito greeted me, asking, "What are you waiting for here?" I replied that I was waiting for ammunition. Tito left and Žujović came by. He said, "What's going on with you, Vlado? Is that issue resolved?"

"No, Mitar won't do it."

"How can he not? We sent an order. I'll look into it."

And they left. When we got out of the encirclement, Mitar summoned me to the division headquarters. He said, "We've decided to readmit you to the Party. We hope you'll justify our trust." And imagine, they humiliated me by appointing me as the quartermaster. A food supplier! Moreover,

the battalion commissar, a guy from Kolašin, treated me like his errand boy, even shouting at me. He demanded that I host and entertain him. Since I didn't hold back, he complained to the brigade commissar, Vojin Nikolić, whom I knew well from Belgrade. He was a member of the Belgrade Municipal Committee before the war. Vojin Nikolić came and said, "I know well how humiliating it is for you to be appointed as a battalion quartermaster. But you know, you somehow offended Mitar, so bear it for a bit. You'll move on soon." And indeed, a few days later, they called me to the 2nd Division headquarters. Mitar welcomed me, took me outside, and said, "You've been called to the Supreme Headquarters. You'll surely get a leadership position. We recommended you, and please justify our trust!" They recommended me. They kept me as a quartermaster and even resented me for not treating them to baklava!

At the headquarters, I saw Moša Pijade sitting, as a patriot. Don't you know what a patriot is? It's a punishment. He had killed a fighter, a Montenegrin named Đurašković, and as a punishment, they sent him to the division headquarters to sit without any function or assignment. That was called a patriot. Đurašković, a severe invalid with a crippled hand, was running a mobile kitchen. Since the kitchen stayed in Bosanski Petrovac for several months, he had time to get involved with a girl there. When they moved on, her mother insisted he marry her, but he refused. He said, "What wedding? I don't know if I'll stay alive!" Moša happened to be nearby, and this woman told him that Đurašković had raped her daughter and now refused to marry her. Moša told him he had to marry her, but he refused. He even said, "You can't order me whom to marry!" Moša took out his machine gun and simply cut him down with a burst. The fighters almost killed Moša then.

So Moša was sitting at the headquarters, and Peko was there too. I heard him talking about how there's no army in the world like ours. He said any other army would have surrendered in the Fifth Offensive. I blurted out, "Who knows if some would have surrendered if they had guarantees nothing would happen to them." How can you surrender when you know you'll be killed immediately? Peko looked at me, went outside and called me. He said, "Are you crazy? Do you know they'll expel you from the Party again if he reports this?" I didn't mean anything bad. I just wanted to say, "Don't exaggerate, Moša."

When I reported to the Supreme Headquarters, Tito said, "You only need to invite your aunt, and all the Dapčevićs will be here." Tito loved my aunt. Everyone did. No one called her by her name, just simply "aunt." Once, after the war, the phone rang in our house, we were all living together then, I answered, and it was Tito. He said, "Vlado, bring the aunt to have lunch with me." At the headquarters, Ranković called me and said, "We don't take what happened before as a serious fault. You're just too open. You need to be more careful. Do you want to be a brigade commissar?"

They appointed me as commissar of the 7th Krajina Brigade. That brigade was decimated. It went through the Fourth and Fifth Offensives with 1,700 fighters and returned with 450. The brigade commander, a Marjanac, was killed. He was a good man. The brigade commissar was Ljubo Babić. He seemed to be fearful, and when you're like that, you don't have authority over the fighters. They demoted him, sent him to the rear and put me in his place. That was in 1943.

That's when I entered the high ranks. Everything important happened around me. Every day I saw Tito, Đilas, Ranković, Žujović, Vlado Popović — all the bigwigs. We ate together, only Tito ate separately. I inadvertently attended

meetings of the Central Committee members present, discussions on personnel issues and so on.

I saw everything and definitively understood some things. Just take this. Vlado Popović had previously been the secretary of the Central Committee of the Croatian Party. He came into conflict there, was pulled back, and at a Central Committee meeting, appointed secretary of the Provincial Committee for Serbia instead of Blagoje Nešković. It was believed Nešković wasn't doing well enough in that role. They decided to implement this as soon as possible. However, the next day, Koša Nađ came, he was the commander of the 3rd Corps, talked to Tito, and among other things, said he was without a commissar. Vlado Popović and I were sitting there listening to everything. We were good friends, even sharing a blanket at that time. Tito asked Koša, "Who would you like to have as a commissar?"

"Vlado the Spaniard."

Vlado Popović. Tito then said, "I'll give him to you."

Just like that: I'll give him to you! As if the Central Committee's decision had never existed. Vlado was about to explode. He said to me, "Vlado, let's take a walk." He trusted me. When we got to a spring, he started, "Did you see that, damn him!" About Tito! "Yesterday we made that decision, and today he just pisses on it. As if we are nothing. And it's not the first time. He does it whenever he wants..."

Such words would not only get you expelled from the Party but could also cost you your life. He added, "This must be stopped. This arbitrariness will surely bring us great troubles and unpleasantness someday!"

I replied, "You know much more about all this. You're a Central Committee member, so you have the right to address this. It's your duty in the Central Committee. If I, who have been punished so many times, said even one word about it,

I'd surely lose my head."

"I wouldn't dare say this to anyone else but you because they've made you a brigade commissar. You'll soon be a division commissar and higher, you'll be at the top and able to influence things."

That's what Vlado Popović told me in 1943. He predicted what Hebrang wrote to Kardelj in 1946. The newspapers recently published this. I think I read it in *NIN*. Yes, about Tito's arbitrariness and overriding decisions of the Political Bureau. Hebrang suggested to Kardelj that they meet and discuss what to do. Kardelj took the letter to Tito, and in my opinion, that was Hebrang's death sentence. Hebrang never declared anything about the Cominform Resolution. He was arrested two months before the Resolution.

These were very dangerous matters. During the war, besides Vlado, other high-ranking leaders questioned why they even met and made decisions when Tito could change them alone. Žujović also seemed to struggle with the same issues. That year, he had a serious conflict with Tito over some things. I told you he lived with Vera Planojević, was madly in love with her, but was married. Vera had a very weak character. If you had seen what she did to him after his arrest in 1948! Tito used this and removed him as the organizational secretary of the Party and deputy supreme commander. Žujović was the second man in the Party and the second in the National Liberation Army. Tito sent him to command the 8th Corps and made Ranković the organizational secretary. He later brought him back, but they clashed again at Kupreško Polje. Tito decided the Supreme Headquarters would move to Italy, but Crni was adamantly against it. And he didn't go. He stayed with the 1st Proletarian Brigade. Žujović wanted to be the president of the Serbian government after the liberation, but Tito didn't allow it. He knew Crni was quite popular in

Serbia and likely feared he could attract Serbian cadres. He appointed Blagoje Nešković to that position and Crni as finance minister.

I want to tell you that there was constant infighting among them. People were dissatisfied with some things. Only some dared to speak out, while the wiser ones kept quiet. At best, they confided intimately, like Vlado Popović to me, to people they thought wouldn't snitch on them. Some were wrong and suffered for it. As I told you what happened before the war and the fate of Petko Miletić. In a letter to Moša Pijade, Tito wrote, "If Šepo," that's what they called Petko, "doesn't listen to what I've ordered, I'll exclude him from the Party." That was when Tito replaced the prison committee and made Moša the new prison committee secretary. You say, and all of you there, that he had a mandate from the Comintern. It wasn't about a mandate but his great ambition and arbitrariness. He formed a provisional Central Committee, brought in Kardelj, Leskošek, Đilas, Ranković, Ivan Milutinović, and then expelled whoever he wanted. I recently read a statement by Đilas that Petko wouldn't have managed as well as Tito as the General Secretary because, as he said, Tito was more intelligent than Petko. Tito was more skilful, but definitely not more intelligent.

What do you think, is it a coincidence that the District Committee of the Party in Sremska Mitrovica during the occupation prohibited the liberation of prisoners from the Mitrovica prison? The escape was organized independently by Slavka Veselinov, the SKOJ secretary, because she was in love with Jovan Veselinov, who was languishing in that prison with other communists. With Slavka were Pinki and another five or six people. Thus, those communists were saved. Most of those prisoners, about 60 of them, were followers of Petko Miletić. Every day, there was a danger that the Ustaše would

kill them. It was likely inconvenient for someone that such capable, knowledgeable and influential people were to be freed. Each of these people was worth so much that sacrificing a brigade for the liberation of each of them would have been worthwhile. There are still many unclear aspects in the history of our Party. But soon, all that will come to light. There are still living people who know these things but won't speak because they hide their responsibility for complicity in such matters.

I believe, for example, that the biggest sins of the then Central Committee were Kerestinec and Sremska Mitrovica. In Kerestinec, everyone was killed, but these survived, thanks to the indiscipline of Slavka Veselinov. The late Paško Romac told me a lot about the Mitrovica prison. He was among those prisoners.

But let's get back to where we left off. My happiest wartime period was when I was the commissar of the 7th Krajina Brigade. The people from Krajina are amazing! I immediately found a common language with them. We lived in true love and great trust. I wasn't at all happy when they called me to a higher duty. After that, things regarding my advancement unfolded roughly as Vlado Popović predicted. I always went to a higher position. First, they appointed me as the commissar of the officer school of the Supreme Headquarters, then as the commissar of the 10th Division. Before me, that role was held by Ilija Došen. They sent him to be the commissar of the Fifth Corps.

When we captured Travnik, we fought for two days and two nights with 4,000 Ustaše from Kupres, the worst murderers and criminals, and we killed them all. One day, Ilija Došen came. I noticed he was poking around me, even inquiring within the division. The people, sensing something was off, praised me more than I deserved. I didn't know what

he was up to. One evening, I remember, we were sleeping on straw, covered with a horse blanket, talking about all sorts of things. Suddenly, he asked me:

"Well, Vlado, you're a strong and passionate man. How do you manage without women?"

I replied:

"To be honest, it's hard. There are women in the division, some of whom might be interested in me, but I would never know if it's because they like me or because I'm the division commissar. Besides, there's always someone with me, a courier, an escort or someone else, so even if I wanted to, I couldn't be alone with anyone. But now, as we liberate these towns, if I find a woman who catches my eye, I won't forgive myself."

As soon as I said that, he started lecturing me:

"You're the division commissar, you can't do that. How can you know who that woman is?"

And on and on, he went. Finally, I said:

"Don't lecture me. Look at what the higher-ups are doing: Tito, Ranković, Žujović... Each of them sleeps with a woman every night, and we're supposed to restrain ourselves and live like ascetics for years."

About 10 days later, they called me to report to the corps headquarters immediately. I went to Travnik, reported to Ilija, and asked why I was summoned. He said:

"Because of what you told me, that Tito, Ranković and Žujović sleep with women and mistresses every night! That's why the Regional Committee for Bosnia and Herzegovina formed a commission."

I froze. Looking at him, I hissed:

"You're a scoundrel, a rascal and a swine, you have nothing human about you. You know I said that to you without any intention of slandering anyone, as you say."

The commission included Avdo Humo, Uglješa Danilović

and Došen. I sat in front of the commission. Ilija said, "When I told him why the commission was formed, he called me a scoundrel, a swine, a rascal, a scum..." Avdo Humo asked me if I said that. I replied, "Yes, and I would have said worse if I could have found suitable words in our language." They all knew that Tito slept with Davorjanka, that Žujović slept with Vera Planojević, that Đilas slept with his wife Mitra, and that Ranković alternated between women. It didn't bother him that he was married to Anđa. Ilija and Uglješa were silent, and Humo got all riled up at me, questioning me like a grocer, asking if I had slept with any woman and accusing me of terrible things. He said, "You spread slander, you're an enemy!" After that ordeal, I went to see the corps commander, Slavko Rodić, a very fine and good man, just to report to him and greet him. Slavko welcomed me warmly and immediately said:

"Since you're going to Belgrade now..."

"What? Belgrade?"

"Haven't they told you? A radiogram arrived yesterday saying that you should go to Belgrade immediately. Hopefully, you'll help us when you get there..."

I looked at him and thought: "You don't know where I'm going, Slavko. I'm going like a lamb to the slaughter. What has our Party become, what kind of people are these... God save me!"

Avdo Humo gave me a letter to take to the Central Committee and hand it to Ranković when I arrived in Belgrade. At that time, I didn't know that Đuro Pucar was already in Belgrade and had told them everything, and in the worst way. The whole issue was that as a commissar, I often clashed with Pucar over various logistical matters. His demands were always excessive compared to our capabilities. He behaved like an emperor, like a ruler. Hardly anyone dared to contradict

him. Everyone had to stop in front of him like they did in front of Tito. He was an absolute despot. People even had to call him "Stari" — like Tito.

I set off for Belgrade, carrying that letter for Ranković. The journey to Belgrade at that time went through Bari in Italy. While waiting for the ship to Bari in Split, in a tense situation and complete uncertainty, I decided to open that letter. If you could have seen what was written about me in that letter! I had been the commissar of a division for eight months. Not a single word about my work, successes or failures, just about how I slandered, how I was rude, how I had gravely insulted the corps commissar... I tore that letter to pieces and threw it in the toilet, took the ship "Bakar" to Italy, and from Italy, after 15 days, flew to Belgrade.

I found Ranković in his new general's uniform, dressed up, looking sharp, in "Madera," where the Central Committee was initially located. He was heading to a reception. I was already bracing for an unpleasant encounter when he said:

"Hello, Vlado, how are you?"

He smiled, even hugged me. He patted me on the back and said:

"Good, you're looking well. Suddenly, he asked where the letter was.

"I opened the letter when I was in Split, and when I saw the filth written about me, I tore it up and threw it away."

He said nothing, just replied:

"You shouldn't have, but it's okay. Go see Krsto, you're going to a position where we absolutely need you."

They sent me to be an instructor at the Higher Party School. I taught the cream of the crop at that time: members of provincial and regional committees, commissars of divisions and corps...

When I went to see Krsto Popivoda, he recounted every-

thing that had happened regarding my alleged slander. He told me about Pucar's complaints, Ranković's anger and, interestingly, that a report full of superlatives about me and my work as a commissar in the division had come from the Regional Committee of the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was signed by Đuro Pucar, but it was likely written by Uglješa Danilović. Krsto defended me in front of Ranković and pointed out that Pucar had a history of intrigues, revenge and creating bad blood among people... Ranković responded fairly, saying, "I know both Đuro and Vlado. That thing about women was certainly not meant maliciously. Besides, it's true."

After that incident and in general, after the war, I kept moving to higher positions. Though I worked like a horse in each role. In the Party school, for example, I wouldn't leave all day. I lectured during the day and prepared myself in the evenings because we all knew far too little. But despite all these high positions, high salaries and various privileges, I was most dissatisfied during that period. I was sickened by everything happening before my eyes. Immediately, the scramble for power, positions and privileges began. Corruption of unprecedented proportions began. And Tito set the tone for all this. He pushed them into positions, immersed them in privileges, and thus bound them to himself. In all this, I felt just as I did during the war when I saw the Ribar brothers in leather from head to toe, or when I watched Mitar Bakić give a horse bought with brigade funds to Tito. Only after the war, this feeling was much heavier, more unbearable because of the scale it had taken. It simply didn't fit into my possibly overly puritanical understanding of communist morality. And, of course, conflicts immediately began.

The head of the Higher Party School was Božidar Maslarić. That man was insatiable. He immediately moved

into the villa of Rada Pašić, the son of Nikola Pašić, and in that time of severe scarcity when food for us was collected through district committee actions, he hauled food home by truckloads, hosting dinner parties and ingratiating himself with various generals and other bigwigs. And at school, imagine, one evening he didn't allow us to make the simplest sandwiches. Because of all that, Đilas eventually dismissed him and appointed him as the head of the Tesla Museum. And to make matters worse, when I once publicly criticized his behaviour, he organized some school attendees to criticize me as intolerant and strict. That's what people resorted to.

Or take these two cases that I also protested publicly. The first is related to General Gradimir Ivanović. That Ivanović was a military attaché in Prague. When he was transferred to Belgrade, he picked up the entire official furniture and brought it from Prague to Belgrade, boasting about it in high society in Belgrade. Women being women, they gossiped, and it got discovered. The second case is related to Tempo. He once invited me to his house for lunch; he lived above the Partizan stadium, near Krcun Penezić, and when we entered the house, there was new carved furniture. Tempo asked his wife, Mica:

"What is this?"

She said:

"I don't know, I thought you sent it. Soldiers came, took out the old furniture, and brought this in."

I watched and stayed silent, and Tempo, to his credit, immediately shouted:

"Send this back immediately."

He called Savo Drljević, the logistics commander, and ordered him to take the furniture away. Tempo hadn't yet started that grab for things. And from this example, you'll see the technology of looting. Before the war, there was a factory

of luxurious furniture at the beginning of Belgrade's Južni Boulevard. When we came, the army took all the factories, later returned them, but kept this one. Since Kardelj was the foreign minister and foreign diplomats visited his house, it was decided to make a luxurious carved furniture set for him. Cana Babović heard about it, called Savo Drljević, and asked if she could get such furniture. Savo said, "Yes." Then he decided to make one for himself, but to cover himself, he made four more, and among those four was the one for Tempo. Tempo returned his and scolded Savo Drljević for a day. But Savo kept his set.

Simultaneously, another thing happened. We, the Dapčevićs, lived in a villa on Proleterskih Brigada Street. Nearby was that diplomatic storehouse with top-quality items. Plus, they were three times cheaper than elsewhere. About 40 people had the right to supply themselves there. One day, my sister convinced me to buy fabric for a suit. I called the storehouse, asked if they had any. The person there said they had enough for 100 suits. I went to the storehouse on the third day, asked for fabric, and the same person said, "No more." In three days, 100 suit fabrics were snatched up! Five, six, ten each. One morning, my aunt asked for newspapers to wrap bread. She said:

"I'm ashamed to carry white bread in the street."

I asked:

"Why?"

She said:

"Because others don't have it."

"Where do you buy it?"

"In that storehouse."

I forbade her from bringing it into the house from then on, even though we ate white bread before the war.

I criticized this at a Political Administration meeting, in

front of Gošnjak, Koča and others, but it didn't help. I openly said we were turning into a feudal bureaucracy with special privileges and proved with examples how much my salary was with privileges. I had a salary of a little over 8,000 dinars, plus 1,000 cigarettes, coal and wood for free, uniform, telephone — all free. Additionally, we paid minimal rent to the house owner. I calculated that all together, it was worth 42,000 dinars. The average salary at that time was around 3,000 dinars. Do you know what Ivan Šibi said to all this? He was the head of the Personnel Administration then, and I was the head of the Propaganda Administration. He said, "If you don't like white bread, you don't have to take it!"

What disheartened me the most was that I was the only one among all those people there to speak up and criticize these things. I said this too: "We are sawing the branch we are sitting on. If we don't eliminate these privileges, not only will we become alienated from the people, but we will also become psychologically crippled." Interestingly, those who had something before the war grabbed less then. Despite everything earlier, at that time, I hung out with Vule and Veljko Mićunović. With Veljko, though, less. The Mićunovićs were a very poor and tragic family before the war. After the war, Veljko was first the head of UDB for Belgrade and then Ranković's deputy. Lots of power. And now see: he rode in a special Mercedes with a compressor, wore an expensive Philippe Patek watch, and of course, lived in a villa in Dedinje. However, all this wasn't enough for him. The moment Žujović was arrested, he took his villa — because it had a pool! That combination of greed, luxury and primitiveness descended from the top officials downward. The last primitives were then grabbing Persian carpets, crystal chandeliers and luxurious furniture... I remember an anecdote with one of those UDB officers. He was a peasant in Montenegro before the war. A

Montenegrin woman went to his house and saw a child urinating on a Persian carpet. She said, "Why do you allow the child to ruin such an expensive carpet?" He replied, "Let him pee, it's earned with blood!" It was simply considered then that they defended the country and it was time to be compensated. And heavily.

No. I had everything then, but I only loved women. What bars? What was recently shown on television is pure fiction. Only foreigners and UDB officers went to bars. The latter to eavesdrop on the former. I was an officer then, and a high-ranking one.

Everything I'm telling you broke people's character because privileges depended on position. Careerism developed to the highest degree, with no hesitation in snitching, scheming and inventing things if someone was in the way. Obedience and sycophancy became paramount in personnel policy. Here's just one example, but a very telling one. The head of the Military-Scientific Institute was General Boško Šiljegović. For a while, I was his deputy, then I was transferred to the Head of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Administration for Agitation and Propaganda. That man did almost nothing but had mastered all the techniques of ingratiating himself with the leaders. Among other things, he played dominoes with Tito and always made sure Tito won.

There was an event connected to that Šiljegović, characteristic of some of our generals towards the end of the war and after. When we were in Drvar, Radovan Zogović raised a fuss because Šiljegović decided to marry that ballerina Mira Sanjin. He was already married to a student, but he fancied Mira, who was wealthy, and he abandoned that marriage to marry Mira. However, the communists from Split accused Mira of dancing naked on tables for Italian officers. When she lived with Ljubiša Jovanović (our best actor), they joined

the partisans, and Mira met Boško, then the commissar of the 8th Dalmatian Corps. The ballerina liked the commissar and a romance began. When that accusation from Split came, Radovan Zogović formed a commission and started interrogating Mira. Being "subtle," he said:

"You, Italian whore, want to marry our general!"

And she defiantly replied:

"I do, and I will marry him!"

And she did. As far as I know, they still live together.

And that's the revolution for you: peasants become commanders and commissars, touch silk panties for the first time and marry bourgeois women. Then in those bourgeois families, they take control and are done for. Since they weren't ideologically formed, they easily changed their views. At that time, 90 per cent of our cadre didn't know the most elementary things about Marxism and Leninism.

And look how that Šiljegović ingratiated himself. I don't know what he said to Tito while playing dominoes, but this, I heard with my own ears. Tempo and I, already then I was the head of propaganda, went to visit the *Narodna Armija* newspaper and the Military-Scientific Institute. Colonel Vukčević received us at *Narodna Armija,* and Boško Šiljegović at the Institute. Vukčević was later killed on Goli Otok, dying a metre away from me. It's unbelievable what they did to him: they beat him from the warden and deputy, through the interrogators, to the ordinary guards. About 20 people from that Petar's Pit are still alive — ask them, they'll all confirm it. When we arrived at Šiljegović's, he immediately started praising some article by Tempo. And this way: "Comrade Tempo, what you wrote is genius. It will surely enter the treasury of Marxism-Leninism!" Tempo kept silent, but I couldn't hold back: "Do you know anything about Marxism and Leninism if you can praise an ordinary article like that? How dare you

ingratiate yourself like that?" When we left and headed to Tempo's car, Tempo said to me: "You didn't have to be so harsh." Even Tempo enjoyed the flattery.

Those who ingratiated themselves advanced, while those who criticized did not. They were even undermined and had their private lives thrown in their faces. That Tempo, with whom I otherwise got along well, once responded to a criticism I made at a Political Administration meeting only with one "argument": "You whore around, Vlado, you whore!" And that in front of Koča, Gošnjak and other military leaders. There were at least 30 people. At that time, I was young and healthy and was neither a pederast nor impotent. Imagine what he used to discredit me at that moment!

THEY COMMITTED BETRAYAL, NOT ME

We managed the state completely unprepared. We knew nothing, not even about the army, in which we had at least some experience. Once, because of some other matters, Arso Jovanović, who was then the Chief of General Staff, called me and suddenly said, "Vlado, we know nothing." And Arso could say that because he had completed all the military schools and, in addition, had written the *Tactics,* the most important military textbook. Even the Czechs used it. We had barely literate division commissars. Ninety per cent of company commissars were practically illiterate from a general cultural standpoint. Because of this, whenever I had the opportunity, I insisted on educating our cadres and reducing the army's size by at least a third. At that time, we had a huge army — the largest in Europe after the Soviet army. We had 88,000 officers and military clerks. You can imagine what a burden that was for the country. The army then numbered between 450,000 and 480,000 people. Half a million people, in those times of scarcity, were eating bread for nothing, contributing nothing. Not to mention that keeping such a number of people under uniform diminished the already decimated workforce capable of labour. I openly opposed maintaining such a state.

Another thing that puzzled me was the method of our Party's work. Even after the war, it operated semi-illegally. We held meetings in secret. It was forbidden to know who was a Party member. Party documents and decisions were not published... I wondered why. Third, for me, the issue of cadre policy was a paramount political issue. I mentioned something about it earlier, but I didn't say everything. The prewar revolutionaries were being sidelined, while various newcom-

ers, including people who had been in enemy armies, were being favoured. Suddenly, former Domobrani, even Ustaše, former gendarmes and police clerks began to rise to the top. Because of this, I once protested in the Political Administration. The reason was General Klišanić. When the Artillery Officers' School opened in Zagreb, which I organized, I saw that the General Staff sent General Klišanić as their representative. And that Klišanić had been at the very top of the Domobrani-Ustaša hierarchy until 1943. When our forces captured him in Lika or Banija, I don't remember, and started convincing him about our ideology and everything else, he openly said he didn't accept it and remained on completely opposite positions. He didn't even want to talk. Later, he changed his mind and rose to the rank of general and the position of head of the General Staff's educational department. He even gave a speech, and of course, no one applauded him. One of the attendees, a bit tipsy, told me that Klišanić, as a commander of a regiment of the old Yugoslav army in 1941, disarmed an entire unit and handed it over to the Germans.

And Tito appointed Milan Žeželj, a former gendarme, as the commander of his guard.

Moreover, we started to divide, creating forbidden zones. Once, Petar Lalović, who was then the guard's commissar, came to me and asked for some political materials. I asked him:

"How are things in the guard? What's the moral-political situation, the organization..."

He was silent and said:

"I wouldn't talk about that."

Two days later, Ranković called me on the phone:

"Vlado, let this be the last time you inquire about the guard!"

After that, I deliberately told Tempo:

"Let's go see the guard, to see how they work, what the Party organization is like... I've never been there."

He said:

"No, we can't go there!"

Tempo, the head of the Political Administration of the Yugoslav Army, couldn't enter the guard's barracks!

With the Russians? I started working with them as the artillery commissar. Most of them were in artillery. Without them, we couldn't have organized units or schools in a modern way. I worked well with them. Once, Tempo invited them for a conversation and, among other things, asked those artillerymen: "How's the commissar?" They told him: "If you had just a few more commissars like Dapčević, you could sleep peacefully." The next day, Tempo called me and said:

"Why do these Russians praise you so much?"

"I didn't pay them. Are you kidding me?"

"No, no. They praise you a lot."

I then thought that the Soviet and our army were the same. That the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were the same, that state borders were just a formality. That was in 1946. I had an artillery lieutenant colonel named Slobođanjinov, one of those White Russians. As an officer of the Domobran artillery battalion, he joined the partisans in 1942.

In 1945, former White Guards began to receive Soviet citizenship. One day, Slobođanjinov came to me and asked:

"Comrade commissar, some are receiving Soviet citizenship and they're forcing me. I don't know what to do."

I replied:

"It's all the same today, man, to be a Soviet or Yugoslav citizen."

What I told him then was and remained my fundamental belief.

No. I first noticed official distancing from the Russians in

1947. Suddenly, they were no longer invited to staff meetings. Although, none of them ever entered the Political Administration. When they suggested giving us advisors and transferring the principle of political, ideological and cultural work from the Soviet army, our people firmly rejected it. None were in the army counterintelligence service — KOS. At that time, Tempo often told me: "Don't get too close to these Russians." And I clashed with Đilas when he asked me to remove five or six lessons about the Soviet Union from the army's educational program. These were minor indicators that puzzled me, but I didn't connect them into any stance as all this had not yet taken large proportions.

Around that time, the power of KOS also began to grow. I remember that two reports about one matter arrived at the Political Administration simultaneously: one from the Party organization of the 2nd Army and the other from KOS. Tempo got up and said: "I believe KOS!" I was stunned. I said: "If that's the case, then we don't need the Party — let's dissolve it!" Until then, until September 1947, KOS was under the Political Administration. It didn't have the right to arrest an officer and similar actions without the approval of the Political Administration, i.e., the person in charge within the Administration. Such approvals were given by Kada Petričević, as Tempo's deputy on the organizational line. This prevented the police-political abuses that policemen are always prone to make. It was a good thing because they were completely under the control of the Political Administration. Without concrete facts, there were no arrests. After September, KOS was separated from us and completely tied to Ranković. We no longer had the right nor were allowed to interfere.

Once, at a meeting in the Political Administration, Koča — in his refined and intelligent way of planting an arrow, which he learned in France — looked at Jefto Šašić and said:

"You see, comrades, how diligent this comrade Jefto is. He is the only one here writing everything down." Jefto Sašić was the head of KOS. And they were already controlling us then. I was shocked to learn that my driver reported to KOS about my movements every day. I found out purely by chance. I called the garage: send my driver, they answered that they had sent him to the hospital on some errand. I left my office, which was on the fourth floor, and saw my driver coming out of KOS on the fifth floor. I went down and told him:

"Drive to Topčider!"

When we got to some quarry, I pulled out my gun and shouted:

"Get out! Where were you?"

"At the hospital."

"Why are you lying, you scoundrel, I'll kill you like a dog! Where were you, speak!"

"Up at KOS."

"Why?"

"They ordered me to go there every morning and inform them where you were, how long you stayed at each address."

It went dark for me. I immediately went back to the General Staff — furious like a lynx. I looked for Tempo. Tempo wasn't there. I had decided to go to Tempo, take off those two epaulettes and throw them right in his face. I found Kada Petričević. He said:

"Are you crazy? Mine, Koča's and all our drivers work for KOS!"

I experienced that as a great insult, as total distrust and espionage. I was disgusted with everything. I said:

"Well, damn it, if they don't trust us, whom do they trust in this country!"

I didn't know how it was in the Soviet Union, but I assumed there were no similar things there. On the other hand,

everything I told you about what started happening with us shocked me. And above all, that terrible megalomania. I connected all this with Tito. He gave tone and direction to all this. And then these guys, Tempo, Đilas and others — these two I heard personally — began to slander the Russians. There was even a story launched about how the Russians were robbing us. That claim was more than brazen. Stalin gave our people everything they asked for. Even more. And for free. Directly from the factory, they received: weapons for 17 complete infantry divisions — from rifles and pistols, through machine guns, light machine guns, to cannons included in an infantry division; three tank divisions with those T-34s, which were the best tanks in the world at that time; three air divisions; heavy artillery for the reserve of the Supreme Command... Today, that would be worth, I guarantee, at least 10,000,000,000 dollars. Plus, when there was famine in Russia — our people who went there told this — they gave us 500,000 tons of wheat and 100,000,000 dollars in gold. As a gift — so we could buy some essential things from the West.

In 1948, it was rightly anticipated that Greek monarcho-fascists would try to penetrate Albania and conquer southern Albania, where about 50,000 Greeks lived. Therefore, we had agreed with Albania to give it a mountain division. It was to be formed in Banja Luka. I was supposed to help with that. The division was formed, reached Ohrid, but did not enter Albania because it was just then that relations with the Russians were severed. The news caught me in Sarajevo, in Milinko Đurović's room, the army commissar. First, a telegram from the General Staff arrived with an order to open fire immediately if planes with Soviet markings appeared, and then the phone rang in Milinko's room. There was Tempo. He was looking for me and demanded that Milinko, Apostolski and I be in the large war room of the General Staff at 8 a.m. the

next morning. I still hadn't connected everything, although I remembered an episode that happened a week before. I had argued with Tempo, Vojo Nikolić and Milinko Đurović about something and, as a sign of reconciliation, invited them to dinner at my place. At that time, Tempo told us: "Comrades, we must all be firmly united around Comrade Tito because some are against him, those who slander him." I knew something big was at stake since Tempo talked like that, but I had no idea that the first letter from the Soviet Party, written by Stalin and Molotov, had arrived.

I thought about it and saw that something serious had broken out since we had to go to Belgrade so quickly, but I didn't share it with Milinko because an atmosphere of distrust had already been created. At that time, it was very difficult to get to Belgrade from Sarajevo in such a short time. The airport often didn't operate due to fog. However, Roćko Čolaković gave us the government railcar. Roćko was then the president of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian government and, along with the entire government, agreed with the letter from the CPSU(B) to our Party. The difference is that the Bosnians were all invited to Belgrade, and were well criticized and scared there. When they changed their minds, only two or three were stubborn and sent to Goli Otok, and the rest returned to Sarajevo. But the Montenegrins, since they held their stance, were all arrested. Twenty-two ministers and deputies were arrested and brought together to Goli Otok.

The next morning, two KOS colonels with helmets — in full combat gear — stood in front of the war room. In the hall, I saw all my colleagues from the Political Administration: Kada Petričević, Ivan Šibl, Vule Mićunović, Vlado Šćekić, Kreačić... Gradually, the entire army top gathered: commissars and commanders of regions, the commander and commissar of the People's Defence Corps, the commander

and commissar of the air force, the commander and commissar of the navy, the president of the Supreme Military Court, the chief military prosecutor, the head of health, Nikoliš... At the head sat Tempo and Gošnjak. Gošnjak opened the meeting, and Tempo first read the letter and then the response of our Party. We, or rather I and most others, still didn't know that a session of the CC of the CPY had been held 15 days earlier and that Žujović and Hebrang had already been arrested. After that, he also read Hebrang's letter to Kardelj. Do you remember, I mentioned it to you earlier. It was short: "Comrade Bevc, you know that at the Political Bureau meeting we made, among other things, a decision to send a delegation to the Soviet Union. However, despite our completely clear decision, Comrade Stari changed everything. As you know, this is not his first time. We must put an end to this. I would like to talk to you about it." Finally, he read letters from the CC of the Hungarian Party and the CC of the Bulgarian Party.

When the reading was over, everyone had to state whether they agreed with the decision of the Central Committee or not. In that response, there were things I knew for sure were not true. For example, the letter from the CPSU(B) stated that the organizational secretary of the Party, Comrade Ranković, was the head of the cadre department and the supreme chief of the UDB, and that he thus placed the UDB over the Party, i.e., put the Party under the control of the UDB. It also said that there was not enough initiative among Yugoslav communists in solving daily problems because they felt the UDB was over them. Our people responded that it was not true that the personnel manager was Ranković, but Veljko Zeković. All of us who listened to this then knew it was not true. The personnel policy was led by Ranković. In the Political Administration, we had a commission for cadres. I was on it. We made lists of candidates for division commanders

and higher for the Central Committee, in three lists. The first list had the best, the second those considered, and the third those who could eventually be chosen. All three lists were sent to Ranković, and he would circle whoever he wanted.

So, in that specific matter, I considered the response untruthful. They lied instead of saying: It's true — we will correct it.

We were stating our positions individually. Tempo didn't start with us. He began with those who were former officers of the old Yugoslav army, like Rade Hamović, who was the Deputy Chief of General Staff, or that corps commander Vukotić. Naturally, they all supported our response. Vojo Kovačević even started crying: "How could they attack our Comrade Tito?" The Chief Prosecutor Žižić, who eventually ended up on Goli Otok, said, "I'll die for Tito." Gojko Nikoliš said, "These are crows and ravens attacking us." Slowly, it reached us. At that time, I was still not sure. I didn't like many things, but I hadn't taken a stance. I thought: it will look foolish if I'm the only one here to say I disagree. I was the penultimate. I stood up and said, "I accept the decision of the Central Committee, but it seems to me that this is a much more serious matter than some think." Then I sat down. Meanwhile, a colonel entered and called Tempo to a special phone. He rushed there and came back. He said, "Comrade Tito called and asked how it was going. I told him — it's going well, some comrades are even crying!"

I left very thoughtful. There was no longer any trust among people; the fear of the all-powerful hands of the UDB and KOS had taken hold, so there was not a single person I dared to talk to about what I thought. Others felt the same way I did. Vojo Kovačević, who cried, tied people up at Party meetings just because they believed we should have gone to Bucharest for the Cominform meeting. Psychological and

physical depression began. Things were so shaky that even Kardelj, who had previously shamelessly betrayed Hebrang, accused Tito in the USSR of not convening the Central Committee since liberation and doing everything on his own. Kardelj even promised to try to do something about it. Yes, literally so. There are Soviet sources about it, and Kardelj himself admitted it. Tempo said that Kardelj was almost excluded from the Party and leadership. Tito eventually calmed that matter down. He probably feared that if he excluded Kardelj, all the Slovenes would leave with him.

For a while, I had the false hope that our people and the Russians would reconcile and that there wouldn't be a final split. Kada Petričević disabused me of this one day, and that was the moment of my decision. He entered my office and said:

"I came to talk to you; I can't take it anymore. I can't sleep, and I don't dare say a word to anyone else. What do you think about all this?"

I said:

"There are things I disagree with. If the Russians say in that letter that the Soviet government guarantees the truth about Velebit and Leontić with all its authority, then they have the data."

Kada said to me:

"Everything is true — from A to Z!"

Then he told me this story. Tito invited Tempo, Kreačić, Petričević, Ranković and Ivan Krajačić-Stevo to dinner. After they ate and drank a little, Tito began: "Look how they attack us, and we gave them our best cadres. I even worked for the MGB." For the Ministry of State Security. When Stevo Krajačić nudged him with his foot, he turned to Stevo and said, "Why are you nudging me, these are my best cadres, I can tell them everything." Kada told me this and left. All

those stories from before the war, Petko Miletić, betrayals in Russia, Nikola Lekić, began spinning in my head... I thought: if he worked for the MGB, then he must have written reports. What other job could he have had than to give opinions and evaluations of people from the Yugoslav community to the MGB!

Kada also told me, supposedly from Tempo, that they agreed — if the Russians sent Dimitrov to the Fifth Congress to try to win over delegates from the position of the Resolution — to simply prevent him from speaking. Dimitrov had enormous respect among us and they were justifiably afraid of such a possibility. The idea was that Tito, if necessary, would turn off the microphone and, in the worst case, only the first two or three rows would hear him.

When he told me that, along with various things about the fates of Hebrang and Žujović, I finally made up my mind. I concluded: this is nonsense and trickery. There was no longer any doubt. The film rewound and I began to understand some things I had previously paid no attention to. Even some that happened just before the conversation with Kada. For example, I was invited to the UDB's May 13 holiday, and there I had the opportunity to see how they were showered with ranks, medals, champagne and how people were simply corrupted.

At that time, I thought this way: This is a big deal that absolutely leads not only to our break with the Soviet Union but also with other socialist countries and the international communist movement. To sustain ourselves economically, militarily and otherwise, whether someone likes it or not, we will have to turn to the imperialists, the Americans. To gain credit with them, we will have to make significant concessions to the domestic bourgeoisie in politics, cadre and every other aspect. Bit by bit, there will be nothing left of socialism

in our country. Everyone who died did so in vain. This must be prevented!

How?

I said to Kada:

"Let's talk to these people, gather 50 colonels and generals, and make a petition demanding a compromise — to acknowledge certain evident things and correct them."

Kada said:

"You're naive. Did you see what happened to Hebrang and Žujović? You'll talk to one, another and a third person, one will betray you, and they'll arrest you immediately. That has no real chance of success."

The main question then was: Who are our like-minded people? Kada once said:

"Probably the Russians know. Let's ask them. Surely these people come into contact with Soviet representatives."

"They'll characterize it as espionage."

"Those who lose will be characterized the worst anyway."

I didn't consider it betrayal or espionage. I said that in court. From the first day I became a member of the Communist Party in 1933, I considered myself simultaneously a member of the Soviet Party. For me, there was no difference. It's hard for you today to understand the internationalist feeling we carried. It was inseparable from the communist feeling. That last sentence in the *Communist Manifesto* — Workers of all countries, unite! — grabbed me on the first day. That I felt that internationalism to the bone is evidenced by the fact that I tried to go to Spain as a volunteer five times. Later, from the USSR, I arranged to go as a volunteer to Cuba, and after that to Vietnam. When I became a communist, I adopted two things as axioms once and for all. One — proletarian internationalism. Two — that Marxism-Leninism is the teaching of class struggle, that everything must be viewed from class

positions. Ideology is either socialist or bourgeois. There is no third. Everything else is a lie and deception.

We agreed that I would contact the Russians. Near the JNA House lived the assistant of the Russian military attaché, General Sidorovich. I rang, entered, introduced myself, told him why I came and asked for an appointment with Sidorovich. He looked at me and just said, "Wait for me tonight at Kalemegdan. I'll lift the hood as if fixing the car. I'll tell you what General Sidorovich replied." I met him that evening and got the response that Sidorovich agreed to see me and that we should go there immediately. I got in his car and went to the Soviet embassy. As soon as he brought me in, he left and I was alone with Sidorovich. I immediately began:

"I came on my behalf and on behalf of Branko Petričević, to talk to you, as a communist to a communist, about this very serious problem that has arisen between our party leaderships. We accept your letters, except for some minor details, and believe something should be done. The situation is difficult, there is total mistrust and it is very dangerous to talk to people. You could get burned immediately. We assume that other people come into contact with you. Without organization, nothing can be done, and that's why we need to connect among ourselves..."

He only said:

"No one has approached us, and I can't tell you anything about it. It would be best if you come back in a week. Arrange it now when you leave."

Moreover, he refused to meet anywhere other than their embassy. I thought he would consult with Moscow and talk to me more openly afterwards.

At that time, the Fifth Congress of the CPY had already been convened, and I was elected as a delegate. In the meantime, the third Russian letter arrived, and Tempo had called

a conference of leading cadres of the Ministry of National Defence. Again at the Army House, Kada and I were called there. Kada excused himself with some duty, and I had to go. Now imagine my situation: if I don't go, I'll be suspicious; if I go, I'll have to state my position again. But how can I state my position against my conscience? I had already accepted the resolution, and from then on, only one thing mattered to me: will we continue with the Soviet Union and the international communist movement or go against it?

When I arrived at the Army House, Koča, Gošnjak, Tempo and others were already sitting there. Tempo went up on the stage and began explaining why we didn't go to Bucharest. Among other things, he said there was a high probability and danger that they would detain our delegates there until we released Hebrang and Žujović. Since what Tempo was saying was not very convincing or for some other reason, Gošnjak, Koča and some others pressured me to speak. I couldn't. If I said something against my stance, I would be the most contemptible person in my own eyes. If I expressed myself against their stance, I would be finished in one moment. A rather unpleasant situation was created, which Gošnjak interrupted. He announced a half-hour break and invited Tempo, Koča and me to play a game in the billiard room. Tempo and I against Koča and Gošnjak. Suddenly, Koča said while playing: "Tempo, you should watch out for this Vlado. He, who used to speak so easily, refused today." Pure provocation. I swallowed, played that billiard and kept quiet, but I knew that barb would stay in their minds if I didn't respond. They were laughing. I laughed too and said to Gošnjak: "You're a member of the Political Bureau. It would be good for you to watch out for this Koča and see why he struggled for 15 days to write that letter about Žujović's role in the Fifth Offensive when you accused him of taking his division out of the fight

and leaving the others to die." I had to give it back to him because, in that situation, his arrow hit me right in the heart...

What political ambitions! Kada and I were still umbilically linked to our leadership. We agreed completely on two things: that the function of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of the Party should be separated and that only Đilas should be excluded from the leadership because we believed he was a bearer of bourgeois nationalism. We never thought of replacing Tito and the others. The primary intention was to pressure Tito and the narrow leadership to change this stance and find a compromise with the Russians, even at the cost of some sacrifices on our side. If I had wanted to kill Tito, I could have done so in the middle of the Fifth Congress. One day, we sat alone on a bench in that park for half an hour. He was complaining. He was incredibly depressed despite all the noise at the Congress. He was probably afraid that the Russians would play a game against him from the least expected person, from the closest ones. Apart from Đilas, most of them finished school in the Soviet Union. I had a gun in my pocket and a bullet in the chamber. I could have killed him coldly and left, and no one would have stopped me.

Before the Congress, I went to the Russians once or twice. However, it was useless. They simply didn't trust me. I assume they thought Ranković sent me to provoke them. The Russian once said: "Speak up at the Congress if you think you're right, connect with people, especially those who were in the Soviet Union." He even mentioned Gošnjak, by God. That was foolish. Gošnjak and those who were there were the most against them. That was my last meeting with Sidorovich.

The Congress began with Tito's report. Before that, all those who were predetermined for the working presidency got up from the first row — I sat in the second, with Ćeća Stefanović next to me — and the first row was empty. Only

one young comrade remained at the very end of the first row. I asked: Who is that? They said: Comrade Jovanka, our delegate. When we elected delegates at the Ministry of National Defence, generals and Spanish fighters were in the competition, and many didn't pass because the number of delegates was limited. Suddenly, Otmar Kreačić went on stage and said: "Comrades, I would propose an old comrade — she works as a librarian for Tito." We all thought it was an older woman who worked in the Comintern. I looked at her, I met her twice in the partisans and I realized: that's Tito's new mistress. She was tanned, plump, with rustic beauty. I thought: she's good for carrying firewood. While Tito was reading the report, that comrade Jovanka kept jumping and applauding. Never mind that she jumped, but we all had to. Two thousand of us delegates. My God, imagine us, two thousand serious people, jumping and clapping every moment!

Tito did not attack Stalin in his report. He even ended the speech with: "Long live Comrade Stalin!" Thus, Tito concluded the entire Congress. The first attack on Stalin was made by Veljko Mićunović in his co-report. And directly. I was stunned. That meant the bridges were burned. Veljko would never have done it on his own and out of his head. I thought: "Brace yourself, Vlado!"

I returned home with Peko, we lived together in that house on Proleterskih Brigada Street, but I immediately went out to wander around, so we didn't say a word about it that night. In the morning, at breakfast, I was dejected, thinking the devil had taken the joke too far, and Peko looked at me and said:

"Why are you so thoughtful, Vlado? Forget your grand philosophy. Let's go with our Central Committee, come what may."

"Man, how can I not be dejected when the fate of the

country and everything we've fought for all these years is at stake. I can't be indifferent to these things. Sooner or later, we must find some compromise with the Soviet Union. There's no other way. Besides, I felt sick yesterday listening to Veljko Mićunović attack Stalin like that. It's not about attacking Stalin's personality. It is clear what that means. In this case, he is attacking a state like the Soviet Union."

"What Stalin? Let him go to hell when he's wrong."

"For me, Stalin represents the ideology of the international communist movement, and I believe that whoever shoots at Stalin today, through him, shoots at communism. Therefore, I'm inclined to shoot at anyone who shoots at Stalin, or rather at communism!"

"Even me?"

"Even you, if you go to shoot!"

He jumped, and I jumped. We almost fought. Those women who stood there behind the door and listened separated us. Until that day, we went to the Congress together — in one car. That day, he got into his car, I into mine, and headed to Topčider. Even with Peko, I didn't dare speak openly. To be honest, I thought that if I confided in him, he would immediately go to Ranković or Tempo, Tito or Đilas, and tell everything. That day, during the break in the Congress, in a very small circle, Koča said that he didn't like Veljko Mićunović's speech and that he believed it wasn't our line or tactic. In the evening, Peko hugged me and offered me, as a sign of reconciliation, some filigree buttons he got from General Aleksandar. I refused to accept them. Everything broke immediately after the Congress. One woman exposed me — she was the personnel officer with me in the division. I went to the Army House, found her and another woman, a university professor. They invited me to their table; I sat and had dinner and talked with them. They asked me how it was

at the Congress. "Oh, leave me alone," I said, "did you read the newspapers, listen to the radio?" They said: "From the newspapers, you can't see if there were those who thought differently." I said: "Of course there were. Maybe I'm one of them. I disagree." This personnel officer hesitated for three or four days and then went to Jefto Šašić and told him. Tempo was then on holiday, Ranković and someone else were at Oplenac, and Tito had gone to Brijuni. When Jefto came to the Political Administration, he found only Kada and Otmar Kreačić, told them the woman's story and said: "I can't arrest Vlado without Ranković's approval." They agreed to keep quiet about it until they got approval. That same day, my driver removed all the bullets from my magazine. KOS ordered him to do it. Kada immediately called me from his mother-in-law's, she lived on Makedonska Street, and told me everything. I immediately suggested we escape. Even before that incident, I had talked with Arso Jovanović and realized that he was more inclined to escape to the Soviet Union than to mess around in the country. Arso was already compromised. Several generals, including Arso, had discussed everything in Miločer and more or less accepted the Resolution and those letters. Among them was a colonel, Dušan Dozet, from the Political Administration, who wrote a report as soon as he returned. Another time, his sister-in-law reported him. She came from Sarajevo to visit Arso and reported everything she heard to the Sarajevo UDB. Tempo once even said to me: "Vlado, watch out for Arso, he seems to be on the Cominform line."

Arso and I had already decided to go. Kada didn't want to. At the last moment, he changed his mind, came to Arso's house by car, and the three of us left in Arso's car toward Bela Crkva. We left around noon. There was a tank school and a tank brigade. We didn't know this; I found out when I met

them on Goli Otok that almost all the officers of that tank brigade had declared for the Resolution. In Vršac, a neighbouring place, there was a cavalry brigade. Almost all its officers ended up on Goli Otok.

The commander of the school in Bela Crkva was Colonel Dukljan Vukotić, from Piperi, Arso's neighbour. He was a battalion commander in my brigade. We were sure, although we hadn't talked to him beforehand, that if we explained the situation to him, he would give us a tank to cross the border, and maybe he would go with us to Romania. We went to Bela Crkva, but Dukljan wasn't there — he had gone to a wedding of some officer. We went to Vršac, found the secretary of the committee, some Vukmirović, whom I had once admitted to SKOJ, and told him we wanted to go to the state farm in Sočica. He disappeared for half an hour and then said: "Okay, let's go." Fifteen kilometres before Sočica, there was an incredible downpour and all four wheels got stuck in the mud up to the axles. Not a move. It was already night. He went to the village, found the secretary of the local party cell and brought horses. All this took hours. At one point, the cart overturned, and Kada and Arso fell out. We arrived at Sočica around midnight, woke up the farm owner and his wife, they served us dinner, it was raining — a terrible night! We left for the border around two and a half hours after midnight. We wore white blouses and caps and olive-green trousers. A kilometre and a half before the border, he showed us a light on the Romanian guardhouse and said — despite Arso telling him we were there to inspect our border — "I'll take you to the place where horse thieves cross, it's the safest place to cross." He probably guessed what was going on.

Arso held him by the arm, and I held Arso by the arm on the other side. Kada walked behind us. He fell behind by about 30 metres. Suddenly, the rain stopped and it started

to get a little light. At one spot, the road was washed out from the rains, like a trench; the guide said: "When we get out of this trench, in that direction, it's not even 400 metres to the border." We got out of that trench, grass and bushes there, took a few steps, and I felt, from my old war reflex, that someone had a rifle or a machine gun. I shouted: "Down!" pulled Arso and threw myself to the ground. Arso was a split second late. The burst caught him right across the head, and the young man across the chest and stomach.

Kada ran into some corn, the guide was severely wounded and started gurgling: "Don't shoot comrades, I'm not guilty of anything." Arso was already dead. They didn't shoot anymore. I already held the pistol in my hand; I clearly saw the silhouette in the bushes. I would have surely hit it, but I turned and ran after Petričević.

I reached Kada:

"Arso is dead!"

He was all bewildered. A strong wind blew, and from the rustling of those corn stalks, it seemed to us that someone was coming.

"Vlado, please, don't shoot."

"If he shoots at me, I will shoot, even if it's my own brother."

"Please, don't."

"Go to hell! You do what you want; I will shoot. I won't shoot first. If he shoots at me, what else can I do: either I'll get him or he'll get me."

At dawn, we emerged in a vineyard near Sočica. I didn't know where the Romanian border was. We had to wait for the sun to rise because our maps were left in that bag of Arso's.

"What do you intend to do?"

"Break through."

I thought we should go through the cornfields to the

Danube, along the Danube to the Nera, swim across the Nera, and then we're on the Romanian border.

"I won't. This isn't Montenegro; they'll catch me."

"No one can catch me alive as long as I have these two pistols."

"I won't, and I don't advise you either."

"I will. When we set out, Kada, let's go to the end."

"No. I will surrender. I'll say I didn't know about any of this, and please, if they catch you, confirm it."

"Do you believe there's such a fool who would believe that?"

He completely collapsed. And I told him everything I knew, even about the people who had connected with me, and the officers who were in the academy in the USSR. One Montenegrin had gathered most of them around our line and kept in touch with me. There were about 20 high-ranking officers. Kada knew everything about it. I knew that in that collapsed state, he would tell everything immediately. Oh, what to do, my mother? Again, I said to him:

"Kada, please, don't, you'll disgrace yourself! Let's go, either to die like men or to make it through."

"I won't, I'll surrender."

I thought: I'll kill him. He looked at me and started trembling. Then it crossed my mind: Arso is dead, and if I kill him, I'll have no witness; everyone will say I led them there and killed them.

He later confessed everything to Ranković and, among other things, said I almost killed him. They told him they had arrested his wife and he told everything.

I headed towards the Danube. Past some stream, then to a Romanian village. However, I came across some trucks and immediately thought: the border is surely blocked. I took off my coat and cap, buried them along with the big pistol in the

leaves, rolled up my shirt sleeves and trousers — so I wouldn't stand out because many wore military trousers after the war — and headed towards the village of Straža. Near the village, I met a man who asked: "Friend, do you have a cigarette to spare?" I gave him one diplomatic Drina cigarette, and he went to the village. The UDB was already there, questioning everyone, including him. He said: "I just met someone. He gave me a cigarette." When they asked where he threw the butt, he answered: "I didn't smoke it all, I left half. Here."

Of course, I didn't know that. Ilija Kostić later told me this and even showed me the butt. They immediately knew it was me. I didn't go the route I proposed to Kada. I decided to go to Belgrade, knowing they wouldn't look for me there and that I could hide somewhere until I figured something out. Around noon, a train came by, but I couldn't jump on it. A truck passed by. I couldn't get on that either. I decided to go straight to the railway station. And the station was just one house in a field. At the station, there was one employee. He said the first train was only in the evening, a workers' train. I bought a third-class ticket, told him I'd been at a wedding, hadn't slept all night and would like to nap in the waiting room, asking him to wake me when the train arrived. He woke me two or three minutes before the train arrived. I got up, went out and covered half my face and one eye with a handkerchief. When he saw me with the handkerchief, a man stood up and let me sit. I got off the train at the Belgrade Dunav station, went to that small park in front of it and sat on a bench. I didn't know where to go. I couldn't go to friends — they would probably look for me there. To relatives — the same. I decided to go to Dr. Miloš Misirlić because I knew he and his wife had gone to Bled. They lived next to us on Proleterskih Brigada Street. House to house. Their daughter Suzana was alone at home. She had finished law school but

was studying medicine. Her father wanted her to take over. He was a famous doctor at that time. I approached the house and saw someone constantly walking in front of our house. There was an unlit niche near the present Tesla Museum. I hid there and waited. I wasn't more than 20 metres away from that UDB agent. Suddenly, another man approached the one walking and said: "He's not crazy to come home, let's go to 'Barajevo.'" This one hesitated but eventually went to the tavern!

I jumped over the fence, went to the small house in the yard where Suzana mainly stayed, and called for her. She opened the door, looked at me, not understanding anything, but when I told her I needed to stay with her, she let me in. She knew nothing. The newspapers only published the first news eight days later. I told her I disagreed with our government, that two others and I had tried to escape, one was killed, the other surrendered, and I needed to hide for two or three days. She allowed me to stay.

I decided to contact the Russians and ask them to help me cross the border. I was in the worst possible situation. At one point, I asked Suzana:

"Will you go to an address and deliver a letter to a man?"

"I will."

"That man doesn't speak Serbian, but he surely knows French."

Suzana went to the Russian and delivered the letter. When she came back, she said, "He doesn't want to talk to me at all!"

She had rung the bell and started speaking French — she spoke it perfectly because her mother, a doctor of law, was French. The Russian got scared, thought it was some provocation and didn't want to talk.

The person I trusted most in my life was my sister Danica.

Suzana called Dana — she fainted when she saw me in such a state — and I asked her to go to the Russian, show her ID, say she was my sister and ask for help. That didn't help either. I couldn't stay at Suzana's anymore because her parents were returning from Bled, so I sent Dana to the Mijušković family. There were three of them: Marko and his two sisters. We were good friends, and they thought the same way I did. Marko and one sister worked at *Tanjug*. Dana knew them as well. One of them was her friend from Cetinje. They immediately agreed to take me in. They had a room in a building next to the Serbian Assembly. A policeman, Nikola Bugarčić, also lived in that building. You must have heard of him. He was once the warden of Goli Otok, and in 1968, as the chief of Belgrade police, he beat students at the New Belgrade underpass. In that room, Marko lived with his wife and child. His wife was Vjera Bakotić, the first wife of Koča Popović. When they took me in, they moved to the older sister's place, Dana's friend. I stayed in that room for five or six days.

Since the Russians were scared, I decided to go there myself. And I did. The Russian received me, I explained the situation to him, and asked them to transport me to the Soviet Union by ship or some other way. He refused, saying:

"The controls are such that it's completely out of the question. It would cause a major scandal."

I said:

"Fine, I'll go on my own. This time to Hungary. I'll cross the border somewhere between Subotica and Bajmok. I ask you to have the Russians, not the Hungarians, waiting for me there."

I was afraid the Hungarians might hand me over to our authorities. At that time, the ministers of internal affairs of Hungary and Yugoslavia were on very friendly terms.

Young Mijušković's sister came with me towards Subot-

ica. They had a relative working on the railway in Subotica and we counted on him to help me. One evening, we walked across the Sava bridge and boarded a dark, broken train at Zemun Polje. We hid in a compartment near the exit. There was no one else in it. In the morning, we found their relative, but he didn't help me. He said, "The controls are too strict." At that time, two families from my village lived in Bajmok. I asked the railwayman's sister to accompany me there, and she did. I found only an old woman and her daughter, who had come to visit her mother. The daughter's husband worked under me in the artillery. His name was Marko Prlja. He is the father of your colleague, Aleksandar Prlja. From my house in Ljubotinj to Marko's, you could throw a stone. We were good friends. Marko and my brother Milutin finished the officer academy together. I felt very uncomfortable that Marko's wife was there. When I explained the situation, the old woman called a man named Vukmirović and asked him to take me to the border. He agreed, saying he had land right by the border and would take me there, but I would have to continue alone.

We left that same night in pitch darkness. He even showed me a cemetery on the way where some of our people, killed by the Hungarians, were buried. He took me to the border zone and then returned. I crawled across the border and realized on the Hungarian side that my compass was no longer working.

Probably some dirt had gotten into it. I had crossed the border much further south than the place I had indicated to the Russian on the map. I walked on the Hungarian side towards the place where the Russians were supposed to be waiting if they had accepted my request. After a while, I even lit a cigarette and picked up a stick to defend myself from stray dogs. At one point, I thought about hiding in the cornfield until morning. I wasn't sure if I was orienting myself correct-

ly. Still, I decided to move forward two more kilometres.

Suddenly, in the dark, a voice shouted, "Stop!" I thought: Russians! I raised my hands and looked. Five or six people stood up not far in front of me and approached from all sides, pointing machine guns at me.

It was our people!!!

Even today, I don't know what exactly happened at the border. I am still convinced that I was on Hungarian territory and that the Russians should have stopped me instead of our forces. They first took me to a border post, then to the battalion headquarters. We passed by Hungarian, then our border posts. Both the commander, who was Montenegrin, and the battalion commissar, I knew well. The battalion commissar had been the commissar of the Kupreško detachment in my division. Based on the report, the commander concluded that I had been returning from Hungary to Yugoslavia. He started some conversation, but I didn't want to talk. He said, "You have the right not to talk. You'll be taken to a more important place soon. They've already called from Belgrade and are on their way."

Some KOS second lieutenant tied my hands behind my back so tightly — from my wrists almost to my shoulders — that I resembled a bale. I couldn't move. He constantly kept a gun pointed at me. The commissar just watched, his eyes full of tears. They threw me into a car, drove me to Bajmok, and then, in a new car, to the division headquarters in Subotica. The first person I met in the division was the division commissar, Čedo Jovanović.

When I was a brigade commissar, he was a battalion commissar. When I became a division commissar, he was promoted to brigade commissar. He said, "You've always been a decent man; how could this happen to you?" Just a month after this event, he was also arrested and taken to Goli Otok. We were there together, and I couldn't resist teasing him with the same nonsensical sentence. It hadn't been more than 15 minutes since my arrival in the division when General Jefto Šašić, the head of KOS, and Colonel Ilija Kostić, his deputy,

arrived. Jefto said:

"Vlado, let's go."

"Let's go," I replied.

In Belgrade, in prison, they constantly watched me. A KOS officer continuously sat with me in the cell. They didn't even lock the cell door. When they took me to the toilet, they emptied the entire hallway so no one could see me. I refused to admit anything. They read me Kada's statement. He had told them everything he knew. I denied everything. They confronted us.

"Petričević, did you say all this?"

"Yes."

"Vlado, what do you say to that?"

"It's absolutely not true. It's all Kada's vivid imagination."

"Petričević, what do you say to that?"

"It's not true. Vlado is trying to save these people. They were in contact with him and share his thoughts."

"Vlado, what do you say to that?"

"It's not true what Kada says..."

And so on. They knew perfectly well that what Kada said was true and immediately arrested those people. They all confessed right away. They were told, "Vlado has confessed everything," and that was enough. They didn't bother me with that anymore, but they were very interested in where I had been from the moment I separated from Kada near the Romanian border. Even Ranković personally, accompanied by Ćeća Stefanović, came once to ask me about it. They were in a panic.

They didn't know where the danger was coming from. They feared I might have been hiding with some generals or leaders who had not yet been discovered. I refused to tell them, even under the threat of torture. But then Ranković started like this:

"There will be no torture. I understand you. Maybe I would have done the same thing if I didn't know some things that we in the highest leadership knew. There are some indications that things with the Russians might soon be resolved. Maybe we'll soon be talking in a different place, as communists used to. After all, we are communists. You don't think you're facing a class enemy. Let's make a deal about this. We need to know. Under what conditions will you tell us?"

"On the condition that you give me your word of honour that nothing will happen to those people."

"I can't give you my word of honour. I don't have that right."

"Then we're done talking."

We argued about it for about 10 minutes, and then he suddenly said:

"All right. You have my honest, human, communist and comradely word that nothing bad will happen to them. We'll just question them. Understand us, man; we must know their names at any cost."

"Your word?"

"My word."

After that, I told him everything. He was relieved to hear that they were just ordinary and harmless people. The Misirlić family was indeed only questioned. The Mijušković family was arrested and held in custody until my trial. They had also arrested Danica and my brother Drago, but they were released. They even called my aunt for questioning. Dana and Drago told them, "How could we betray our brother?" And Ranković himself said about my aunt, "She's an old outlaw; she would hide even us if needed."

It all lasted 10 months. In the cell, I mostly read, but not what I wanted; only what they brought me. For instance, about reinforced concrete or raising rabbits.

Just before the trial, they transferred us to the prison in Banjica. Then a very interesting thing happened. When the interrogators finished their work, they gave the materials against us to the Supreme Military Prosecutor and the Supreme Military Court to raise an indictment. However, they replied that there were no elements of a crime in all this, that these were Party revolts and offences, and that we could only be punished by the Party for that. The court president was General Krdžić, and the prosecutor was Veljko Žižić. When they refused, their deputies, Laković and Lakić, were called. They also refused. They were all arrested and sent to Goli Otok. Imagine how brave those people were then!

They appointed Ilija Koštica, the deputy head of KOS, as the Supreme Military Prosecutor. Interestingly, Koštica was particularly eager to prove that Arso fired first at the border and that the patrol killed him in self-defence. I waited for the trial, convinced they would sentence me to death. I even knocked it out on the wall for Kada. His cell was right next to mine. I had no idea that in my and Kada's village, they had staged a conference where, supposedly, our people were demanding the death penalty for us. The guards, while escorting us to the trial, talked among themselves about who had volunteered for the firing squad. Even your newspaper, then *Borba,* wrote about those supposed demands from Ljubotin. When the prison warden later showed me that, I told him, "You can write whatever you want. I wouldn't hesitate to put myself at my people's disposal." I simply didn't believe it.

I was under investigation for a total of twenty-two and a half months. From August 1948 to the end of June 1950. First, they held me in Glavnjača. Later, they transferred me to the military prison in Banjica.

About 10 months into the investigation, one evening, Slavko Janeković, then one of Šašić's assistants, some captain

and the guard commander in Glavnjača entered my cell. As they entered, Janeković started:

"And you live here like a gentleman. We're going to sort you out now."

I said nothing. I was completely calm. They tied me up well, took me to the yard where a car was already parked, put a hat over my eyes and drove me to the newly-built military prison in Banjica. They no longer knew where to put the detainees; all the prisons were full, so they quickly built this investigative prison for officers. It was a terrible prison, worse than Glavnjača. They took me to a room where the concrete floor was stained with what looked to me like blood stains. They removed my chains and ordered me to undress. I protested.

"Take off your clothes! As the greatest enemy of this country, you're sentenced to death and we don't want to dirty this uniform. It will be needed by someone else."

"I won't undress! I've done enough for this country to be worth this uniform."

They forcibly stripped me naked, drew their pistols and cornered me against the wall. All of them pointed their guns at me.

"Say goodbye to life, Vlado Dapčević; this is your last day!"

Can you imagine that scene? They looked at me over their sights while I remained silent, staring at them over those barrels, waiting for them to pull the triggers. I truly believed they would kill me.

Janeković suddenly lowered his gun and called out to someone in the hallway to bring another uniform. They dressed me in some military uniform, and Slavko Janeković said:

"From now on, you must forget that you are Vlado

Dapčević. You are now just an ordinary prisoner number."

They didn't allow my family to attend the trial, except for Peko. The audience included officials and a few journalists, including foreign correspondents. They first questioned Kada. He confessed everything. He blamed the Cominform for his "betrayal" and even shouted at the end: "Long live Comrade Tito! Long live the Communist Party of Yugoslavia!" I defended my ideological and political views as much as they allowed me. Colonel Radoš Raičević, I can't remember anymore — he was the head of the legal department of the Ministry of National Defence — defended me better than Colonel Danilo Knežević defended Kada. That Knežević, Kada's lawyer, attacked him three times more than the prosecutor did. A real comedy of a trial. The court panel was presided over by Milonja Stijović. The panel members were Colonel Bogdan Vujošević and General Đuro Lončarević. Unlike Lončarević, Stijović and Vujošević were decent to me.

The trial was prepared to discredit the Soviet Union for alleged interference in Yugoslavia's internal affairs. Kada Petričević's behaviour served this purpose well. They didn't expect that from me, but they hoped I would at least stay silent, even though Peko had warned them not to organize a public trial because I wouldn't remain silent. He even told them: "Even if he faced a hundred, not just one death." Because of my stance, Jefto Šašić visited me during the trial recess — even though he shouldn't have had any contact with me once the trial began — and, utterly distressed, said:

"Why, Vlado, do you want to force us to kill you?"

"If you've decided to kill me, you will do it whether I speak or not. I will defend what I believe in and defend my honour. It is more important to me than your verdict."

Jovo Kapičić said something similar after my first defence. Tito, Ranković, the UDB and KOS played a crucial

role in such trials, depending on the importance of the case. They simply ordered how many years someone should be sentenced. The court proceedings were just a mere formality. On Goli Otok, some Culafić told me this. He was the president of some military court. He said, "I would go home, pull my hair out, cry, aware that I was a mere scoundrel, but I still sentenced people to the terms they demanded." He was eventually arrested, sentenced to 15 years and sent to Goli Otok.

During the trial, various sycophants literally heckled me from the audience. One of the judges asked me:

"You saw that a small number of people supported the Cominform Resolution; why did you do it?"

When I started to answer, I mentioned my revolutionary conscience, internationalist awareness and the like. I told you, that was the most important thing to me, not how many people supported it. Otmar Kreačić interrupted from the audience:

"Oh, your revolutionary conscience..."

I turned:

"Yes, yes. Revolutionary conscience. The kind you neither have nor ever had, so you can't understand any of this."

Then Jovo Kapa interjected:

"You wanted to take a tank too!"

It was like a marketplace. Some even shouted, "Death, death. Death to the traitors!" Among them, I recognized Colonel Milenko Marojević, who once said all sorts of things in front of me in "Mažestik" and came to my office early in the morning to beg me not to tell anyone. People proved themselves at the expense of others' tragedies and misfortunes, even lives.

They sentenced me to 20 years in prison. Kada too. Torture began immediately after the trial. One evening, they took Kada, Miodrag Raspopović, Maljeta Babić, Vlado Lakić,

someone named Dragićević and me, and put us in a police van. Do you know what those vans looked like? They had separate boxes with a bench for one person. They crammed me into one box with Maljeta. He sat, I stood. He was a war invalid. One leg was withered. We were tied up, and it was so cramped I couldn't squat. The air was so scarce that I constantly sweated and suffocated. If the ride had lasted a bit longer, I would have suffocated. In Zemun Polje, they transferred us to a large livestock wagon and guarded us until we reached close to Nova Gradiška. Some major who was escorting us kept shouting that he would kill us if we moved. The train stopped on an open track, the doors opened and a truck pulled up right to the door of the wagon. They threw me inside, deep towards the driver, and five or six men with machine guns got in and started hitting me with rifle butts, feet and fists. They beat me until we entered the prison in Stara Gradiška. It used to be an old Austrian barracks. They took us to a semi-basement, and soon, a major and two captains entered the cell. As they sat down, the major began:

"Do you recognize me, Vlado?"

"I've seen you somewhere, but I can't remember where."

"Oh, you don't recognize me now. I was your courier, Vlado. You will recognize me now. You will pay, Vlado Dapčević!"

As they entered, they left. I looked through the window and saw prisoners, probably returning from work. Black. Emaciated. Bruised. Wearing hemp suits. Have you ever seen such a suit? It's like you're wearing nothing. When they brought us lunch, we tasted it and all left it. It was inedible. When a sergeant saw this, he said:

"You'll eat it, you will. You'll run after the pot and beg for another spoonful."

In the evening, they gave us a blanket, a bowl and a wood-

en spoon, and led us to a room with 150 to 200 inmates. As soon as we entered, they began: "Boo, you gang, boo, traitors!" The door closed. The room leader took some list and began reading:

"Branko Petričević! Get out, get out, traitor!"

"I am General Branko Petričević..."

"What general, you treacherous motherfucker!" They swarmed him. Like a lynch mob. They beat the life out of him.

Bloodied, they threw him on a bed. We slept on triple bunks. We watched and waited.

"Vlado Lakić!"

The same. They called the others too. Maljeta Babić was only slapped. Maybe because he was an invalid. Žarić stood next to me. I whispered to him:

"What's this, man? These must be Ustaše. They'll kill us. Let's defend ourselves."

He said:

"I won't."

"Where's that national hero Vlado Dapčević?" During the trial, Eastern European newspapers called us national heroes, and Đilas mocked this in one of his articles in *Borba*. They swarmed me from all sides. Hit, hit, hit...

Our reception had been prepared for days. From all the prison cells, they gathered the best revisionists and room leaders, all the Cominformists, and brought them there to beat us up. Revisionists were those who publicly changed their stance. Of course, it was nonsense because no one really changed their mind. On the contrary. That terror reinforced their previous beliefs. I saw this in Gradiška, Goli Otok, Bileća and after prison. But people were scared and, in that fear for their lives, committed various atrocities. Before our arrival, two people were lynched in Gradiška. Ištvan Doboš

participated in the October Revolution and held two "Red Banner" orders, the highest decorations of the October Revolution. They demanded he say Stalin was a horse. He refused. They jumped on him from the third bunk until they killed him. They did the same to a Dalmatian, a captain, I think his surname was Bovan. They tied people who openly stated they wouldn't revise to a beam, head down. They placed buckets of urine and feces under their heads and slowly lowered them into those buckets. People swallowed it all. They used "Spanish swimming," one of the toughest torture methods from the Inquisition era. Even the worst police forces avoided it because many died from heart attacks. They tied your legs and arms, stuffed a rag in your mouth, bent your head back and poured a stream of water through your nose. You suffocate as if in the deepest water. I experienced it several times.

They threw me into a corner next to a bucket. On the wall, it said, "Cominform Burrow." I heard someone whispering:

"How are you, Vlado? Who are these people, for God's sake?"

It was Maljeta Babić. We couldn't have imagined they were Cominformists.

"Is it possible that Peko and all of them know what is being done to people here?"

"Don't be naive, Vlado. They're the ones who organized this."

The Cominformists worked in two factories: one making boots and the other work uniforms. Their supervisors were captured and convicted Ustaše, including some who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for atrocities. They slept in a separate room, in groups of four. Every night, they heard those horrific beatings. One morning, one of the Ustaše asked one of the battered and bruised Cominformists, "How long

are you sentenced for?" When he replied three years, the Ustaša said, "Well, I wouldn't trade a single day of your three years for my entire twenty!" They tried to implement the same system of terror with the Ustaše but failed. The Ustaše unanimously refused and started fighting the guards. All the Ustaše were quickly released after that amnesty that also freed the Chetniks. Among those Ustaše were two ministers from Pavelić's government. One was released, and the other remained. When I asked why, he said, "Because I refused to sign that I would work for the UDB." Everyone who was released had to sign that obligation, even on Goli Otok.

Imagine, they released the Chetniks and Ustaše, all those butchers who were not executed, but they left us behind! I remember those three months in Gradiška as a time of indescribable suffering, torture and humiliation that mankind surely does not remember.

After that kind of welcome, they took us through other rooms, through lines of inmates. Everyone had to spit on us — in the face. Whoever refused was mercilessly beaten right in front of us. We went through 18 rooms. Our faces were literally covered in spit, especially mine. That still wasn't enough for them. They brought us back to the room, locked the door and one sergeant shouted:

"Get out, Vlado Dapčević! Take off your pants!"

"Why should I take off my pants? I won't! Are you people normal? What are you doing to us?"

They attacked me, took off my pants, pulled out those military belts and started hitting me with the metal buckle. One by one. No one dared refuse.

The beatings were constant. Not a single evening passed without them. It was horrible in Gradiška, even worse than on Goli Otok. The psychological torture was no less severe. Every Cominformist, upon entering the investigator's room, was re-

quired, for example, to say, "My name is Vlado Dapčević. I am a traitor to the Party and people. I am sentenced to 20 years in prison." I refused to say that or similar things. Kada immediately understood the situation. He wrote down everything he knew, joined the system and, for a while, they didn't accept him, but they didn't bother him either.

There was no running water in Gradiška. We drew water from a well and washed everything there: handkerchiefs, underwear and dirty food containers. The well became contaminated and we all suffered from bloody diarrhea. I had severe dysentery. Every 10 minutes, only bloody mucus would come out — nothing else. They put me in the prison hospital. One day, someone approached me and shouted, "Scum, go to the toilet!" In the toilet, he said, "We have created an organization in all the rooms. We will rebel against this. Most inmates are ready to die just to stop this. We respect you, you have experience and knowledge. Lead the organization!" I didn't answer him. I only told him that it was very dangerous and that they shouldn't do anything for a while. I wanted to buy time and see what was going on. It was a provocation. I didn't fall for it, even though my cousin told me to believe in the organization. It was hard to believe simply because the UDB had such a tight grip that it was impossible to form any significant organization. But it didn't matter to them whether I fell for it or not. They just needed a new excuse and cover for further torturing me. They wanted to break me at any cost. They wanted me to capitulate, to revise. Some Stojan Jovanović-Tesla and a few others burst into the room, grabbed me and said:

"Talk, Vlado Dapčević!"

"What should I talk about?"

"Talk when you're told!"

They tied me up and began "Spanish swimming." Some

doctor named Huso, also an inmate, kept checking my heart, and whenever he thought it might explode, he signalled them to stop. I had endured various tortures in the old Yugoslavia and later on Goli Otok, but nothing was worse than that. I tore the rope they had tied me with from the effort. They later put some donkey mask on my head, hung some tails...

Once, an escape from the blacksmith's shop was genuinely being prepared. Mileta Perović was involved, but I wasn't. They had dug more than 10 metres of a tunnel, mixing the soil with slag, and when they reached the wall, they were caught. The administration knew everything, let them dig for days, exhausting themselves and hoping. Pure sadism.

One day, Jefto Šašić came to that torture chamber with an entourage. He called me over and, believe it or not, hugged me when we met. As if we were some great personal friends.

"What is this, Jefto? What are you doing to us?"

"We've heard about it too, and we decided to strictly forbid these tortures."

It turned out they didn't know what was happening in the prison. Admittedly, for a while after his visit, there were no such hellish beatings and mistreatment. They even allowed us to receive packages. After some time, Jovo Kapa came. He was then Ranković's deputy in charge of the camps. Meanwhile, Kada and I were moved to cell number one. There were about 10 White Russians in it. Jovo entered our room and immediately started cursing the Russians. Suddenly, he ordered me to come with him. He offered me one of those diplomatic cigarettes and started:

"Comrades Tito and Marko are very interested in you. I've come to talk to you. Forget your stance. You see, Kada has changed his stance, and you still remain defiant..."

"Jovo, any conversation with me on that topic is futile. What you are doing to people is the best confirmation of the

correctness of my stance and proof of what kind of people you are. I have my beliefs, and only facts, not beatings, can convince me. What facts are you offering?! You cannot put me in Kada's position. I won't give you the chance to say that I am a rag too. I won't capitulate!"

"Vlado, it's better if you listen to me. You'll be transferred soon. Believe me, you'll suffer worse there than here..."

"It can't be worse than this..."

One evening, the cell door opened, I was on the third bunk, and the investigators entered, called me and took me out. I turned left, thinking they were taking me to solitary confinement for a beating, but they said:

"We're going right."

They all carried some clubs. They took me to a room:

"Strip!"

"I won't. If you're going to beat me, do it like this."

"Strip!"

"I won't strip!"

They stripped me — completely naked — and thoroughly examined every piece of my clothing. I stood there naked and shivering.

"You're trembling, Dapčević. Are you afraid? Tremble, tremble, Dapčević, now we're going to fix you!"

"I'm trembling from the cold. You won't live to see me tremble from fear."

They ordered me to dress and began bringing in, one by one, about 20 men. They gave each one a loaf of bread, took us out, crammed us into trucks, drove us to the railway station and put us on a train. We headed for Goli Otok. We were escorted by a lieutenant and a bunch of sergeants. The lieutenant was good. He forbade them from touching us along the way. One of those provocateurs, who are always with you in prison, whispered to me at one point:

"Let's escape."

"Go to hell!"

That was the least I could say to him. The train stopped in Bakar. In Bakar, there was the ship "Bakar" and investigators on board. As soon as we arrived, the lieutenant changed too. He started shouting. As we began boarding the ship, the screams started. With me were Nenad Vasić, Momo Đurić, Remza Duranović... and tied to me was some Mandžuka. He had been an officer in my division. In prison, as a room leader, he beat inmates with a wooden military trunk. They beat us with those clubs and threw us into the hold of the ship. Among those beaters, I recognized only one Serb from Kragujevac. After the Igman March, half of his foot was cut off. He was the main one among them. When he saw me, he shouted:

"Watch out, Vlado Dapčević, now we're going to fuck you up! You dare defy us!"

They beat me; I thought they would kill me without any mercy. Suddenly, Mandžuka started hitting me with his one free hand. Imagine, while tied to me. In the nose, chin and temple, with all his strength. It must have disgusted them because they shouted:

"Why are you hitting him, you motherfucker!"

"I'm a revisionist, a room leader..."

"What kind of revisionist, you motherfucker..."

They beat the life out of him too. As they grabbed him, they let go of me. They threw both of us into the hold, but the poor guy got stuck at the top out of fear, and I hung by my tied hand. The beating continued below. Everyone was tied except Kada, Branko Poljanec and some Milićević. It was about 10 a.m. when we arrived on Goli Otok, in Mala Draga, in Žica. Since the ship carried supplies, food and who knows what else, some people came to unload it, and we heard them

singing: "Seagulls don't fly on Goli Otok, work brigades labour there... Hooray! Three cheers for Tito, three cheers for Marko... Hooray, hooray, hooray!" I heard someone ask:

"Is Vlado Dapčević with these guys?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"In the hold with the others."

Someone leaned over the hatch, and I recognized Ante Raštegorac. He was in the 1st Proletarian Brigade. A national hero. We weren't close, but we knew each other well. At that time, he worked for the UDB and was the deputy warden of the Goli Otok camp. He looked down into the darkness. He couldn't see us, but we could see him. He said:

"Did you arrive, Vlado?"

"I didn't arrive; they brought me."

"Well, well. Have you lowered your telescope, Vlado?"

"I've lowered it as much as I thought."

"Oh, you'll lower it, Vlado Dapčević, we'll fuck you up like no one who arrived on Goli Otok. You'll curse the moment you bit your mother's breast. We'll pull your soul out with tweezers."

The hold was silent. People bowed their heads, silent and waiting. They kept us there until evening, then transferred us to the main pier. They tied Petar Olhov, a Ukrainian who had fought since 1941, a former KOS major, to us. He was tied to Colonel Sava Vukčević, the former editor-in-chief of *Narodna Armija,* who was so weak he couldn't walk, so they untied him and attached Pera to our chains. Do you know how three tied people walk? They constantly get in each other's way. When they pulled us onto the deck, I saw a line of policemen and investigators on the shore. They all held clubs in their hands and beat the people passing through the line. Horrific! The three of us were the last. We couldn't walk,

tripping over each other, walking sideways. As we approached the line, Raštegorac shouted:

"Ah, here's Vlado Dapčević! Here's the biggest enemy of our country!"

We entered the line. It was hell. They beat us from the front, the back, the face, the chest, the back... Relentlessly. Proving themselves to each other. Worse, we couldn't run like the others. We constantly tripped and fell. When one fell, he pulled the other two down. I don't know how I reached the end of the line alive. We were completely bloody. I thought my head would explode into a thousand pieces. They drove us uphill, still beating us. Someone hit me between the shoulder blades so hard that I buried my face in the rock. When they brought us to the quarry near the administrative building, they lined us up facing the rocks, and a lieutenant came out and said:

"As the greatest national traitors, you are sentenced to death and will now be executed!"

The sergeants lined up, and he commanded:

"Load your rifles! Aim!"

Honestly, I was looking forward to them shooting me. Then someone ran up and shouted:

"Not here, in the upper quarry!"

They surrounded us, the policemen, and with clubs and rifle butts drove us uphill. People staggered and fell. In the upper quarry, it was the same:

"As national traitors, you are sentenced to death and will now be executed!"

Again, we stood against the wall, again they loaded their rifles, aimed... Mandžuka and some others started crying, begging and wailing... Death is a serious matter. Do you know the mental effort it takes to maintain dignity when facing it? Again, someone ran up:

"There's no place here to bury them. Drive them to Petar's Pit!"

Again, beatings, driving and cursing. They stopped us in front of a wall at least four metres high. There was a guard on it. They lined us up in five rows of five. I, the twenty-sixth, stood alone at the end. We stood and heard, as if coming from underground:

"Death to Stalin's servants, death to Stalin's servants, death to Stalin's servants..."

At the same time, a column of people appeared from the direction of the administration. At the front were Branko Damnjanović, the camp warden, whom I knew well, and Ante Raštegorac, his deputy. Behind them were all the investigators, about 35, and a column of policemen. As soon as they arrived, Raštegorac shouted:

"Where is Vlado Dapčević?"

I stayed silent. He saw me, approached and grabbed my shoulder:

"Oh, there you are hiding! Come here, you motherfucker!" He pulled me a few steps, cursing and punching me. Raštegorac was physically weak, so he got tired after about 10 punches. The warden Branko Damnjanović approached me. He was very strong. He punched me once, then again... My face was already bloody, swollen from bruises, and when he hit me the second time, blood splattered on him."

"You stained me, motherfucker!"

He backed up, ran and kicked me in the stomach.

"Don't do that, Branko, motherfucker. Kill me like a man. Don't torture me."

"I'm not Branko to you, but the warden, you motherfucker!"

He ran again, kicked me again, and I went flying. He came and punched me several times in the sides, shoulders

and head. Then he started calling out investigators by name. They approached and hit me. Around the fourth, he said:

"Now you've burned bridges and now you know what awaits you if Vlado Dapčević ever comes to power."

I soon lost consciousness.

Behind the wall was Petar's Pit. Elliptical in shape. About 15 by 10 metres roughly. It was deep. In the hole, there was a barrack, lined with cardboard, and a kitchen. When we arrived, there were just under 100 inmates in the barrack. All former Central Committee members, mostly from Montenegro, former high officials and Spanish fighters. Among them were several invalids from the Spanish Civil War. Elite, they were strictly isolated from other inmates in Žica. Those from Žica weren't even allowed to see them. The little food was brought and left about 250 metres from Petar's Pit, near some cistern and when the person who brought it left, people from the Pit would go for food and water simultaneously. Even all the investigators weren't allowed to approach the Pit. Only those responsible for its inmates. The underground chant "Death to Stalin's servants" was from the inmates in the Pit. When they finished their role, they were taken up and formed a line.

They carried me unconscious behind the wall, to a platform and threw me in front of the guards who watched over the Pit, dousing me with water. When I regained consciousness, above me were Nenad Vasić and Remza Duranović. Before the war, Nenad had been the secretary of the Mostar Party Committee and Remza the organizational secretary. During the war, Nenad was first a commander, and Remza a commissar of the Mostar Battalion. After the war, both worked in the Bosnian UDB as chiefs. In '48, almost the entire Bosnian-Herzegovinian UDB sided with the Cominform, including Nenad and Remza. They were in Gradiška and transferred to Goli Otok with me.

I heard screams and saw investigators jumping on Vukosav Bošković, beating him with feet and clubs, shouting:

"Do you want a convertible or a limousine now!"

He was the general secretary of the UDB for Montenegro, and when cars were being distributed, since he was entitled to one, the poor guy made some fuss about it. And they remembered it. Nenad and Remza lifted me under the arms. However, Branko and Raštegorac saw this and attacked Nenad. They particularly hated UDB members who sided with the Cominform and did everything to break them.

"Why are you helping Vlado Dapčević, Nenad Vasić, you motherfucker!"

They beat him mercilessly. Nenad was an extraordinary man. He could endure an hour of beating without groaning. Then they grabbed Remza, hitting him too... From that platform, they led everyone down into the Pit. Four inmates carried me: Popivoda's brother, Vlado Spasojev and two others, and threw me on the planks in the barrack. There were no beds, just three tiers of planks like those in guardhouses. Outside, the beating continued. Screams, beatings, shouts and wailing... I couldn't move and had difficulty breathing. I was in excruciating pain. They had broken seven of my ribs. Next to me lay Vukčević, dying. I heard: "Oh, my children, oh, my wife, what will happen to you now?" He soon died. They carried him out in a blanket and buried him nearby. Actually, they just covered him with a bit of soil.

I lay there until morning. The first to approach me was Kosta Ćufka. Do you remember, I told you about the two Ćufka brothers from Cetinje? They recommended Nikola Lekić accept me into the Party. Both were on Goli Otok. Kosta was alive, but Aleksa died on the island before we arrived. They say his last words were: "I hope I've proven that I'm a revolutionary now." Kosta came and said, "Comrade, com-

rade, where is Vlado Dapčević?" I was so disfigured that day that my own brother Milutin didn't recognize me. He was also imprisoned in the same barrack. When I was arrested, they asked him to renounce me. He refused. Later, he independently connected with some Cominformists and ended up on Goli Otok.

Dr. Krpo, the UDB doctor, examined us. He had been in the Mostar Battalion, knew Nenad and Remza well, and was familiar with me too. Through the cardboard, I heard him reporting to the warden. He said: "Six are in critical condition, and Vlado Dapčević is in the worst state. If he doesn't receive immediate medical care, I absolve myself of any responsibility for his life." My eyes were closed, I was bleeding from my nose, ears and my teeth were broken... During the night, everything swelled up, especially my mouth, making it hard to breathe. They bandaged me with band-aids, wrapped me in bandages and gave me some injections. I lay motionless for 15 days and couldn't eat anything for seven days. They gave me water through a tube.

When I recovered, they sent me to break rocks with the old and incapacitated. But not with a hammer. With a rock against a rock. If you've visited Goli Otok, you know the fierce winds there. It's cold, and the wind constantly drives all the salt into your skin. Our hands were always wounded because of this. That's where I met Vicko Jelacka. He was 72 years old then, just like I am now. Do you know who Vicko Jelacka was? Before the war, he was the secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Dalmatia. In '37, he and Marić opposed Tito's appointment as General Secretary. In '39, they were expelled from the Party, as far as I remember, and Vicko Krstulović was appointed as the secretary of the Provincial Committee for Dalmatia. Vicko Jelacka was a peasant from the vicinity of Split and a Party member

from its very inception in 1918. He had even been a member of the Social Democratic Party before the First World War. He was the most popular man in Dalmatia. All those, including Labud Kusovac, who declared to be against Tito at that time, were arrested in '48 and brought to Goli Otok. They were beaten like oxen, even old Vicko. Labud Kusovac, who was physically weak, had ears swollen like my two outspread hands from all the beating. They constantly hit him on the ears. An old communist of Czech origin, who had translated the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* together with Tito in the Soviet Union as an emigrant, died on Goli Otok. All he said when he was dying was, "I am a victim of Josip Broz's hatred!" A certain Drezić, who also worked in the Comintern, was tortured so much that one day he tried to kill himself with a forgotten axe. They stopped him. Another time, he sharpened a spoon on a rock and slit his own throat with it.

I was breaking rocks when the manager and Vojo Biljanović arrived. He was a UDB general at the time, probably visiting the camp. By the way, I think I told you, we were neighbours and friends from childhood in Cetinje. He stopped, looked at me and saw the bruises that hadn't yet healed:

"Did the brothers rough you up? If you continue like this, you won't leave here alive. And you brought Milutin here. Remember, this was just the first lesson."

For a while after my recovery, they didn't touch me. But they did to the others. Every night. As soon as they descended into that Pit, the revisionists would first start singing and then fighting. They beat those who hadn't revised. When they thought I had recovered, they put me on the chaser. Have you heard of that? The chaser was a carrying device: two parallel poles with cross-planks. The chaser was modified. The front

handles were short, and the back ones long. The one being chased grabbed the front. Plus, all the weight was put on the front end. The job of the one at the back was to push you faster — to chase. This was how they proved they had revised. Some did it wholeheartedly, turning into real beasts when the guards weren't watching, while others eased up as soon as the guard moved away or turned to the other side. If you dropped the chaser or spilled the rocks, you were beaten. They beat you if you didn't run fast enough. If they didn't beat you, they would knock you to the ground, face down and put the chaser with the load on your back. This could weigh up to 150 kilos. People would scream, beg and plead, feeling like their bodies were breaking. They couldn't breathe.

They assigned eight chasers for me. They rotated every hour. We worked from dawn to dusk, until the lights came on. In summer, up to 16 hours. They chased me brutally. In the evening, it was known. For a few of us, the lash machine was always reserved. After the lash machine came the burning. Sometimes all night, sometimes until midnight, sometimes from midnight. The sadists particularly enjoyed making us stand bent at the waist and leaning forward for hours. If you moved a hand or shoulder, immediate beating. There were moments when I was on the verge of madness. Others went mad, ending their suffering like Drezić. Can you even imagine how far they pushed people to the point where they would slit their own throats with spoons sharpened on a rock? On top of that, they starved us. We who were constantly boycotted, in the greatest heat and under constant chasing, were given only a lid of water. A portion lid. We burned at least 10,000 calories a day, and they fed us chicory and a piece of cornmeal mush made from mouldy flour. We were so starved that we ate it greedily as the greatest delicacy. The instinct for self-preservation had kicked in within us.

Hunger isn't when you starve for five or ten days. Hunger is when you starve for months, when your body starts to eat itself. We talked about nothing but food. We got 200 grams of bread a day. I was so exhausted that my brother Milutin often gave me his only piece of bread to survive. Diljo Demajo also gave me bread several times. Not just to me. He wasn't chased. He mostly drew. Before the war, he was a very famous painter. I remember, he once approached me and said, "Don't be angry with me, Vlado. They forced me to draw your caricature."

He drew Napoleon with my face — in rags!

On Goli Otok, the person who beat me the most and the harshest was Zoran Vidaković. Do you know him? Yes, yes. University professor and doctor of science. At that time, he was neither. He was young, strong and ruthless. He knew how to pick me up half-dead after some beating, lift me by my hair and mercilessly hit me from above with his fists on my face. They gave him two portions of food, he had two or three blankets. He came to the Pit when they concluded that the political situation in it had worsened after our arrival. They sent a certain Tvrtković as the room head and with him about 20 of the best revisionists from Žica, including Vidaković. He had committed atrocities in Žica before that. A scoundrel among scoundrels, an indescribable sadist, the lowest of scoundrels was that young man. In that barrack, he was everything and anything after Tvrtković, and his main assistant and some sort of adjutant was Tugomir Kovačević, a man who spent the war in an SS division...

So, how can you not believe it? Your "fine gentleman" reminds me of someone from our prewar neighbourhood. He was a fine gentleman, kind and courteous... Always: "Good day, ladies and gentlemen! How are you, children?"... When they found the archives of the special police after the war, it

turned out that this fine gentleman had sent over 300 people to death with various reports.

You couldn't talk openly with anyone then. Not even with those who were tortured like you. I remember Jagoš Žarić. He was a rare talent and brave man. Because of this, he was also the commander of the 1st Proletarian Division. They sentenced him to 15 or 18 years in prison and, like me, chased him like the devil. All that: the chaser, the lash machines, the beatings and the burning every night... He was physically stronger than me. One day, some people from Belgrade came and called him to the administration. They said:

"How do you, Jagoš, the commander of the 1st Proletarian Division, allow yourself to be chased by that scum, even SS members, to be humiliated. Decide, and don't listen to that Vlado Dapčević. He's a fool and our sworn enemy. Revise, man."

The custom was, whenever someone was called for questioning, that person would immediately upon return tell why they were called and what was asked of them. Jagoš came back, sat close to me and ate some soup. I asked him in a whisper why he was called. He remained silent.

"Jagoš, tell me."

"I can't take this anymore. I've decided to revise."

"No, man. It's harder for me than for you. You're strong, you'll endure. Don't disgrace yourself now. What they're doing to us is the greatest crime in history. Sooner or later it will have to come to light, and those who commit this crime will surely have to pay for it. Don't become a participant in all this. Don't let them turn you from a victim into an executioner."

He remained silent. In the evening, there was a conference and a room meeting. They admitted Jagoš Žarić to the collective. He became one of them — a revisionist. But before they admitted him, the room head said: "Tell us now,

Jagoš, how this Vlado Dapčević harangued you today." He told them everything word for word.

This wasn't the only time I went through such an ordeal. On another occasion, when a similar situation was set up by a certain Grga Lulić, they beat me in the lash machine until I lost consciousness. And then Vidaković again. They threw me, unconscious, on the garbage dump. I regained consciousness only in the morning. In one corner of the Pit, near the kitchen, garbage was thrown out and taken away once a week. That's where I regained consciousness. Next to Andrija Bubanj, Viktor Bubanj's brother. They had also brutalized him that night and thrown him there. What a master he was — a machinist. He was a people's deputy before the Resolution.

The first person to approach me that morning was Demajo. He said:

"I don't pity you so much, Vlado. I pity those who beat you so savagely more."

They were truly pitiable. The administration often watched all this and enjoyed it. When Demajo was once passed through the lash machine — we were making some solitary cells underground — he couldn't resist saying: "Look at the kind of prisons being built in socialist Yugoslavia, underground, in the rock!" and someone reported him. The entire scene was watched from above, without any pangs of conscience, by the new warden Vladimir Rolović and Vojo Biljanović. Yes, that Rolović who was killed by Ustaše in Sweden. They almost killed Demajo then.

That sadism and violence eased a bit before Ranković's visit to Goli Otok. First, Jovo Kapa came.

It was about a month before Ranković. I was eating, there was some water with a few beans in the portion, when Jovo appeared:

"Can you manage, Vlado?"

"They gave better food in concentration camps in Germany."

"You can't keep quiet."

"Well, look. It's clear as water."

Then he saw Božo Ljumović. He was in the Montenegrin government with him. Jovo was the Minister of Internal Affairs, and Božo was the Vice President. Yes, yes. That Božo who was the secretary of the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Montenegro before the war.

"Are you haranguing, Božo? Corrupting people?"

Božo didn't say a word. What haranguing. He looked more than miserable. He was ill with tuberculosis, and at that time he had a huge subcutaneous abscess on his neck. That abscess burst, pus was flowing, his head was crooked — and Jovo was yelling at him. He was already old compared to us. He was 55 or 56 years old. Since he was weak and couldn't carry when they chased him, they would tie a halter to him — yes, for livestock — to pull him with that halter and still beat him with sticks from behind. They demanded he confess to being a Polish spy. Imagine the nonsense. This was common practice on Goli Otok. Although we were already under investigation and sentenced, the investigation continued on Goli Otok. They constantly put people under new demands and forced them to confess to some nonsense they had invented.

Ranković came about a month after Jovo. In the meantime, they stopped chasing us, stopped the beatings and improved our food... Everyone was given a spoon of fat, half a kilogram of bread and vegetables, mostly tomatoes. They wanted us to recover a bit before his arrival. He came with a whole entourage. He was accompanied by Krsto Popivoda, Džemal Bijedić and about 20 others. They had hidden me at

the bottom of the barrack, tied me up and even put some cloth over my mouth. They feared I would tell Ranković about all the crimes committed against us. However, he wasn't interested in that. He came, looked at the lined-up prisoners — he knew over half of them personally — and left.

Just when we hoped that better times had come, they transferred us to the prison in Bileća. And there, everything started from the beginning. The same regime: revisionists, beatings, lash machines, investigations, mutilations, suicides... Crime after crime. In Bileća, however, I didn't give in. I started to fight back in kind. The first to suffer was some lawyer, a revisionist, who tried to conduct some investigation with me.

"What's up, Vlado, have you started fighting?"

They took me to the warden Sava Prede.

"I haven't started fighting, I've started defending myself. I give you my word, I won't tolerate this anymore. If you didn't intend to, I will make you kill me. Whoever dares to touch me, I will return it tenfold."

Once, they allowed packages, and a bit later, visits to everyone except me and maybe a few others. They shared my packages with the collective members, the revisionists, with explicit instructions not to give me anything. However, after a while, they allowed my sister Dana to visit me. For that occasion, they dressed me in a completely new suit, shaved me, cut my hair and fixed me up... But they couldn't hide my hands. They were so cracked and infected that I couldn't straighten my fingers at all. When she saw me, she screamed:

"What happened to your hands, for God's sake?"

In one breath, I told her:

"Here they do wonders to me. They torture me continuously. They beat me continuously. They chase me in every possible way. They don't let me sleep. This is a horror that no

one in the world has ever endured."

She fainted. The interrogators jumped up and threw me out. As punishment, I was sent to the so-called "shit traffic." We cleaned a huge cesspool. We descended into it on iron stairs, waded through urine and feces up to our waists, scooped it out with buckets, carried it outside and poured it into some barrels. We bathed after work, but nothing helped — we smelled awful.

I was already at the breaking point: either to commit suicide or to kill someone, when they transferred us back to Goli Otok at the end of March 1954. By truck to Dubrovnik, then by ship from Dubrovnik to Goli Otok. By then, Goli Otok was different. We weren't greeted by lash machines and that terror, civilians had already been released, and the few who remained, about 10 of them: Labud Kusovac, Ljubo Radovanović, Vicko Jelacka... had been transferred to Sveti Grgur, the island next to Goli Otok. Sima Marković's wife was also on Grgur. We no longer broke rocks. We worked in the carpentry and masonry workshop. The carpentry produced chairs and tables for England, and the masonry workshop, mostly staffed by your colleague journalists, produced marble cladding for buildings and pools of Arab sheiks and pressed tiles for terraces.

I worked in the carpentry, and when we came to Žica, we no longer slept in Petar's Pit, and we renovated the settlement: we made stairs, toilets, floors, vestibules for shoes, plastered walls and ceilings, installed mattresses... When they decided to release us, they wanted to transfer criminals to Goli Otok. They invited the wardens of various prisons to see the Goli Otok prison, and these, seeing that marvel of a camp, simply said: "We don't want to bring our convicts to these conditions!" So the renovation began. It lasted for months.

In such a situation, I began to connect with people a little.

We started to create an organization. We decided that if they started again, we would resist — let everything go to hell! One morning, in mid-1956, they called me to report to the warden. At that time, the warden was Nikola Bugarčić, who lived in the building with Mijušković. Do you remember when I was hiding in Belgrade before my arrest? By the way, one of ours — he served coffee there and knew more or less everything that was happening with them — told me: "Get ready, something big is in question. I took your file from the interrogator Zlatić and brought it to the warden."

I went, thinking about who had betrayed me so deeply to be called by the warden. He never spoke to any prisoner. He was a god there. It's hard for you to imagine today. In that prison, he meant much more than Tito in Yugoslavia. He could destroy anyone whenever he wanted. We had that organization, and I thought he was calling me because of it. I figured they'd skin me alive.

I entered. Bugarčić was sitting, drinking tea, eating some cakes and said:

"How are you, Vlado?"

"Poorly. I have a bleeding ulcer. I'm passing blood in my stool. The doctors know this, but they don't dare to send me to the hospital."

"Why don't they dare?"

"Because they're afraid they'll be accused of favouring Vlado Dapčević and sent to the quarry."

The atmosphere was really like that. I didn't blame them. They were also prisoners and probably it would have happened to them.

"Well, I'll see about that. But why don't you ever come to me to talk? I understand why you don't come to these interrogators, they're young people, but we're of similar age, we're fighters from '41..."

"I don't know what we could even talk about."

"We would have much to talk about."

"Listen, if you called me to talk on some police line, I must immediately tell you that there will be no such conversation."

"Look at you! Do you feel like the stronger side when you set conditions for a conversation? We won't, we won't be on a police line. Let's talk like two wardens."

"What kind of warden am I?"

"You are, you are. Didn't the prisoners elect you as the head of the prisoner self-government?"

That was indeed the truth. They had elected me by secret ballot. The administration, of course, immediately nullified it.

"Tell me, Vlado, who was the man who proposed forming a secret organization? I give you my word of honour that nothing will happen to him."

"I don't remember. You send so many provocateurs at me that I no longer remember such things."

They suspected something was happening. They couldn't uncover anything, but they assumed I was leading it. When they saw they couldn't catch the threads, they decided at least to discredit me. If I had said any name, they would have immediately spread it. They hoped that the organization would then collapse.

Then we moved on to another conversation. We talked for hours about all sorts of things. Even international politics. He ate, drank and sat the whole time. I stood.

"You have now reconciled with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev and all that company came, you wrote a joint declaration. Why do you still keep us in prison? Why do you still implement this system of so-called re-education that has never existed anywhere in the world? We are communists.

How will you explain to the other communist parties, with which you are re-establishing contacts, why you keep communists in prisons?"

"If you are communists, what are we?"

"You know very well that we are communists. You know very well that we declared for the Cominform Resolution because we wanted to preserve the unity of the international communist movement. And you know best what you are. You can't tell anyone in the world that we are fascists, American agents, Chetniks, Ustaše or anything like that. We just took a different position from the leadership of the CPY on the issue of the conflict between communist parties."

"This system of re-education we must keep until the last day. And we will keep it. Even in this system, it's unclear who is the actual warden of Goli Otok — you or me. Nominally, that's me, but you are the one the prisoners listen to."

"Why don't you, as a political measure, dissolve Goli Otok?"

"Maybe we'll do that. Maybe we'll release a large number, but not you. You will stay until the end. I'm going to Belgrade to report to Ranković. I will call you again when I return."

They were really in trouble in '56. Relations with the Russians were normalized, so they had to change their policy towards us as well. At the same time, they feared paying the price for all that they had done to us for those eight years. They knew that it could happen that those who ordered them could easily blame them for all those crimes and sacrifice them — if someone powerful enough decisively raised the issue of torture against Cominformists.

The next day, they didn't send me to work but to the infirmary. The doctor took me into the infirmary, some lieutenant colonel, and after me, the guard who brought me entered.

"Get out."

"I must stay with him."

"Get out, you scoundrel. I want to examine the man, what do you have to hang around for?"

He threw him out, and said to me:

"I was ordered to examine and treat you. He diagnosed an ulcer in the duodenum and sent me to the hospital. They treated me like a little drop of water for 13 days. They even fed me with rice pudding."

Two days after they discharged me, the warden returned and called me again. As he had said.

"It was decided to release almost all prisoners on November 29, Republic Day. You won't go. I want to be honest with you. You deserve it in a way. So I tell you: you won't be released because we consider you the biggest enemy. But what about the name of the one who suggested you form an organization here?"

"Nothing. I already told you I don't remember. Besides, if you already know that someone suggested it to me, you very well know it was just a provocation and you know who it was."

"You can go."

By then, there were already about 1,500 criminals on Goli Otok. Bugarčić had been dismissed, and they brought another warden. Sunday — people were playing chess, reading newspapers. An inspection team of interrogator officials from Belgrade arrived. They called me.

I met Kada. He had greatly advanced. Commander of some centre there, and very active. We weren't talking at that time. When those eight revisionists were chasing me in Petar's Pit, changing every hour, Kada was among them and he would catch the last hour when I was already completely out of it. It was the hardest for him. Not because he had to chase me like that, but because I told him all sorts of things along the way:

"Scoundrel, rogue, coward, scumbag..."

"Come on, come on, you'll leave your bones here, Vlado."

"If I leave them, they'll laugh at you dead. You've destroyed everything human in yourself. If I don't leave them, remember, we'll carry yours and I'll carry mine out of here. Eating all this shit won't help you."

I entered that building.

"How are you, Vlado?"

"Here, serving my sentence."

"Well, Vlado, what would you do if we released you?"

"First, tell me if you will release me."

"To tell you openly, a list of those to be released came. It was signed by comrades Tito and Ranković. And you are on the list. But we don't think you should be released. We consider you a dangerous enemy, mortally embittered by what you experienced in prisons, and that you will be very dangerous if you are set free. So we sent a telegram to Belgrade with a proposal that you remain in prison."

"Look at that, you broke my bones here for eight years because I opposed Tito and Ranković's decisions, and now you openly don't respect and follow them."

"We hope our request will be granted. But if it happens that we must release you, know that a brigade of agents won't give you peace anywhere."

They made a ceremonial stand up at the top. Yes, where the volleyball court is. On December 6, 1956, they called us up. The warden gave a speech about releasing a large number of prisoners, about humanity..., and the interrogator Zlatić started reading the list of those released. In alphabetical order. He got to D, read all the names — I wasn't there. I thought: "It's over, I'm staying." When he read N and was supposed to move to O, he shouted:

"Dapčević Jovana Vladimir!"

RANKOVIĆ'S AXE

My aunt met me at the Belgrade railway station. She knew I would be released before I did.

She was a brave woman; she even came to Bileća to bring me a package. They neither let her in nor gave me the package. She saved the house we lived in by sheer courage. When we were arrested, Peko had left the house earlier, and they immediately came with a truck to evict the family. They were assigned a damp hole to live in. When my aunt saw that hovel, she went straight to Tito and demanded a meeting. Tito refused to see her, but told his secretary to inform her that he would take care of it. That wasn't enough for her, so she literally shoved the terrified secretary back into Tito's office and wouldn't leave until Tito wrote and signed a note: "Do not evict the Dapčevićs." That saved the house and Drago's apartment, which they also wanted to evict. She simply shoved that Tito's note in their faces: "Do not evict the Dapčevićs!" True, they took two rooms in the house on Proleterskih Brigada Street — mine and one on the upper floor — so Danica, my aunt, Milutin's wife with three sons, and Milutin, when he was released, lived in the remaining two rooms.

I arrived home around 4 p.m. There was an uproar, kissing and hugging. In the evening, dozens of people came to greet me, among them Radovan Zogović and his wife Vera.

Once the excitement died down, a new and serious problem arose: how to proceed and make a living. For six months, no one wanted to employ me. Finally, by order of the UDB, which was still all-powerful, especially when it came to us, I was given a job as a commercial agent at the "Krug" art cooperative. They probably wanted to disgrace me. You know, commercial agents always have to be a bit shady, bribing and such, so if needed, they could arrest me and send me to prison

as a thief. And if you didn't bribe the directors who bought those art pieces, you couldn't sell them. Knowing this, I defended myself quite successfully against the schemes of the director and others.

On the other hand, life in freedom had completely changed compared to the postwar period: new psychology, new way of life, bourgeois elements, numerous bureaucrats, the leadership doing whatever they wanted, praising America and the West, cursing and swearing at the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the Comintern... We were still treated worse than criminals. Even when employed, we were given low-paying jobs. Kada was employed at the "Rad" publishing house. He worked for a miserable salary from morning till night and lived in a kitchen at a relative's place.

The leadership constantly talked about some self-administration, the rule of the working class, although it served only as a mask for all sorts of arbitrariness. They quarrelled and divided the working class over some trivial, supposedly surplus labour, and then did whatever they wanted. Despite this so-called self-administration, they treated state property however they pleased. Tito led the way even after the war, but by 1957 and later, it reached imperial proportions.

He lived more lavishly than a shah, than the emperor Selassie or anyone else in the world. On an ideological level, I saw pure revisionism in all this, taking large steps towards the restoration of capitalism...

All right, all right. I know you all defend that capitalism today. But that's your problem, not mine. I think as I tell you, and I have no intention of changing my beliefs. Besides, history has not yet halted its march.

Former comrades? When I came out of Goli Otok, I immediately decided to take this stance: If any of my former comrades greeted me on the street or in any other way and

wanted to talk to me, I would accept. Why not? If they didn't greet me, no matter. I didn't want to put myself in a situation where I would greet someone first only to be sent to hell. Through the women — who were always less burdened by politics — I received messages that I should just ease up a bit, make a small gesture and my position would be improved. Of course, I didn't do that.

Once, Suzana Misirlić got two invitations to a French art exhibition at "Cvijeta Zuzorić" on Kalemegdan. One of her children got sick, so she couldn't go and gave me the invitations. I went there with the poet Jolo Stanišić. He now lives in the Soviet Union. Only when we entered did I realize we had arrived at the opening of the exhibition.

Before that, Dana had dressed me nicely. From head to toe. She took out a huge loan at that time and bought me a top-quality suit, a Grombi coat, shoes... She said: "I want you to be better dressed than when you held a position. So that no one laughs at you." That's our Montenegrin pride, our pride. The poorest among us, when going to the market or a wedding, dresses the best. If they don't have anything, they borrow from neighbours or relatives. Dana had divorced her husband at the beginning of the war because his family were Chetniks — his father, her father-in-law, Savo Lazarević, was killed by my unit — and she never remarried. She loved me very much. She practically lived for me.

At the exhibition, it was all elites. Among others, Peko, Koča, Tempo, Avdo Humo, Rodoljub Čolaković... And Sartre among them. I saw him for the first time then. Milan Bogdanović opened the exhibition. Everyone looked at me like a marvel, like some scarecrow. No one could understand how I was there. Honestly, I felt very uncomfortable. Peko glanced at me a few times but didn't say a word. When the welcoming speech was over, they all went one way through

the rooms, while I went another. I didn't want to get into a situation where someone would say something to insult me because I would immediately react and surely pay for it later. I was looking at the paintings when suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned around: Koča!

"How are you, Vlado?"

"Well, okay."

"Hold on, falcon!"

He squeezed my shoulder, turned and left.

A similar thing happened at a Soviet ballet premiere at Kolarac University. I sat, again by chance, in the front row. Around me were all ministers and Central Committee members. During the intermission, I was one of the last to go into the hall and bumped right into Peko and Crvenkovski. Everyone watched how that encounter would go. Peko and Crvenkovski just sized me up, and a certain Zdenka Šeglić — we knew each other well before the war, we were even imprisoned together on Ada Ciganlija — in that silence, somewhat confused, even shouted: "There, Vlado Dapčević." Stana Tomašević, who was standing with her, immediately shushed her.

That was my first encounter with Peko after '48. We crossed paths once more on Terazije. He just looked at me and walked on. If he had greeted me, I would have talked to him. He's my brother, after all. After that, I never saw him again.

The official attitude towards us, the so-called Cominformists, which had already become a derogatory term, was, in addition to being humiliating, completely hostile. We were strictly forbidden from seeing each other or talking. I was a convinced Marxist-Leninist. All my life, I fought against capitalism, against revisionism, I was a conscious fighter and prewar organizer of the struggle for socialism and communism — so I immediately decided to start fighting against this

evil again. I talked about it the most with Mileta Perović and suggested we create an organization. The conditions for that were more than dire. The police had everything in their grip. Khrushchev capitulated to Tito, completely isolating us Marxist-Leninists, leaving us without the support of the international communist movement. Goli Otok and other torture camps completely broke people, demoralized them and rendered them incapable of any political struggle. The idea was this: don't rush, don't make mistakes, speak to people in the strictest secrecy, gradually probe them, slowly create a political line, spread it to all parts of Yugoslavia, and — when we deemed ourselves strong enough — hold an illegal congress, adopt a program and statute, and start political action...

We counted on substantial support. Yes, yes, in the country. Here's how. Out of the 400,000 Party members at the time of the Resolution, 240,000 were expelled on the Cominform line. Ranković reported this at the Sixth Congress in '52. In other words, the majority, even under those conditions of terror. If free expression had been allowed then, without repression, I think 90 per cent of the Party membership would have sided with the Resolution. We counted on those people. Additionally, we counted on all those who went through Goli Otok and other prisons. There were about 60,000 of them. Plus their families, their offspring...

By early summer '57, we had created several groups of four or five people in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro. It was slow, but it was progressing. It couldn't be otherwise. They even followed me openly. They didn't hide at all. I passed messages through those not under surveillance. I knew whom I could trust and had no major problems.

The situation with us, however, soon escalated. A conference of communist parties was held in Moscow, and Ranković

and Kardelj attended from our side. They signed the general declaration on peace among nations but refused to sign the main declaration on cooperation between communist and workers' parties. So, conflict again. This could be understood even from the newspapers, and it could've been good but also bad for our organization. I knew another cooling in relations between Tito and the international workers' movement was coming, that they might try to rely on us in the ensuing political struggle. Therefore, our task was to connect with the international communist and workers' movement.

On the other hand, this was apparently clear to Tito, Ranković, the UDB, KOS and others, so one day the phone rang in my office. I picked up: Jarićević! The head of the Yugoslav UDB department for the Cominform. I met him back in Bileća. He said:

"Why don't you drop by? Let's see each other."

"I haven't missed you at all!"

"Stop by tomorrow. Do come. Better than me sending for you."

The next day in his office:

"How are you, Vlado?"

"You know that better than I do."

"We had a meeting recently and concluded that you Cominformists are gathering more, talking about Goli Otok, criticizing certain things, and that if anyone would dare create an organization, it would be you, Vlado Dapčević. You created one on Goli Otok, why not here. Listen, Vlado, we don't give a damn about your stories and criticisms. No matter how many of you there are. But, Vlado, don't even think about creating an organization. Comrade Ranković told me to tell you: if we notice you forming any organization, however small, we'll cut you down with axes in the street!"

In '58, the Seventh Congress of the League of Commun-

ists of Yugoslavia (LCY) was held. The radio broadcast Ranković's report:

"Cominformists are raising their heads again and trying to fight against the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. They have forgotten how humanely we treated them. They are the first and greatest danger to us, and I, therefore, call on all members of the League of Communists to lead a decisive fight against every appearance of Cominformism, especially against some Cominformists who were in prison and now continue their counter-revolutionary activities."

It was all clear. They were ready to attack us and needed the green light, the political legitimacy to do so. Jarićević's axe was about to fall. It was immediately confirmed. Seven men were constantly stationed in front of my house. A car. An automatic camera across the street photographed everyone entering and leaving. A streetlamp on the pole of who knows how many candles. It was as bright as day at night. An Army friend gave me a circular letter mentioning my name as the organizer of "Cominformists raising their heads." A friend from the UDB told me they had already decided to re-arrest Cominformists. In three waves — depending on the degree of tension with the East. In the first wave, they planned to arrest 400 "most dangerous," in the second several thousand and in the third even 40,000. They had already started preparing the camps.

The wife of a UDB officer told me that her husband's colleagues, during a dinner at their place, recounted how Ranković allegedly said somewhere: "Arrest the first group all in one night, and arrest Dapčević and immediately liquidate him. We've had enough of him!"

I don't know if it was true. That's what I heard. Who knows, maybe it was. In any case, the situation was extremely tense. Even without that story, I assumed I was already sen-

tenced to death.

One evening, Mileta Perović came and suggested we go to a house for a gathering. It was some birthday celebration, so sympathizers of the Soviet Union had gathered. We went. I saw we were being followed. We entered Tašmajdan Park. They followed. We both had pistols. I nudged Mileta and whispered:

"Be ready. If they come to arrest me, I will shoot. They didn't come near but didn't stop following either."

When we passed the Botanical Garden and Budimska Street and entered some yard from Đura Strugar Street, they followed us. We hid in some shadow by the fence and waited. Pistols ready. One of those following us entered right after us. I approached him with my pistol:

"What is it, you motherfuckers? What is this insolence? Get lost!"

He ran away, and we entered the house. The company was excellent. We ate and drank. Some women came. We stayed until after midnight. The company dispersed and we stayed. We needed to go home but didn't know if they were waiting for us or if they were ordered to arrest us or just follow. We went out: no one. Only the car of the American ambassador with American flags and his driver waiting! No, there was no mystery. Mileta's earlier friend worked as a cook at the American embassy. She invited us. When she came to her daughter's birthday party, she asked the ambassador to lend her his car and driver for the evening. The ambassador, apparently a good man, obliged. It confused us as much as it confused our followers. They waited for us 100 metres away.

We went to Mileta's apartment on Budimska; they followed.

"Mileta, they will probably arrest us."

"We'll defend ourselves if they enter the house. We'll die

like men and that's it."

No one entered until morning. When it got light, we headed to my house. Mileta didn't want to let me go alone. As soon as I arrived, I called Jarićević at the UDB:

"You're driving me either to flee this country or to kill someone. Seven agents constantly follow me. What do you want from me? What does all this mean?"

"We have nothing to do with that. I'll see what's going on."

Indeed, not even an hour passed, someone came by car, said something to them and they all left. The UDB apparently wasn't ready for the arrests yet, so they were playing some kind of charade. They were probably afraid I would flee. And it was because of all this that we decided to flee. Previously, with those from other republics who might be arrested, we had agreed they should also flee as soon as they received a telegram with the message: "Mama has died, the funeral will be tomorrow." Those from Croatia were to go to Hungary, from Slovenia to Italy, from Vojvodina to Hungary or Romania, from Kosovo, Belgrade and Sarajevo to Albania. Ljuba Kojić and I were supposed to fly to Hungary. He flew a school plane to Hungary very easily. I did not. I didn't trust Janos Kadar, since I thought he might hand me over to the UDB. I decided to flee with the group going to Albania.

We made the decision to escape one Saturday, planning our departure for the following Saturday. It was agreed to inform the others on the day of our departure.

Vukašin Milić and a certain Bulatović were to go to Sarajevo and lead the Sarajevo group to Milić's village near the Albanian border. I was to go with Mileta, Momo Đurić, Radomir Jokić, Pavle Mrvaljević, Branko Aleksić, the two Jovović brothers and a few others — 10 of us in total — through Kosovo.

Everything was decided, arranged and we were just waiting for the next Saturday. Somehow, those days passed, Friday came and I went to my cooperative when I saw a notice. It was underlined twice in red pencil that I had to report to the UDB at 2 p.m. that day!

If I went to the UDB, they would arrest me! If I escaped immediately, I would disrupt the entire organization!

I decided to go to the UDB, armed with a pistol. If they tried to detain me, I would shoot until they killed me. I tucked the pistol into my belt and went. They took me to someone who started lecturing me right from the door: "You're travelling all over Yugoslavia, stirring up trouble, creating an organization — we know you..." I sat on pins and needles, listening to his tirade, while the pistol started to slip. I tightened my stomach to keep it in place.

"What's wrong with you?"

"I have an ulcer; it's starting to hurt."

"Go now. In the future, if we notice anything else, we will take the harshest measures."

They had an agent in our Sarajevo group and knew something about the organization. Before me, they had called in Labud Kusovac and several older comrades, gave them a similar lecture and let them go. I didn't know that at the time. When I got to the gate, the doorman wasn't there, and the gate was locked. I thought they were messing with me and that they would arrest me now. I found some captain, who said, "I'll handle it," went into an office and talked to Vlado Bojanić, the head of the UDB for Serbia, and two others. He was talking while they laughed about something. I had nine bullets in the magazine and was ready to kill all four of them.

The captain came out, took me to the gate, opened it and said:

"Go!"

I walked out into the street, took a deep breath and thought: "Well, we won't see each other again."

We were supposed to leave the next evening at nine. I had arranged with Mileta for him, Momo Đurić and Milan Kalafatić to wait for me in the Students' Park, behind the Vuk monument. We were to take a taxi from there to Mladenovac, and from Mladenovac, a train to Peć. Pavle Mrvaljević, Bogdan Jovović and Pantelija Simić were supposed to take that train as well. They didn't know where they were going but were told they would meet someone they knew well on the train who would tell them what to do next... It was approaching 9 p.m., and I couldn't leave. The agents were still outside the house. I was pacing around the house, unsure what to do. Dana looked at me and asked:

"What's wrong, Vlado?"

"Dana, I have to escape!"

"Where to?"

"To Radomir Jokić's." She started crying.

"They will kill you, Vlado. With you, we'll lose everything this family had..."

Just then, Senka Jovanović came in. She had warned me earlier that my life was in danger, having heard it from the wives of some officials. Dana went to the kitchen to make coffee and Senka sat down.

"Senka, please don't stay here long. Leave immediately. I can't tell you what's going on. You'll find out in a few days. It will be better for you. Who knows what conclusions they might draw outside. Tell Danica you have to go. Find any excuse."

As soon as she left, the power went out in the entire area due to some failure. I used this opportunity, ran outside and climbed over the courtyard walls to Kalenić's barn, from where I headed to the Vuk monument. I only took a bag with

some small items, mostly chocolate. It takes up little space but is nutritious. A minute before nine, all three of them were already in the Students' Park.

"Let's go!"

Only I knew where and how we were going. I trusted them but still couldn't tell them. Especially not Kalafatić, even though he was a member of the executive leadership. I feared he would tell his wife. We had information that she worked for the UDB. She even lived with a UDB colonel, and he knew about it. She told him. We got into a taxi. I sat in the front, they in the back. I was most afraid of leaving Belgrade.

"Where are we going?"

"To Mladenovac. We are going to a wedding; we're a bit late, so it would be good if you could hurry if possible. There will be a good tip."

Everything went smoothly. In Mladenovac, we boarded a third-class train, found our people and headed for Peć. We rattled along all night. The train stopped everywhere. Damn it! It was already well into the day, and we were only in Kosovo Polje. The train stayed there too long. To make matters worse, Mileta recognized the head of the UDB for Peć and several other agents in the first carriage. We thought they had prepared a reception for us. We got off the train 15 kilometres before Peć, at the Hosna station, without anyone noticing, not even our fellow passengers in the compartment. You know how it is: when the train stops, everyone instinctively looks at the station. We sneaked out of the compartment, broke the seal on the other side and jumped off when the train started moving. Our companions in the other compartment did the same. We headed towards Bogdan Jovović's village, Bistrica, which was coming up. We had to wade through it. Around 11 a.m., we reached Bogdan's house. It was in some forest.

"Bogdan, go tell your brother we've arrived."

"I'm afraid. The police might already be there. They will kill me."

Pavle Mrvaljević went instead. We were thirsty, hungry and tired. They immediately took us to a grove, fed us, gave us water and left us to wait for evening and Radomir Jokić. He was responsible for organizing our crossing over the border. Radomir arrived, carrying a rifle, and led us to the summer pastures — to the man who was supposed to take us to the border. When we arrived, I asked to choose a leader for the journey. They chose me.

"This is the most dangerous stage. They may have already set ambushes for us. We won't be able to discuss much at any point. I take responsibility and will kill anyone who doesn't listen to me!"

We didn't find Jokić's man. He had gone to his sister's wedding. They remembered Ali Musa — a respected Albanian with a large family. He was 84 years old then. We reached Musa's tower, which had three floors. Radomir climbed up to the third floor and asked Musa to find someone to lead us.

"I will take you. I don't trust others."

This man knew all the trails and paths of the Prokletije mountains.

The only thing he didn't know was Serbian. He talked to Mileta and Radomir in Albanian. We set off immediately. At one junction above Vokša, Musa stopped us and asked if we wanted to go left towards Vokša — to reach the border in two hours — or right — a whole day's walk. We chose the longer and safer route. What a trek that was! At a place called the Bride's Grave, we walked along a cliff face cut into the rock like a knife. On top of everything, the water had washed away the narrow path. We almost fell off those rocks. In a dense forest, we stopped to rest; it was already Monday. Suddenly, helicopters buzzed overhead. I thought: "They are looking for

us." They might indeed have been looking for us because they came to my house that day to arrest me. Dana told them I had gone on a business trip to Zagreb.

I took out the chocolate and offered it to Musa.

"I can't."

"Take it; it has no fat. He was a Muslim, a *hađi*."

"I know what chocolate is. I can't because of fear. If you get killed, everyone will say: 'The old scoundrel led them into an ambush.' It would be a disgrace for my family forever."

Night caught up with us there. Guns started firing.

"Don't be afraid; the shepherds are scaring away wolves."

Musa reassured us. We passed by some summer pastures, climbed up and reached above the border. No one was there. The border was a bit lower below us. Musa left us there and returned to the summer pasture. In the morning, we started descending. Radomir went ahead of us, using his rifle as a staff. He slipped and slid down the slope straight towards the precipice. The snow was frozen all around us. Fortunately, he stopped on a large rock at the last moment. We turned left. It was so steep you could die. That part of the mountain is called Pasji Krs. It's more than 2,500 metres high. At 9 a.m., we reached a village. We didn't meet any of our Albanian border guards along the way. Mileta said:

"This is Dobro Polje."

"Go check with that woman."

He greeted her good morning in Albanian. She responded: "Good morning" — in Serbian!

"Which settlement is this?"

"Babino Polje." Yugoslavia!

Panic settled in. They told us where Gusinje was, and we quickly crossed a little bridge heading there. Dobro Polje, Albania, was on the other side of the hill. We had descended the wrong side, so we climbed back up the hill, reached a clearing

and entered a rocky area under a hill. Pavle and Bogdan went up the hill to scout. It was a sunny day, June 3, 1958, around 3 p.m. Below the hill, nearby at about 250 metres away, was our border post!

"Who will scout the border post and see if there are any tracks?"

The old hajduk Radomir Jokić volunteered. I gave him the pistol, and he slowly, crawling, circled the entire post.

"No one is there."

The border guards hadn't come to the post yet. It wasn't possible to stay there in winter. The snow hadn't melted yet. I said:

"Good luck. Let's wash our feet, eat some chocolate, smoke a cigarette and then set off."

Now the real challenges began. First, we were afraid the Albanian border guards would shoot us. Second, we had heard before that the Albanians, fearing the UDB and its agents, kept everyone who crossed the border in prison for six months, interrogating them before eventually releasing them. Of course, if they were convinced they weren't spies.

Mileta and Radomir went first. We followed about 150 metres behind. As soon as they entered a grove, someone shouted. Albanians. They had seen us on the hill and set up an ambush in the grove. These two raised their hands and called for us to lay down our arms.

We reached the border post at dusk. They welcomed us as hospitably as possible.

"Who leads this group?"

Mileta said:

"Vlado Dapčević."

They radioed Tirana.

They gave us dinner, and we, exhausted, immediately fell asleep. Like the dead. The Albanians even moved to another

room to make space for us.

The next day, transportation to the interior began. An officer approached me and asked:

"Do you, Dapčević, vouch for these people?"

"I do."

They trusted me. They probably knew what I had been through. That was enough to free us from any investigation. We passed through Tropoja, Bajram Curri, Shkodra and were taken to Kruja. They hosted us along the way for several days. In Bajram Curri, they even brought some acquaintances. Hugs, kisses and gifts. Kruja is near Tirana and was once the capital of Skanderbeg. They put us in separate rooms and assigned someone to take care of us about food and everything else. He knew Serbian. In my room, there were photos of Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev. I said to Mileta:

"Look at this. If anyone strangles and destroys us, it will be this Khrushchev."

We asked for paper, a typewriter and newspapers. They brought them. In the newspapers was the Yugoslav official statement. The statement roughly said: a group of known Cominformists, led by Vlado Dapčević, had fled to Albania to act against the interests of their country.

As soon as they gave us the typewriter and paper, we started writing a letter. I dictated and Mileta typed. We wrote 32 dense pages. About Goli Otok, the situation in Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav revisionist policy, Tito, and finally, Khrushchev. We heavily criticized him. As we finished each page, we took it to our comrades in the other room to read and possibly make comments. They fully accepted everything we wrote.

About Khrushchev? I can't remember every word, but the gist was this: We, the remaining Yugoslav communists who stayed true to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, were more than shocked to read that Tito was

welcomed in the Soviet Union like Caesar after a triumph, that he waded through flowers up to his knees in Kiev, that he was called a great Leninist in Leningrad. Tito, on whose orders tens of thousands of communists were held in Yugoslav prisons, tortured in the most horrific ways for their loyalty to internationalism and the Soviet Union, many of whom were physically and psychologically crippled or died in the most terrible agony. We simply cannot believe this is possible in the Soviet Union...

We packed that letter and addressed it to the central committees of the Albanian, Soviet, Czech, Polish, East German, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Chinese and North Korean parties. The Albanians sent it to all the addresses.

About 15 days later, the officer who was taking care of us was summoned to the committee. When he returned, he said:

"Comrade Ramiz Alia, a member of our Party's Political Bureau, has come. He wants to talk to you. You can bring two comrades."

Mileta and Kalafatić went with me. As soon as we met, he kindly suggested we choose one of several languages for the conversation. We chose Russian. Kalafatić spoke it well; Mileta and I understood it quite well. Additionally, Mileta spoke Albanian, so we could easily clarify any misunderstandings.

I forgot to tell you the demands we made in that letter: First, to enable us to contact all Yugoslav political emigrants in the socialist countries. Second, to allow us to travel to these countries to build a common ideological and political platform. Third, to let us publish a newspaper that would, paraphrasing Lenin, be a collective agitator and organizer of a new communist party in Yugoslavia. Finally, to enable us to create a Marxist-Leninist communist party of all Yugoslav emigrants when conditions allow.

To be honest, we wanted to mobilize the masses in Yugo-

slavia to fight for the re-establishment of the socialist order, to overthrow the existing government, which we considered anti-socialist, and to return Yugoslavia to the fraternal family of socialist countries.

Whatever the specific situation required. Bloodshed? Nonsense! The October Revolution was practically bloodless. Blood was shed when the counter-revolution began. We didn't expect conditions to be ripe for our goals anytime soon. Maybe in 10 to 20 years. We were very weak at the time.

In our conversation with Ramiz Alia, we were most interested in their stance on our demands. Here's what he told us. I paraphrase: "We agree with your ideological and political position, and with most of your general assessments. However, unfortunately, we cannot support any practical activities from Albania. Our country is small and surrounded on all sides by either imperialists or revisionists. We suggest you go to one of the socialist countries. They are in a better position than us."

I immediately agreed with this. I just didn't want to go to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was a complete revisionist, and I knew he would completely undermine us. I liked the idea of going to Czechoslovakia or even to the West.

Strange? What's strange about it? Yes, they are imperialists, but parliamentary democracies function there, allowing for action, organization, publishing newspapers, and holding congresses and conferences.

Alia concluded:

"Until we receive responses from the socialist parties, we need to place you somewhere. It would be inconvenient in Tirana. The best place would be Berat."

An old city. For Albanians, Berat is what Dubrovnik is to us.

In the meantime, another of our groups crossed into Al-

bania somewhere near Kuča in Montenegro, wrote a similar letter, and tried to contact us. Even in Kruja, they once asked me if Branko Arsenijević and Dušan Majcen could be trusted. When they fled from Slovenia to Italy, they first approached the directorate of the Italian Communist Party, presented themselves as members of the Yugoslav émigré CP, and requested help to get to the Soviet Union. The Italians checked through Albania, and they asked me. They were first transferred to Switzerland, then to Czechoslovakia, and from there to the Soviet Union. Even Kalafatić's family managed to get to the Soviet Union.

After our escape, as I heard, about 400 so-called Cominformists were arrested again in Yugoslavia. They were held under investigation for several months and then sent for three years to Sveti Grgur. However, there were no longer the same repressions and atrocities. They were punished with solitary confinement as the harshest measure.

When I met Ramiz Alia for the second time, he essentially confirmed the previous position:

"If we interfere in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia, we give them the opportunity to interfere in our internal affairs."

The first disagreements among our group began. We split over the question: to go or not to go to the Soviet Union. Kalafatić wanted to go at any cost. Understandably, his family was waiting for him there. Momo Đurić had been there at the academy, living in luxury and wanted to return. Goli Otok broke them; they had had enough of everything and wanted to live peacefully, far from Yugoslavia. I, on the other hand, still advocated for new battles, new sufferings and new risks... Mileta agreed with me. Conflicts started. They began to support everything happening in the Soviet Union in advance, and I did not accept that. Once, when I defended Mileta, Momo Đurić attacked me for criticizing a Gomulka article

published in *Pravda*. He said:

"You criticize that article. It was published in *Pravda.* So, you are attacking *Pravda.* And if you are attacking Pravda, you are attacking the Central Committee of the CPSU."

"Well, Momo, are you against Josip Broz's policy?"

"Yes."

"Did *Pravda* publish his article on a whole page?"

"Yes."

"Then are you against *Pravda*?"

"No, and I never will be!"

That's how we started talking. After these principled matters, we argued specifically about Khrushchev. They defended him and I held my views. Khrushchev, and later Brezhnev, were not at all capable of the positions they held. Khrushchev could at best be the chairman of some village council, and Brezhnev the president of a village union. That's how it is in history. After great men, some small fry always follow. And Stalin was truly great. Soviet citizens have not forgotten him to this day. Your colleague Risto Bajalski recently expressed surprise in his texts from Moscow — when Gorbachev's campaign against Stalin began — why many drivers today have Stalin's pictures on their windshields. Since Stalin, my friend, we haven't had a proper leader of the communist movement.

Among us, things finally fell apart when I returned from some five-day political talks in Tirana and elsewhere. I was the secretary of this provisional leadership, so they called me. Stevo Drinjak met me and asked:

"What's new?"

"Put on your boots tighter."

"Did you make a deal to lead us into danger?"

While I was away, they made a faction, attacked me and voted: nine for them, six for us. After that, they sent a letter to the leadership of the Albanian Party. They accused me of

everything in 17 points. Among other things, they accused me because my brother Peko was a member of the Yugoslav leadership, because my grandfather was a priest... Pure nonsense.

We quarrelled fiercely. They demanded to take our materials, but I didn't give them. What majority? Numbers don't matter, principles do. When they are wrong, that majority means nothing. They wanted to live comfortably in the Soviet Union and sleep with Russian women, while I wanted to fight for a just cause. Who is right here? I didn't give myself the right to be the main interpreter of the line. I didn't invent it. I kept repeating what Marxists established almost a hundred years ago.

We stopped even talking to each other. While we waited for the Albanians' response to their letter, they kept barking. One day, the secretary of the committee came and said that Ramiz Alia was calling me. I took Mileta with me. As soon as I entered, I saw that the matter was resolved in our favour. He hugged me, even took off my coat and hung it up.

"We have rejected the accusations against you. Don't worry about this conflict. People are tired. You have to understand them. You are right. Besides, it's better that the split happened now than at a more dangerous and decisive moment."

Three days before this meeting with Ramiz Alia, we had sent Khrushchev a telegram requesting to be invited to the 21st Congress of the CPSU. It was scheduled for those days. We asked to represent the Marxist-Leninists in exile and to participate in the work. Signed: In the name of the group of Yugoslav Marxist-Leninists — Vlado Dapčević.

Ramiz told me:

"Khrushchev replied to your telegram. That's a good thing. He acknowledges you."

He handed me the telegram:

"We received your telegram. For now, we do not consider it appropriate."

Later, he called Kalafatić, Momo Đurić and Stanoje Brajović. He told them essentially what he had told me. Naturally, they were stunned and made a scene. Momo Đurić first said:

"If we were in Yugoslavia, we would kill Vlado Dapčević!"

Then he began to insult me in front of Ramiz Alia. Alia didn't allow it:

"I do not allow that. We consider Vlado Dapčević a true Marxist-Leninist. Please, not another word about it."

A few days later, they decided to move them to Belvino. The six of us began to insist more and more on leaving Albania. We were even ready to return to Yugoslavia the same way we came, so we climbed those mountains to get into shape.

One day, the district committee secretary came again. He said:

"Bita has arrived; he's calling you to the committee."

Piro Bita was the director of the Albanian Party's Directorate for Foreign Party Relations. As soon as we saw that we had to wait 10 minutes and that we were being taken to a small room, not the secretary's office, we knew something was wrong. Mileta was with me again.

"What are you doing, Vlado?"

"What do you mean, what am I doing?"

"We received the strictest warning from the Soviet Union. If we don't take action against your activities, they will question our mutual relations. They have been informed that you émigrants are preparing to infiltrate Yugoslavia."

"Comrade Bita, I don't want to insult you, but I have to ask if you are sane. How can you believe such a thing? We don't leave Berat. You know our every move. You even know

what we talk about among ourselves. An officer from the Sigurimi is always with us..."

"Understand, Dapčević. All of that is true, but we are accused of allowing you to organize regiments of émigrants who are to infiltrate Yugoslavia and cause unrest, an uprising..."

This whole mess started with Tempo. He met with Khrushchev in the Soviet Union; they were close personal friends. When Khrushchev claimed that the Soviet Union was doing everything to strengthen mutual relations with Yugoslavia, Tempo said:

"We have reason to doubt that."

"Based on what?"

"We have information that Vlado Dapčević in Albania is organizing émigrants and preparing regiments of émigrants to infiltrate Yugoslavia. Albania wouldn't dare to do this without at least your tacit approval."

Khrushchev promised Tempo that he would take all necessary steps to prevent this, which is why Piro Bita came in a panic. As Bita explained, sparks began to fly between us:

"Dapčević, you must cease all activities. You must no longer meet with anyone..."

"I do not accept that. I am a revolutionary, a communist, a Marxist-Leninist, and I will do what I believe I should do. Regardless of anyone's stance. I cannot understand how you can be executors of the demands of the Yugoslav revisionist leadership..."

I didn't want to say "and the Soviet one."

"Besides, you have enough prisons, so if you have the guts, lock me up in one of them. I repeat: I do not accept what you ask of me."

Of course, they conveyed this to Khrushchev, who then decided that my entire group and I should be transferred to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev may have wanted to keep only

me under control, but this suited the Albanians to pack the whole lot. These factionalists would never have seen the Soviet Union without this, despite having annoyed the Albanians. Ramiz Alia, a month before our departure, told me they were making serious trouble, connecting with black marketeers, speculators, even hostile elements and speaking ill of the Party of Labour of Albania... Alia said they had considered arresting some: Milić, Branko Jovović and another whose name I can't recall. I saved them then. I told Alia:

"If anything happens to them, I won't be able to wash it off. It will seem like I, thanks to my good relations with you, set them up."

He accepted that, while we were in Albania, and we were there for a short time, their and our positions should be entirely equal.

They called me to Tirana. In front of the hotel was Momo Đurić! We sat in the same car. I sat in the front, he in the back. I was silent; he was silent. They took us to the Central Committee and to Piro Bita. Bita started officially:

"At your request..."

Listen, at our request!

"...it has been decided that you will go to the Soviet Union. You will go two by two. By plane. Please, write the order of departure."

Momo Đurić put himself first. I put myself last. I hoped to find out how they were received there and to see if I would go at all. Later, we asked if at least Mileta and Radomir Jokić could stay. For them, Albania was like a second homeland. They had been with the Albanian partisans for a while. They said: "That would be an exception. No one can stay."

We waited. One day a bus came and took us to Durrës. A member of the Central Committee met us:

"Comrade Vlado, it has been deemed very dangerous for

you to travel by plane. The plane must fly over Yugoslavia, and Yugoslav fighters could force it to land at a Yugoslav airport. You will travel by the Soviet ship 'Belostrov.'"

We boarded the ship. It was carrying Soviet tourists home. They welcomed us very kindly. They gave us single luxury cabins and the captain came to have lunch with us as soon as the ship sailed. That was a great honour. We first docked in Piraeus. The tourists disembarked. We stayed. It was not planned for us to leave the ship. We didn't dock in Istanbul, even though it was planned. On that day, a military coup occurred in Turkey. From the ship, we could clearly see tanks in the streets. In Varna, we left the ship for the first time. We toured museums all day. In the evening, we sailed first to Constanta, then to Odessa.

To understand what comes next, I must tell you another detail from Albania. One day, I received a phone call. You know, before, you had to go to the post office when someone scheduled a call. Stanoje Brajović and Bulatović called. Both were former division commissars and both Montenegrins. When we split, they sided with the faction. I took the main receiver, and Mileta took the listening one. Bulatović began:

"I know, Vlado, that you have a heart as big as Lovćen. I beg you to forgive us for the mess we made for you. We respect you. We know how you conducted yourself before and during the war, and on Goli Otok. Please, overlook that, and now that we are going to the Soviet Union, let's be together there."

I knew it was the worst kind of flattery, as they assumed that, like with the Albanians, I would have much greater influence with the Russians, and that could help them get a better status there. Nevertheless, I replied:

"I have nothing against it if you have truly realized that you messed up. And not just with me, but with our entire

cause."

Stanoje Brajović more or less repeated what Bulatović said, but added an interesting thing:

"Pero Popivoda sent us letters about you. We're sure you'll be very interested in them. As soon as we meet, we'll give them to you."

From 1954 onwards, Pero Popivoda was the head of the Yugoslav émigrés in the Soviet Union until its dissolution. He had been in Moscow since 1948.

MOTHER RUSSIA

In Odessa, all the tourists left and we remained. We were sitting in the lounge waiting for someone to call us. The captain came:

"Please come with me. Comrades are waiting for you."

There was someone from state security, someone from the Red Cross, a woman from the Office for Political Emigrants and a few others. When I entered, the security officer looked around and said, "Are we all among friends?" Then he began: "Vladimir Ivanovich, you have arrived in the Soviet Union. This comrade will take care of your accommodation, food and other needs. You will be staying in the best hotel in Odessa..."

I replied:

"I don't want to talk to you. I have nothing to do with the Red Cross. I am neither a fire victim, nor have I suffered from floods or earthquakes. I am a revolutionary and a communist, and can only talk to party organs."

"Vladimir Ivanovich, you misunderstood me. Don't be confused by the Red Cross. You know that the International Organization for Aid to Revolutionaries — MOPR — existed under the Comintern. When the Comintern was dissolved, we retained that organization but camouflaged it a bit. We attached it to the Red Cross. The comrades who work there are in direct contact with the Central Committee of the CPSU. Only through MOPR can you contact the Central Committee. There's no other way."

"Then send me back!"

I hoped at least the secretary of the regional committee would come and accept me as a communist. I was furious! I saw this as a bad omen.

"I didn't ask to come to the Soviet Union. I came against

my will."

"Please, Vladimir Ivanovich, you are here now. We are small people. Our task was to meet and accept you. If you want to contact the Central Committee directly, go ahead."

He was right. Two days later, I wrote a letter to the Central Committee asking for an audience. I wanted to discuss our situation, status and conditions under which we would live in the Soviet Union. We arrived in June 1960. In the meantime, about 15 days later, those from Berlin came to Odessa. Bulatović, Lakić and Stanoje Brajović called me to the park and gave me all the letters Pero Popivoda had written to Albania. It said the worst possible things about Peko and me. Scoundrels, bastards, inhumane... I partially understood him — my arrival threatened his position in a non-existent leadership — but I couldn't understand why that would cause so much venom in the letters.

Admittedly, once in Yugoslavia, he had also created some intrigue for Tempo and me, accusing us of something completely untrue. When I was appointed political commissar of the Higher Military Academy, he desperately wanted to be a teacher of War History there. He pressured me for a long time, and one day I mentioned it to Tempo. He was a relative of Krsto Popivoda, and I didn't want problems with Krsto. Tempo waved his hand: "What about Pero, he knows nothing about Marxism-Leninism!" During a dinner at the Army House, I made a mistake by teasing Pero and saying, "Tempo said you know nothing about Marxism-Leninism."

Being who he was, Pero went to Krsto and told him that Tempo and I said Krsto was ignorant and a scoundrel. Krsto was offended and told everything to Ranković. Ranković scolded Tempo, and if it weren't for Savo Burić to testify, I would have been in big trouble. Tempo was very angry.

In Odessa, Olga Kamenska really took care of us. She

was from the Office for Political Emigrants. They gave us 800 old rubles a month. It was enough for good food, with some left over. She conveyed an announcement from the Office for Political Emigrants that after the dissolution of the Yugoslav émigré organization, no Yugoslav political émigrant could engage in political activities. They had to either work or study. She asked us to choose.

Two-thirds immediately chose to study. Momo Đurić said he wanted to work somewhere as a lawyer, Bogdan Jovović as an accountant and Simić as an engineer. Momo Đurić and Panta Simić were sent to Kharkov, the two Jovović brothers to Kiev, Brajović, Bulatović and Stevo Drinjak to Ulyanovsk for studies, and Milica and Pavle Mrvaljević to Stavropol.

We refused both options!

A telegram arrived from Moscow: I was summoned there. Olga Kamenska went with me, as did the three who were travelling by train to Ulyanovsk via Moscow. They didn't know why I was going. We arrived in Moscow very early, so Kamenska drove me around the Moscow metro for almost an hour. It's the most beautiful metro in the world. When we got out of the metro, she told me:

"Emigration is like any emigration. They intrigue and slander each other. In Moscow, there's one of your people whom you can completely trust. I guarantee him. His name is Radonja Golubović."

Of course, this intrigued me very much, especially since Kamenska had once shocked me with a story:

"Vladimir, you are a smart and good man, a true revolutionary, as far as I can tell. But you will suffer here."

"Suffer? How? Am I not in the Soviet Union, the land of the Great October?"

"You are in the Soviet Union, but people like you no longer exist here. There were some during the revolution and

maybe until the war. Since the war, especially today, everything has changed. People now only grab for positions, salaries and privileges. You won't be able to find common ground with them. Being who you are, you'll clash and the consequences for you could be dire."

She spoke the truth. At that time, the Russians had really started sending Marxists-Leninists to a camp in Taymyr, north of Siberia, the coldest place.

I tell you all this because, from just one day in Moscow, you can understand almost everything about the Yugoslav émigrés in the Soviet Union at that time.

I had known Radonja for almost 30 years and thought the same of him as Kamenska. He was a man of character and reliability. She took all four of us to him and then left. Radonja welcomed us nicely, though he was a bit surprised. He immediately told me about the mess Kalafatić had caused when he arrived in the Soviet Union. He had left Albania before us.

Lale Ivanović and others had managed to convince Kalafatić, which wasn't hard, that the best solution was for all émigrés to return to Yugoslavia. Then Kalafatić agitated for the return to Yugoslavia among all the Yugoslav émigrés. This was considered a totally capitulationist line. Since they knew nothing about me, Branko Arsenijević and Dušan Majcen, when they heard the nasty things Kalafatić was saying about me, thought he had buried me in Albania and that I was probably still in prison there. Kalafatić's agitation for a return to Yugoslavia, considered total capitulation, and what he said about me were why these two beat him up like a horse at Lale Ivanović's house. Branko and Duško, as you know, came to the Soviet Union via Italy. They had started fighting so fiercely against this opportunist line that once, when they visited Radonja, they scared him. He said:

"Know that I will defend myself!"

"Don't buy what others don't buy. We didn't come to quarrel with you. That one deserved it. He buried our best comrade."

Their conflict with Kalafatić was child's play compared to the conflict between Pero Popivoda and Radonja Golubović. They were mortal enemies. If it weren't for smart people in the Soviet Political Bureau, Pero would have certainly buried Radonja. The conflict peaked when Maltsev published the book *The Yugoslav Tragedy.* It depicted the National Liberation War in Yugoslavia in the most disgusting way. Koča Popović and many others were portrayed as spies and enemy agents... Pero Popivoda was a co-author of that book. As Radonja Golubović was the editor of the newspaper *For Socialist Yugoslavia,* they asked him to publish parts of the book in series. When Radonja read it and saw it was all an outright lie, he wrote to the Central Committee of the CPSU, saying that as long as he was the editor, the book would not appear in the newspaper. He even told them, "I am genuinely surprised how such a dirty book could receive a state award."

Chaos ensued. Pero, then the head of the émigrés, and his leadership decided to remove Radonja. They even demanded an investigation for his gesture. At one of the meetings where this was to be decided, someone from the Political Bureau attended. When they attacked Radonja — there's always someone who uses someone else's misfortune to strengthen their position or advance — the Political Bureau member interrupted and said, "The Political Bureau appointed Radonja Golubović as editor, and only the Political Bureau can remove him. I declare on behalf of the Political Bureau: Golubović stays." I read that book and must tell you I fully agree with Golubović that it should not be republished. It is indeed a "dirty book."

When Radonja saw that Pero wanted to leave him without honour and without a head, they went to war and never spoke again. They began to compete for people: who would attract more to their side. At that time, there were about 2,500 Yugoslav émigrés in the Soviet Union.

Emigration? Many have described political emigration, but I think Vera Zasulich wrote best about it. She was a member of Plekhanov's group "Emancipation of Labour," the first Marxist group in Russia. There were six of them, and they were all Narodniks before that. Vera was such a bandit that she killed the governor of Petrograd in his office. She was friends with Engels. In her memoirs, Vera wrote: "Nothing morally destroys a revolutionary — neither the gallows, nor prisons and dungeons, nor persecutions, nor Siberia — like emigration." Because of such things and terrible slanders, Lenin once fled to the Swiss mountains, sat there for nine months and wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.* I had so many opportunities to observe all those émigrés that I must tell you what Vera wrote in the last century is absolutely true. This is the fate of emigration.

When Radonja went to see off the three to Ulyanovsk, I stayed with his wife. The phone rang: Branko Arsenijević called and asked if those three had come to Radonja. Branko called from Pero Popivoda's apartment. Pero had forced him to call because those three had sent a telegram from Odessa asking Pero to meet them at the train station. Pero, being proud, considered it beneath him and thought they should come by themselves. Meanwhile, Branko and Majcen arrived, waited for two or three hours, and when they saw no one, Pero jumped up and shouted: "Radonja grabbed them! Branko, you're friends with him, call him, please, and ask if they're there."

Radonja's wife told Branko they had indeed been there,

but Radonja had taken them to the station and they were already on the train to Ulyanovsk, adding:

"But Vlado is here."

"Which Vlado?"

"Vlado Dapčević."

When Branko said my name, Pero Popivoda collapsed like a sack. He fainted. Having nothing else on hand — there was a tuxedo and a top hat hanging nearby — they grabbed the top hat, filled it with water, poured it over Pero and revived him. Branko Arsenijević once wrote a good anecdote about it.

Kamenska placed me in a room that day, albeit in the centre of Moscow, but a second- or third-category room, not a first. To me, it was an indicator of a certain attitude. The next day, we went to the Red Cross — to the head of the Office for Political Emigrants. Meanwhile, Branko Arsenijević and Dušan Majcen had arrived. We embraced and kissed. They came to see me. They also saw my arrival as a new hope for some work. Although they wanted to fight all the opportunism, they couldn't do it alone. Moreover, the Central Committee wouldn't accept them...

What was happening was what Ljubo Kojić once wrote to me in Albania. When he flew to Hungary in a school plane, he immediately moved to the Soviet Union. When he saw what was happening there, he sent me a letter: "I talked to Pero, Radonja and about 10 other people. You need to know that none of these people will fight for anything anymore. Everything has sunk into the emigrant mire. They are looking for the best way to live. That's where all their revolutionary spirit ended." That letter from Ljubo was my first news about what was happening with our political émigrés in the Soviet Union. Until then, I believed those people in Russia since 1948 were far above us, learning and improving while

we were carrying stones on Goli Otok. And they, honestly, seemed unquestionably to be the ones to lead our struggle. I saw myself in the role of someone who would be close to them, listening and executing more than deciding. In just three days, I realized that Ljubo Kojić was completely right.

Branko and Dušan also came to convey Pero's invitation to dinner. After he regained consciousness, it occurred to him that the easiest way to smooth over old quarrels was, as he told the two of them, to host a nice dinner at his place. I naturally refused because I didn't want to talk to him until he apologized profusely for all the vile things he had said and written about me. I told them that we could only talk when we met somewhere on the street, not in his house, once he apologized and if his apology satisfied me. The next day, we met in front of the Bolshoi Theatre. He approached me with open arms:

"Vlado, please forgive me. I ate shit, not just one pile, but a whole heap, lying about you like that."

"Forget the big words, Pero. Do you mean it sincerely?"

"Of course, Vlado. It was the biggest swinish behaviour imaginable from my side. Nothing like this will ever happen again."

We shook hands and went to his house. We started talking. I spoke about the struggle, and Pero about positions. First, he mentioned that he didn't believe anyone important would receive me at the Central Committee, to which I replied that if that happened, I would refuse to talk. After that, I insisted on persuading him that we should all unite on common positions and goals, write a common platform or part ways definitively if we couldn't manage that. I even said, "Let the people democratically choose the leadership of the organization. I hope it won't be either you or me." He liked hearing that they wouldn't choose me, but he didn't like at all that I said they wouldn't choose him either. He immediately

said that if the time came, the new leadership in Yugoslavia would be determined by the Russian Political Bureau, not by any émigré organization.

He held no position or entrusted duty. He worked as an ordinary clerk in the Civil Aviation Administration. I quickly realized that there was no luck to be had with Pero, but honestly, I wanted to avoid direct confrontations from the start. My main goal was to reach an agreement with the Central Committee and get the opportunity to work freely, organize people and carry out propaganda among them.

Olga Kamenska and the head of the Office for Political Emigrants accompanied me to the Central Committee. I was received by Lisakov, deputy to Yuri Andropov. Andropov was then the secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU for international relations — essentially the foreign minister according to party lines. However, he didn't receive me in his office but in some kind of reception room, quite coldly and officially. I tried to explain our position to him and even hand him all our materials, which I had in my bag, but he just waved it off: "It's not necessary. I'm already familiar with everything." Then I began to discuss our status. However, he said to me:

"Listen, comrade, let me be frank. At the plenum in May '55, the Central Committee decided to completely change its approach to Yugoslavia. There can no longer be any organization of Yugoslav political émigrés in the Soviet Union, nor any of their activities concerning Yugoslavia. Therefore, you in the Soviet Union must choose between two things: studying or working."

"There can be no discussion about that at all. I was brought to the Soviet Union, you know how, and if you don't want to meet my demands, I demand that you immediately give me an exit visa from the Soviet Union!"

That ended the conversation. He clearly wasn't authorized to tell me anything more. He tried to convince me not to be angry and said that it was just the current situation and didn't necessarily have to last forever. In fact, their policy towards me and others like me was this: keep him here with us and under control. Like when a weapon is made, conserved and stored in a warehouse. If war breaks out, use it; if not, let it stay in the warehouse. I naturally didn't want to allow myself such a shameful position. First, I always felt and acted as an independent man. Second, I didn't value them a penny. I considered them revisionists. When he saw that I insisted on getting an exit visa, he said:

"We can't give you an exit visa until you get the consent of a country that will accept you."

"What if I get it?"

"You'll immediately get an exit visa."

"Can you write and certify that for me?"

We argued about that for about 10 minutes. In the end, he went somewhere and actually brought back the promise — typed up and stamped. As soon as we left, I told Olga Kamenska:

"Your Central Committee is leading a swinish policy towards us."

I used the Russian word *svoloch,* which is the greatest insult there.

"So, Vladimir Ivanovich, you think our Central Committee leads a swinish policy?!"

"I said what I thought, and now you go and convey that to them. Besides, I know well that you work for the police. The first chance I get, I'll say this to one of them in person. You don't have to worry that it will remain a secret to them."

I don't think she conveyed it to them. I felt simply locked up. I stayed in Moscow for a month. On my own, I met with

people and talked. Colonel Karpeyev, head of the Office for Political Emigrants, invited me once. He respected me and agreed with me on most things. Of course, when we were alone. As soon as someone entered, he changed his tone and attitude.

"Vladimir Ivanovich, you are a good but very naive man. Like all good people. Everyone you talked to reported you."

He showed me 11 reports. They wanted to show me how futile everything I desired was and that it was high time to yield. Shortly after that, those factionalists from Albania accused me again. They wrote to the Central Committee that I was against the decisions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, against Khrushchev, that I considered their policy revisionist, treacherous, counter-revolutionary, that I was a Stalinist to the core, an adventurist... The worst of everything. In such circumstances, I always asked myself anew: Am I really so stupid not to see and understand the life around me? Am I really Don Quixote, as Panto Simić shouted in front of my apartment in Albania: "In this house lives Don Quixote Vlado Dapčević!"

I returned to Odessa and immediately agreed to work. Temporarily — until I got an entry visa from some country. The others did the same. They gave us a choice: Makeevka in Donbass, Krivoy Rog in the Ukraine or Kherson. We chose some factories in Kherson. We reckoned we'd leave the Soviet Union in three to four months at most. Meanwhile, in Odessa, on thin paper, we wrote about 20 densely typed pages of a memorandum similar to the one we wrote upon arrival in Albania. We sent it to about 30 addresses — all our émigrés in Odessa. Mostly officers.

Around that time, relations between China and the Soviet Union began to strain, as well as between Albania and the Soviet Union. The conference of 81 communist parties

in Moscow was already scheduled, and I went there with our memorandum. I took it to the Albanian, Chinese, and other socialist country embassies and representatives of communist parties from some Western countries. The Chinese delegation had already arrived in Moscow: Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai and Chen Bota.

I don't know if Pero had received a signal from the side or not. Representatives of the Central Committee of the CPSU kept repeating that none of them had had contact with him since '54, and Radonja and Lale Ivanović told me that some émigré had reported seeing him with Medvedev. In any case, Pero Popivoda wrote a circular against me and my group and sent it all over the Soviet Union. It roughly said:

"In Odessa, a pro-Chinese, pro-Albanian group led by Vlado Dapčević has been organized. That Vlado Dapčević, who, after being released from prison, attended dinners with Josip Broz Tito and was in the closest relations with Ranković. It can be assumed that Ranković sent him here to disrupt our political emigration and harm the interests of the Soviet Union. They write some letters on toilet paper, clearly showing Dapčević's pro-Chinese position and his hostility towards the Soviet Union."

I went to the Chinese embassy and requested an audience with Liu Shaoqi... As if! I didn't care about the job at all. The conference did not invite the League of Communists of Yugoslavia — they didn't even consider it communist — so we demanded that one of us Yugoslav communists attend the conference. I didn't see Liu Shaoqi, but an embassy official conveyed his message. He said that Liu intended to meet me, but was prevented because their visit schedule was suddenly changed to tour some factory, but that he would advocate for our cause at the conference, agreeing with our positions and would request that we be invited during the conference.

They didn't invite us, but they condemned the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as anti-Marxist, anti-communist and anti-socialist, calling on all communists worldwide to fight revisionism resolutely and to protect the international workers' movement from its influence. At that time, Fidel Castro openly wrote: "The League of Communists of Yugoslavia is neither a party nor communist." Khrushchev, of course, didn't agree and vehemently attacked Enver Hoxha. It was probably easier for him to attack Enver than the Chinese. However, Enver didn't hold back. He openly accused Khrushchev of revisionism, sowing confusion in the international communist movement, inconsistency in speech and decision-making, and continually putting communist parties before a *fait accompli*... Khrushchev got furious, stood up and began: "Enver Hoxha's unrestrained speech..." Attacking Albania also meant attacking China, as the positions of their two parties were identical. Nonetheless, the declaration and assessment of revisionism were adopted and published in *Pravda*.

We concluded that we could once again engage in political activities. Especially since other émigrés — Turkish, Iranian and many others, except the Greeks — were already working without hindrance. They even sent tanks to the Greeks. They had revolted in Tashkent when Khrushchev unilaterally removed their entire Central Committee, led by Zahariadis, and interned him in a northern Russian village. In this situation, what encouraged me further was that no one prevented me from travelling and meeting with people. In Russia, there was a strict rule for émigrés who weren't Soviet citizens: without special permission, one couldn't leave their place of residence.

We immediately sat down, Radonja, Lale Ivanović, I and some others, and wrote a short resolution. This time, we in-

tended to offer it to all Yugoslav émigrés for signing. The same addresses: the CPSU and other communist parties. However, Lale Ivanović insisted that we condemn both revisionism and dogmatism. He probably wanted to recommend us to the Central Committee of the CPSU in this way. However, I cut it short: "We are not fighting against dogmatism, but against revisionism!" After all, Gomulka once said: "Dogmatism is like a cold, while revisionism is a deadly disease"...

What don't you know? I'm telling you what the man said at the time and, of course, I don't expect you to approve of it. I know that you in Yugoslavia have sucked anti-communism and hatred for the Comintern and the Soviet Union with your mother's milk... How can dogmatism be a "deadly disease"?... Okay, long live the phrases. Shall we continue?

The main content of our resolution: "Based on the declaration of the conference of 81 parties and the clear condemnation of Yugoslav revisionism, we, Yugoslav communists, who are most called upon to fight against revisionism, demand from the governments and parties of all socialist countries to allow us, Yugoslav communists, who, by circumstances, are in your countries, to participate in the fight against Yugoslav revisionism."

Despite Pero Popivoda organizing an entire action against signing our resolution, and Momo Đurić even personally leading a team to practically prevent it, we gathered around 160 signatures from our people in various socialist countries. About 170 signed it in the Soviet Union itself. We made copies of all this and delivered them to the embassies of the socialist countries.

This gave me wings. I began to travel to cities and gather émigrés. True, many times they invited me themselves and paid for my travel. I held meetings, conferences, explained, persuaded and propagated... One day, General Karpeyev

from the Office for Political Emigrants called me by phone. He even found me at Radonja's place. They knew where I was at any moment, he said: "Vladimir Ivanovich, Comrade Andropov invites you for a conversation. We need to be at the Central Committee at 10 a.m."

We entered Andropov's office. The office was huge, with a large conference table and two round tables with armchairs around them. Andropov, Lisakov and another deputy welcomed us. Andropov kindly approached, greeted me, offered me cigarettes, and asked about my health and some ordinary things for about five minutes. I answered briefly and superficially to everything, waiting for the main topic.

"I have been instructed by the Political Bureau to inform you of its decision regarding you personally. Before your arrival, we had no problems with émigrés. Since you arrived, there have been conferences, memorandums and resolutions. This has reached large proportions. Since your political activities here are at odds with the political line of the Central Committee of the CPSU, we kindly ask, very kindly, that you stop such activities. If you refuse, we will be forced to withdraw our hospitality."

I knew that what Andropov told me meant nothing other than they would use force since earlier persuasion had not worked. I didn't let myself be confused.

"I can't understand how hospitality can be withdrawn from someone who never asked for it. You know that I came to the Soviet Union against my will. I was brought here. Since you condemn my activities, at least let me briefly explain what those activities consist of. You are used to being praised here. Allow someone to tell you about things that won't be praises."

He listened, and I spoke for about two and a half hours. About Yugoslavia, the international situation, the Soviet Union and its positions. He never interrupted me, even though what

I said must have been very bitter for them. Andropov, I had the impression, was the most educated and cultured member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. At the end, I said:

"I ask you, as a communist to a communist, what would you do if you were in my place?"

He looked at me, smiled a little, thought for a moment and replied:

"The same as you."

"So, I'm doing the right thing?"

"Oh no, I didn't say that. I just said I would do the same as you, but if I were in your place. But what would you do if you were in my place?"

"If I were a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU and accepted its current line, of course, I would do the same as you: implement the line of the Central Committee of the CPSU."

"So, we understand each other."

However, I didn't agree. Under those conditions, I didn't want to stay in the Soviet Union. I appealed to their moral obligations towards me, reminded them that I had shed a lot of blood for the Soviet Union and endured much suffering, and demanded they legally transfer me to another country. I asked to go to France. He didn't advise that because, as he said, the French and Yugoslav governments cooperated well, so there was a danger they would hand me over to Tito. He suggested I go to Finland or Austria. The Russians had special agreements with them, and Andropov believed they wouldn't dare hand me over.

While talking to him, Khrushchev called Andropov two or three times. It was evident because Andropov responded with "Nikita Sergeyevich, I'm not finished yet." Once he said, "It's not going easily and simply. When we finish, I'll come to inform you." I was a bit surprised that Khrushchev

personally took an interest and wanted to break and win me over. Throughout the conversation, there was always a mix of subtle threats and various offers and suggestions if I accepted what they demanded of me.

I first went to the Austrian embassy. The ambassador, who spoke Serbian as well as I did and had been a consul in Yugoslavia for 12 years, said:

"As far as I know about you, I don't think anything will come of it. But it's my duty to forward your request, and I'll do it. Come back in a month."

They refused, flatly. I was also rejected by the Finnish embassy. And the French and all others in turn... Finally, I went to the American embassy. They even had a file on me! They knew absolutely everything. Even all the positions I held in Yugoslavia until '48. I asked the consul:

"What do you need this for?"

"We know what you're doing here and, in principle, we never know who will be in power in Yugoslavia tomorrow. You are one of the leading émigrés here, maybe it could be you. We always need to know whom to help and whom to hinder."

"You would surely hinder me."

"By all means."

Since some Senator guaranteed for me, he said that he would still send the request to America. A month later, he told me:

"Even if the President of the USA personally guaranteed for you, we wouldn't let you into the country."

When the situation around Cuba began to escalate, I went to their embassy and met the ambassador. Their ambassador to the USSR was an important figure — a member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Party. He was a physically small man. I told him that, in my opinion, the Americans

were preparing an attack on Cuba, explained my situation in the USSR, and suggested that I and several others, all officers, be accepted as volunteers. I had already talked to people about it and they wanted to go. In the Soviet Union, we were already politically completely ruined, and it made no difference whether we fought imperialism here or on the other side of the planet.

"How many people would go?"

"Around 150. That number will be even larger if Fidel Castro intervenes with Khrushchev because many of them are active officers of the Red Army."

He was thrilled. He said they really expected an attack, had a mass of people ready to defend Cuba, but lacked officers. It would be a great help, and he would immediately send a telegram to Fidel Castro. While waiting for the response, I often went to the Cuban embassy for talks, and once even met Che Guevara there. We talked for about two hours. Castro ordered them to immediately give me an entry visa and sent a letter to Khrushchev. He asked Khrushchev to allow me and then others to come to Cuba.

As soon as I got the visa from the Cubans, I went to the Russians with the confirmation Lisakov had given me. They told me, "Okay, come back tomorrow and bring photos." When I showed up the next day, they explained that I was a resident of the Kherson region, things were decentralized there and I would get the visa there. Colonel Karpeyev confirmed this. In Kherson, I told my people that we were going to Cuba. There was general excitement. The police listened to everything but didn't give me the visa. They said they had to ask Moscow. I called Karpeyev and asked about the visa. He told me everything was fine and I would get it in a week. A week passed — nothing. I called Karpeyev again.

"Vladimir Ivanovich, unfortunately I must inform you

that you didn't get approval for the visa!"

I think Khrushchev himself forbade it. I immediately went to Moscow and called Andropov. Not there, on an official trip, sick... A bunch of reasons for refusal. I got so nervous that I said all sorts of things to the head of Ovir — the central visa office in Moscow. Among other things, I told him that tomorrow he would be ashamed of what he was doing. Without any excitement, he replied: "I doubt it, I am a clerk here and I follow orders. I have nothing to be ashamed of."

I couldn't reach anyone. The 22nd Congress of the CPSU was being prepared. It had already been rumoured — such was the level of secrecy in Moscow at the time, that half of Moscow knew the discussions of the previous day at the Political Bureau the very next day — that Stalin would be removed from the Mausoleum and diplomatic relations with Albania would be severed, including the expulsion of the Albanian embassy from the Soviet Union. I went to the Albanian embassy and told them this. I asked: "Is this true?" The person replied, "No, that's not possible!" acting surprised, but it was so obvious — they were even packing!

Both pieces of news turned out to be true. Stalin was removed from the Mausoleum, and Khrushchev personally attacked Albania and its entire leadership, led by Enver Hoxha. The only one to oppose him was Zhou Enlai, the head of the Chinese delegation. He said that his speech was seen by the Chinese delegation as an attack on a fraternal party, condemned it as something unacceptable and contrary to elementary internationalist relations, and, therefore, in protest, they left the Congress. And they left. After that, Khrushchev went to America, courted the Americans, and when he returned, the Chinese attacked him. Then he went to Mao Zedong to patch things up, and they had a complete falling out.

When horses fight, donkeys suffer. I was one of those don-

keys. I stood 100 per cent on the side of the Albanians and Chinese. When the Chinese began publishing letters about everything that happened between them and the Russians, I sat down and wrote another letter to all the communist parties. The trigger was Khrushchev's interview with that journalist Sulzberger. When asked if Cuba was a socialist country, he replied that it wasn't, but when asked if Yugoslavia was, he said it was. And he praised Tito immensely. Naturally, I disagreed, and in that letter, I wrote that "some top leaders" were causing confusion in the world communist movement, especially among Yugoslav communists. I demanded a clear position on whether the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was a Marxist-Leninist party, given its program adopted in '58, and whether Yugoslavia was a socialist country, given that it was led by the LCY with such a program and practice. I also referenced the declaration from the meeting of the 81 communist parties. I dropped the letter into the CPSU's mailbox and took the rest to the embassies of the socialist countries.

A month and a half later, Mao Zedong wrote that brochure with the same title: "Is Yugoslavia a Socialist Country?" A third of the brochure contained data and information we had written in our letters, including the first one written in Albania. The Russians immediately realized it was my doing. The battle of the mute against the horned began. Although I wasn't supposed to, I mostly stayed in Moscow. I slept at Radonja's, had breakfast with one, lunch with another. Comrades helped me financially because I didn't receive any salary. One evening, Radonja asked me:

"What new letter are you writing against the Soviet Party, supposedly about its treatment of Yugoslav communist émigrés?"

"I'm not writing anything."

"You are, Vlado. They called me from the Central Committee today, said you're writing and asked me to influence you to stop. Medvedev told me that would be the last straw they couldn't tolerate."

Radonja defended me, told him he knew me well, vouched for me, said I was a good man and revolutionary, but that he couldn't influence me if I had decided on something or if I was convinced of something. He said it would be best if they called me and discussed it. I really wasn't writing any new letter, but once, out of frustration, I told Radule Marković — shortly staying with him — that I would write such a letter even if it cost me my head. Radule probably reported everything to the authorities.

Medvedev called me one day. He found me at Radonja's and scheduled a conversation at the Office for Political Emigrants. Medvedev, Lisakov and two others came. One of them recorded everything. They also had a tape recorder. It wasn't a conversation but a heated argument. Medvedev spoke to me and kept jumping up from his chair. The others listened. First, he praised me, and at length. Starting with how well I spoke Russian, how knowledgeable I was about Marxist-Leninist theory, how talented I was as an organizer... It made me uncomfortable. I interrupted him, saying I didn't need those praises. I knew something had to follow. Praises are always a form of bribery.

"I will write my biography. If I work well and fight as a revolutionary, my biography will reflect that. If I degrade from revolutionary positions to revisionist ones, you can praise me all you want, but I will still be a scoundrel. Let's get straight to why you called me."

He asked:

"Why do you wander from pillar to post?"

"I wander because none of us can work until you inform

us of what to do. You use this to coerce me into submission through economic means. I've starved so many times in my life that hunger won't force me into anything."

"You move all over the Soviet Union, even going into restricted zones. We tolerate that. You live in Moscow without permission. Given your stance, we will hand you over to the administrative authorities."

He started threatening me. I looked at him and said:

"Listen, Medvedev, some things here baffle me. I'm appalled by this behaviour. First, you try to bribe me with promises and conditions, then you threaten me. You want to buy me. If I'm a true revolutionary, you can't buy me with anything. It's insulting to even suggest such a thing to a revolutionary. If I'm a scoundrel willing to sell myself, then it's a waste of money to spend on such a scoundrel. Besides, if I wanted to sell myself, I would have done so in Yugoslavia, not here, 2,000 kilometres from my country. And you're threatening me. You know I'm not easily scared. You know my biography well. It's appalling to think that you, a communist, can threaten me with the force of the Soviet state. Is this how communists should talk to each other? You know well how and how much I've fought for the communist cause during and after the war. You know the hardships I've endured for unity with the Soviet Union, considering it the main strength and fortress of the world proletarian revolution. Honestly, I think there's something wrong with your character..."

"How so?"

"A few days ago, I read your booklet *Tito — Leader of the Traitors,* where you wrote the most terrible things about Tito. Now, you defend that same Tito and persecute me, Vlado Dapčević, acting like the Yugoslav police, intending to arrest me for my consistent communist and internationalist Marxist-Leninist stance."

He jumped up as if scalded:

"I am a party soldier. At that time, I wrote what I did because that was the line of my party. Today, the line of my party is different."

"So, tomorrow, you'll speak differently if your party's line changes. That speaks volumes about you and your character. You're a person without independence, without a shred of individuality. To keep your position, you're ready to denounce everything you said and did yesterday."

He kept jumping and shouting, while I remained calm. It was a real state of war. When he finally offered me his hand, I told him: "Whoever threatens me with the police, I don't shake hands with." I turned and left. Before that, I addressed Lisakov:

"Things happen here that make me wonder if I should trust you at all. Did you, Comrade Lisakov, sign this promise that I would get an exit visa as soon as I received an entry visa from any country?"

"I did."

"Why did you break your word when I got the Cuban entry visa?"

"We had to do it. Your departure to Cuba couldn't be hidden and would have led to attacks on us from all sides. On Cuba too. Parallels with Spain and the International Brigades before the war would have been drawn. Moreover, we have moral obligations towards you. You could die there..."

"What kind of reasoning is that! Do you think I'm a fool or what? You send the military and missiles to Cuba, which poses no risk of international conflicts, but the departure of some émigré Vlado Dapčević to Cuba can create international problems! That's your most basic excuse."

I looked at him and thought: "Damn you!"

I had already realized that revisionist policies had com-

pletely triumphed in the Soviet Union. For a while, like many others, I hoped this was temporary and that the Soviet Bolshevik Party would find the strength to overcome it. However, during my stay in the Soviet Union, every illusion of mine in that regard shattered. I saw that revisionism had prevailed in both the Soviet Party and society. I saw that the Soviet Union had turned into a kind of bureaucratic-feudal state, with feudal privileges for the top bureaucracy, and that it could only lead to an open restoration of capitalism. I knew they would start openly persecuting and arresting me and would probably send me to a camp.

During those days, Radonja went to Poland, and I, of course, moved out of his house. A few days later, I called Radonja's wife to ask if he had called and what was new, and she said they had, that they were well and that I should come to pick up a letter that had arrived for me in the meantime. Just before I arrived, two policemen — one lieutenant colonel in uniform and one in civilian clothes — rang at Radonja's door. When Radonja's wife told them I wasn't there, they replied they would wait because they knew I was coming. They were eavesdropping. When I rang the doorbell, Radonja's wife opened, looking frantic and immediately let me know they were waiting.

"You need to come with us."

"Why?"

"We've been ordered to bring you in for questioning."

"That's an arrest!"

"No, it's a detainment."

The Russians behave the same way in such situations as our people. They say it's not an arrest but isolation! Isolation, but they beat them like cattle there!

"Please, we need to go right away."

"I'm not going anywhere right away — even if we have to

fight. I'm going to have coffee first."

"Vladimir Ivanovich, we need to go right away, they're waiting for you."

"Let them wait. Besides, if you had informed me, I would have come on my own. Are you going to tie me up here or there?"

"We won't tie you up."

When he saw I wasn't leaving without my coffee and didn't want to fight with me there, he waited. After drinking my coffee, they took me to the district police station. The station was like any other district police station: full of various criminals, shouting, shoving and cursing. They kept me on a bench with those criminals for three hours. Two policemen sat with me — one on each side. When I got bored, I asked one of them to go and protest to let me in, or I would leave and fight my way in. They took me to a colonel:

"You live in Moscow without permission. That's illegal, and I have an order for you to leave Moscow within 24 hours."

"I've been living in Moscow without permission for over a year; why did you remember now that I don't have it?"

"I neither know nor care about that. I have this order and will ensure it's carried out. Please follow the order and go to Kherson. If you don't, we'll escort you."

I left for Kherson by train the next day, but I returned to Moscow in about 15 days and wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU. I didn't choose my words. Moscow was in chaos and nervousness. The Chinese had left demonstratively, Stalin was expelled from the Mausoleum, the Albanians were expelled... They even sent some émigrés to break the glass at the Albanian embassy. Sometimes I stayed at the house of Marko Spahić's son and wife in Moscow. Since the police knew this, they told Marko's wife that she had to report if I showed up again. They also told her that I was an enemy

of the Soviet Union. She pretended to be surprised and said, "But we all know he's a hero!" To which they replied: "Forget about heroism. He's against our Party's line, follows a line that aligns with the Chinese and Albanians, and therefore, he's our enemy. Next time he comes, inform us immediately." Her son told me this, even though he worked for them.

I met him on Arbat Street and accepted his invitation for roast duck. When we entered, the duck was indeed roasted and already served on the table. Just as I started eating, I heard Marko's wife quietly talking on the phone in the hallway, mentioning "interested in you." That was enough for me to drop the duck and run out the door. Her son followed me. As soon as I left the building, some men ran after me, picking up a lieutenant along the way. A real street chase ensued. I couldn't jump onto a trolleybus, and they surrounded me with about 10 men. Immediately, a crowd of onlookers gathered. One of them addressed the crowd, explaining that we — Marko's son and I — were thieves. Allegedly, he stole, and I showed him what to steal! I started shouting immediately:

"You're lying, you dog! Don't believe him, they're arresting me because I'm a revolutionary, because I'm a Marxist-Leninist, because I defend what Lenin and Stalin fought for."

Two cars appeared out of nowhere, they grabbed us, shoved us inside and took us to Lubyanka. First, they held us in some reception area, and about 20 agents came to see us. One of them told Marko's son, "You can go!" I sat there until 11 p.m. when the same lieutenant colonel who arrested me at Radonja's house appeared. He took me to an office with thickly padded doors, knocked, slipped inside and quickly came back out:

"Vladimir Ivanovich, the general-colonel asks you to come in."

We were in the office of the head of the police for the en-

tire Moscow region. We went inside, greeted the general and I sat down. He smiled and said:

"You think you can hide from us."

"If I wanted to, be sure you'd never catch me. I don't do that, but I must tell you that you violate all internationalist obligations towards me. You treat me as an enemy. You replace a healthy head with a sick one, embrace American imperialists and revisionists, and persecute true revolutionaries and communists."

"I am the head of the Moscow region militia. Whether I personally like you or not has no significance for this conversation. There's no point in discussing that now. I received an order from the highest level, and if I don't carry it out, I won't be in this position tomorrow. I inform you that you must leave Moscow within 24 hours."

"I have no money for a ticket, food or living expenses."

"Don't worry about that. Go to the Office for Political Emigrants tomorrow and everything will be arranged. Don't misunderstand me, duty is duty. I think you understand."

I left around 2 a.m. The lieutenant colonel escorted me to a hotel. The next day, at the Red Cross Office for Emigrants, a first-class train ticket, 100 rubles and a suggestion to study in Odessa were waiting for me. I temporarily accepted the situation and decided to write my doctoral dissertation on the history of the Yugoslav workers' movement from 1918 to 1960 in Odessa.

I became seriously engaged in it. I even met Andropov by chance and secured his written permission to work at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow. There, in the Comintern archives, were many documents that could clarify many things that happened to Yugoslav communists in the Soviet Union before the war. As soon as I got the permit, I literally ran to the Comintern archive. I went inside, settled in,

placed my document request and was told without comment to wait. Usually, material took about half an hour to arrive. Half an hour passed, then an hour, then another half hour... My papers never arrived. Then they called me to the director's office and told me I couldn't get the requested documents. This was conveyed by a man who had hurried from the Central Committee. When I ordered the documents, I referenced Andropov's permission. The librarians immediately informed the Central Committee because the documents were embargoed. They likely asked someone at the highest level and — naturally — he forbade it. Thus, my last hope of obtaining written evidence for what I thought and what was discussed among Yugoslav communists in '37 and later was dashed.

Since my thesis was rejected and every access to primary sources was blocked, I lost interest in studying. Meanwhile, I tried to volunteer in Vietnam. Brezhnev was already the head of the Soviet Union. I wrote him a letter asking not to act like Khrushchev did when I wanted to go to Cuba. The Vietnamese wanted to accept me. Brezhnev replied that I could go as soon as I got a Vietnamese visa. However, when I went to the Vietnamese, they regretted to inform me that due to current circumstances, they couldn't accept my generous offer, although they were very grateful... Even Ho Chi Minh sent word, as they told me, that they couldn't accept me due to international obligations but that I would be the first to be called to Vietnam if the situation changed positively.

The Russians blocked that too. They completely blocked and disabled me. Still, I continued visiting some cities, meeting people, making arrangements, some came to Odessa, and I defended the Chinese and Albanian positions. Someone, as always, reported me, and I was summoned to the regional party committee and warned to stop. They were very bothered by the fact that I discussed my position with our émigrés

who were active officers of the Red Army. They threatened me with a special court.

By then, it was 1966. I had had enough. I couldn't stand staying in Odessa, writing some damn thesis and decided to go to the Yugoslav embassy! Even when I was in Moscow a year earlier, I received some signals from both the Russians and those from the embassy to get in touch with the Yugoslavs. It never crossed my mind then, but I noticed some strange things happening. At the 23rd Congress of the CPSU, a delegation from the LCY, led by Ranković, attended. On television, Brezhnev could be seen, and even more clearly how he briefly hugged Gomulka, then the General Secretary of the Polish Party, but very long and warmly embraced Ranković, who was only Tito's deputy. At that time, I was in a Moscow library, and a high Soviet party official supposedly found me there by chance. He greeted me warmly. I immediately started complaining about my treatment, and he responded, "Don't say that. The situation in Yugoslavia is changing now. We think Ranković is a very party-oriented man and that his arrival will change a lot in Yugoslavia."

At that time, Ranković held all the operational functions in Yugoslavia: Vice President of the Republic, head of the UDB, organizational secretary of the Party, even president of the Union of Veterans. He had all the power. Tito was undergoing some surgery, and this one was taking the helm. Based on all this and who knows what else, they concluded that Ranković was coming instead of Tito. I knew Ranković could have if he wanted to, but I told this Russian it wouldn't happen and even if it did, it wouldn't change my status because Ranković was just an executioner to me. He opposed this and advised me to get in touch with Ranković. A similar sign came from the embassy. Nebojša Grebenar, once my interrogator in Bileća, now a counsellor at our embassy in Mos-

cow, through my sister Danica, who had come to the USSR to visit me, hinted that he had received instructions from the highest Yugoslav authority to contact me.

Ranković was received in Moscow with the greatest pomp. I heard that Krste Crvenkovski, who attended everything, reported everything in detail to Tito upon his return, perhaps adding more, and Ranković was gone as if he never existed. Moreover, it was supposedly learned that a drunken UDB officer from our delegation's entourage had once told someone: "Now Ranković will come to power in Yugoslavia!"

Within the LCY leadership after 1960, two lines had formed. One led by Kardelj and the other by Ranković. Ranković was on the so-called dogmatic line, against the free market and all measures that could lead directly to the restoration of capitalism. He knew it would mean losing power. For a while, Tito sided with Ranković against Kardelj. Later, he sided with Kardelj against Ranković. What happened in Moscow was likely the drop that tipped the scales in Kardelj's favour. Tito, I suppose, feared that Ranković could take over power in Yugoslavia with Soviet help. Wiretapping was just an excuse to remove Ranković.

In the Soviet Union, I was completely blocked from any serious political work. All my attempts to leave the Soviet Union, through the embassy of some Western country or by going to Cuba or Vietnam, ended in failure. I saw that the Russians wouldn't let me go. The only way to leave the Soviet Union was to get a Yugoslav passport and leave with it. They couldn't prevent me from doing that because I was not a Soviet citizen but a Yugoslav citizen and an emigrant in the Soviet Union. Of course, I had no intention of returning to Yugoslavia. I knew what awaited me there after everything I had done. So, I decided to go to the embassy. I went with Branko Arsenijević.

By then, Ranković had already been politically liquidated. I ran into Grebenar. He, too, was removed from his position a month after my arrival, being associated with Ranković. I informed them that I had decided to return to Yugoslavia! They were shocked and even more so when they heard that I was asking for guarantees that no one would persecute me there because of my past political activities. They scheduled for me to come back in a month, early January 1967.

When I appeared at the appointed time, instead of the already retired Grebenar, I was greeted by someone named Krivokapić from Kotor, who gave me a written response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "You can return to Yugoslavia because you are still its citizen. We give you no guarantees. Immediately upon crossing the border, you will have to answer for your activities against Yugoslavia." I told Krivokapić: "If I knew they wouldn't sentence me to more than five years, I would go immediately. Since I don't know, I need to think about it." A few days later, I went back to our embassy and informed them that I accepted. I asked for a passport, but they only gave me a piece of paper with my photo — a pass valid only for travel to Yugoslavia. The Russians delayed the exit visa for more than a month, sending some people and some of my Russian friends to persuade me not to go because I would lose my life there. But finally, at my insistence, they said: "You're going to 100 per cent death, but since you're so insistent, go to hell!"

My sister Danica came to help me prepare. We left the Soviet Union and, since it was not allowed otherwise, we headed for Bucharest.

BLUE PASSPORT

From the very first moment, it never occurred to me to return to Yugoslavia. I just wanted to leave the Soviet Union and then somehow reach the West. Since I didn't get a Yugoslav passport, I had to go to Bucharest with that travel document. But I knew I couldn't miss this chance — the Romanians couldn't send me back to the Russians because I wasn't a Russian citizen, nor could they hand me over to the Yugoslavs without greatly offending the Russians.

In Bucharest, at the station, we were met by Tomić, a friend and Miletin's brother-in-law. He lived in Craiova as an emigrant. While we were having lunch in a restaurant, Markušev came by. We went to his place, talked and found ourselves with the same ideological position. In the evening, he took me to meet with Opojević. I waited on a bench while Markušev called him from the apartment. Opojević also shared my thoughts.

I spent almost two months in Bucharest and had some contacts with the Albanians, but it was clear to me that I had to go to the West. The closest option was the Belgian embassy. I went in, requested to speak with the ambassador, and the consul received me. I explained that I was a Yugoslav emigrant, had lived in the Soviet Union for a while, but had to leave because I disagreed with their policies. That unfortunate consul misunderstood and thought I was something like Đilas or a Russian dissident, took out a huge stamp and stamped the back of my travel document, even though it had long expired. I had an entry visa to Belgium, but I needed to get there. I couldn't travel by train through Hungary because I still didn't trust the Hungarians, and I didn't have the money for a plane. I needed about 130 dollars. Romanian money could be gathered, but dollars were nowhere to be found. I

had brought some valuable items from the Soviet Union: an expensive camera, a wristwatch and a large platinum ring, but I couldn't sell them for dollars. The visa was tourist and valid for three months. I had already spent a month looking for money. I remembered the Albanians and, as unpleasant as it was, went to their embassy to ask for money. The Albanians received me coldly, even though I had previously received a letter from their Central Committee recognizing me as a friend of the Albanian people. They gave me 2,000 leks and said they had to ask Tirana about dollars. Days passed, and they didn't get back to me. When I got tired of waiting for those 200 dollars, I went back to the Albanian embassy, asked for the ambassador and, when I didn't find him, sat down to talk with some advisor.

"What does this mean? I've always been honest and open with you. You don't have a greater friend in the world than me. I openly defended your positions even when I knew it could cost me my life. Medvedev even told me I brought my views to the Soviet Union 'along with that suitcase from Albania'..."

The next day, they gave me 200 dollars and didn't want to accept the leks I had prepared in return. I paid for the ticket and arrived at the Brussels airport with 70 dollars in my pocket. I knew no one and nothing. I took a taxi and asked the driver to take me to a cheap hotel. I paid the taxi driver 20 dollars, 10 for one night in a room without a bathroom, and I had 40 left. The only address I could turn to was the address of the Central Committee of the Belgian Communist Party. So I did. I bought their newspaper at a kiosk, saw the address and went there.

When I showed up, all they could do was give me the address of a cheap hotel where the room cost three instead of nine dollars, which I had paid for the room the taxi driver

had taken me to. You can imagine what kind of hotel it was. When I settled in and had only a few dollars left, I went back to them. I asked for help selling the things I had brought with me. I was afraid of being cheated. They did nothing, just looked at me and shrugged. I had been hungry for two days when I sold the only gold coin I had. Instead of 800, its value, I got only 83 francs. No one wanted to buy the two English fabrics, and I sold the camera to the hotel owner for 4,500 francs, instead of the 10,000 it was worth, and immediately paid for the hotel for a month in advance.

I went back to the Central Committee of the Belgian Communist Party and asked for help again. I told them my whole biography. They listened, but I saw they had no information about me yet. When I went back the second time, they sent a letter to the Albanian Party asking what to do with me. The response hadn't come yet, and being a small party, they were completely without influence and money, so they couldn't help me themselves. I wrote to some friends worldwide and to my grandmother in America. I was in such a situation that I didn't have even 10 francs to buy half a loaf of bread for 10 days. One day, I received a cheque for 300 dollars from my grandmother in America. I went to an American bank, and the clerk there said, "We have to verify the account." I went there every day for seven or eight days in a row. Nothing. One day in a café, I ran into a down-and-out sea captain, showed him the cheque, and he immediately told me it was valid and should have been cashed the first day. I went back to the bank and the clerk said the same thing again. I lost my temper: "Pay me this, you scoundrel, or I'll kill you like a dog right here!" He immediately gave me 15,000 francs for those 300 dollars. Meanwhile, a friend from Libya sent me 100 pounds, and another from France 10,000 French francs. I collected a total of 40,000 Belgian francs. With that, I could

live comfortably for a long time. First, I ate well because I was terribly starved and had lost weight. I hadn't eaten properly for weeks. Do you know how a person feels in a foreign country when they know no one and have no means?

The Belgian authorities interrogated me about 20 times asking, among other things, to confess how much I bribed the consul in Bucharest to get a visa. I was a man without a passport or other documents. The only thing I had was the stamp from the Belgian consulate in Bucharest on my long-expired travel document. As soon as I arrived in Brussels, I sought asylum in Belgium through the UN Commissariat for Refugees. I didn't get asylum, nor did the police give me residency. Without residency, you're nobody and nothing. You can't work and just wander the streets. Even if you find a degrading job, the employer exploits it and pays you several times less than the already miserable wage.

Little by little, the money ran out, and again, I had no money in my pocket. Someone even stole my last 8,000 francs. I think it was the hotel landlady... What kind of emigration? How could I connect when I didn't know anyone? There were Ustaše and Chetniks, but I was still their enemy. The Belgian Communist Party even told me to be careful because the Ustaše had publicly sentenced me to death through one of their newspapers. Somehow, they found out I was in Brussels. One Ustaša emigrant even wrote that I was sent as a Russian agent, the eyes and ears of Moscow in the NATO headquarters, and that I had killed the best Croatian sons...

In the Belgian state security, they openly told me I was a dangerous and undesirable person and had to leave Belgium immediately. They let me know they were watching me constantly and would disable me if I tried to do anything. The fines for employers hiring workers without proper papers were huge. Meanwhile, some members of the Belgian Communist

Party went on holiday to Albania and agreed with the Albanians to support me for a while on behalf of the Party of Labour of Albania. They gave me 10,000 francs a month for six months. They couldn't give more. I somehow managed to live on that, although it was very little for a decent life. At that time, a housemaid earned about 14,000 francs.

One day, they called me to the police and told me, "Your time is up. You must leave Belgium or you will be arrested and possibly handed over to the Yugoslavs." They said, "Go to France," and explained precisely where I could cross the border without any papers. A taxi driver took me to a town that was half-Belgian, half-French, I bought a box of cigars and I walked into France. I took a train to Paris and found someone who had been with me on Goli Otok.

I spent the night, and the next day I went to the police. As soon as they checked my papers, they arrested me. After an hour and a half, they took me to a luxurious office. There was the head of state security, the head for Europe, the head of the Yugoslav department and my file. I explained my case and said I had come to seek political asylum. I referred to French democratic traditions and so on. They said, "Your case is very complicated, but we will put it into the procedure. Come tomorrow to provide all necessary information, and we'll see."

I struggled with hunger in Paris for two months. I ate half a kilogram of rye bread and drank a litre of milk daily. When I managed to find someone who would give me a guarantee — there, you can't get a job without someone's guarantee — I found a degrading job and they extended my papers. Meanwhile, I began meeting and connecting with our emigrants, forming groups and convincing them of the need for revolutionary struggle. Yes, with economic emigrants. I formed several groups, propagated Marxism-Leninism, gave lectures and discussed various problems with them. And that was af-

ter 12 hours of work and three hours lost commuting to and from the construction site. I wanted to form an organization, start a newspaper, and use it to present our views and lay the foundation for forming a communist organization.

After six months in France, one day they called me to the police and told me the Minister of the Interior's decision — that I must leave France within 24 hours! I went back to Belgium, spent the night with an emigrant, and the next day reported to the Belgian headquarters of the company I worked for in France. I had done well there so they intended to recommend me to the Belgians. They did and even reported to the police that they had hired me. But as soon as the police realized who I was, they started chasing me. What could I do — I crossed illegally back into France and hid with some of my comrades. After some time, I went to Switzerland. In Geneva, I found a friend, who himself had a friend, a Slovene, married to a wealthy woman, well-off and able to help. And he did help — he found me a job in a furniture factory and the police approved my temporary residence. I earned about 1,000 Swiss francs. Good money if I didn't have to spend half on accommodation and breakfast.

Unfortunately, one day they called me from work to the police. When they take you from work, it's not a good sign. They told the factory director to pay me off. In the police station, everyone was polite, but they said:

"Mr. Dapčević, we cannot grant your asylum request. We asked Belgium and France why you were expelled and received a telex from the French minister, Mr. Marcellin, stating that you were never expelled and could return to France whenever you wish. This telex will serve as your temporary identification."

I listened, watched and wondered how a Minister of the Interior could lie so brazenly. They sent me to another police

station to sort out the formalities. I sat in a hallway, watching them bring in hippies, pushing and shoving them around. A door opened, a policeman came out, pointed at me and called me with his finger! I didn't move. When he saw I didn't respond to his finger, he came over and said:

"Please come here."

My suitcase stayed in the hallway. He led me to the fingerprinting department. When I realized what was happening, I started shouting and shoving them: "Shame on you, what are you doing? I'm not a criminal; I'll complain to the United Nations." Only then did they realize something was wrong. They called the cantonal police and immediately apologized, "Excuse us, please, sir. Sit down. The head of cantonal police will come shortly." He arrived in five minutes, apologizing from the door, took my suitcase, put me in a car and drove me to Basel, to the border.

At the border, he asked a French gendarmerie officer if he was aware of Mr. Dapčević's case, as he called me. The officer replied:

"Yes, I am."

"So everything is in order?"

"Yes, everything is in order."

The officer invited me inside. The Swiss bid me farewell, wished me a safe journey and left.

As soon as I entered a room, several of them drew guns and pointed them at me: "Hands up!" All bristling. I showed them the telex — it was worthless. They took everything from me, even stripped me to my underwear and shoes. When the police van arrived and two gendarmes tried to push me into the back behind the mesh, I resisted:

"I won't go there. I'm not a criminal; I fought for the French Resistance as I did for Yugoslavia. What you're doing is a disgrace."

One gendarme stopped, looked at me and said:

"I fought in the French Resistance too. We are comrades in arms."

He put me next to him in the front and sent the other gendarme to the back, behind the mesh. They took me to the Saint Louis gendarmerie barracks, about 15 kilometres from the border, and handed me over to a lieutenant colonel. When the man saw my telex and compared it with the completely opposite order they had, he realized something was wrong and really made an effort to clarify the situation. At one point, he came and said:

"Our government asked the Belgian government why you were not granted asylum in Belgium. The Belgian government replied that they had granted you asylum in August 1968 but couldn't deliver it because they didn't know your whereabouts. Based on that, the French government decided to send you to Belgium."

Imagine that. Those were blatant lies. I immediately saw it was a setup, and at the government level. I asked why they had to escort me with guards.

"Our authorities consider you a very dangerous person. Don't resist or get angry; we'll bind you and take you to the Belgian border."

Again, they handed me to the comrade from the Resistance and another gendarme, bound. As soon as we entered the train, he unbound me and began complaining about how, in France after the war, those who collaborated with the occupier advanced the most.

At the Belgian border, it was the same as at the French: "Hands up!" Binding, the police van and straight to some post. At the post, they sat me on a chair and tied me to it. They kept me tied to that chair for five hours, hungry and thirsty. They typed something and gave it to me to sign: "You

must leave Belgium within 48 hours!" They were making a farce with me. I refused to sign. But the lieutenant was adamant:

"You'll stay tied here until you sign this. I've been ordered to do so, and I will execute the order. Sign this, then go to Brussels. Within 48 hours, find those who gave me the order and argue with them."

That was a clever suggestion, and I immediately signed the paper. They gave me food, drink and a ride to the train station. They even bought my ticket. I arrived in Brussels around 11 a.m. and immediately went to a friend's place. He owned a cafe and had helped me a lot before. We immediately hired a lawyer who had already represented some people in the same situation. The lawyer managed to get me a month's stay extension. Then one day, after eight months — he told me this as I was leaving the house where I was staying — they informed me about my political asylum in Belgium. I received political asylum and Belgian citizenship in October or November 1969, after two and a half years of wandering and torment in the West.

In Belgium, I couldn't find a job, so I worked for a while as a labourer on the construction of an oil refinery in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, I quickly got sick there — working under terrible conditions, in wind, rain, at great height and cold — so I had to return to Brussels again. Then something very important happened to me.

I ate at the restaurant of my Yugoslav friend. A very respectable Belgian family came there at least once a week. Father, mother and daughter. The parents were already over 50 and the daughter was a little over 30. I sat at my table, close to theirs, and from there, quite clearly, although I didn't want to, I could hear their conversations. The father was a typical conservative, and the daughter always defended left-

wing orientation in their family debates. I never came into contact with them, but I must admit, I really liked the daughter's way of thinking.

Since they often saw me there, they became interested in who I was, especially the mother. My friend, the restaurant owner, told them everything he knew about me in great detail. It seems that the story pleased the mother and Micheline. One day, they invited my friend and his family to their house in the countryside. My friend insisted that I go as well. I resisted because they hadn't invited me, but he convinced me to go. We were there for lunch, sat in the garden all afternoon, talked... That's where my acquaintance with Micheline began. I liked her, but because of my situation, primarily financial, which is very important here, I didn't insist much on seeing her. Once, I sent her a postcard from France and she immediately told my friend.

She was very happy about it. The same evening I returned sick from Holland to Brussels, my friend, without asking me, called Micheline. She lived alone. Here, it is customary for a child to move out as soon as they finish their studies. He told her I had come and wanted to see her. She replied that she had already gone to bed, that it was late, and something else along those lines, but he insisted, "Get up, get dressed, take a taxi and come." Imagine, she came.

After that, we saw each other very often. After some time, she invited me to her apartment, and little by little, we grew close and fell in love. One day, she suggested that I move in with her.

We got married the following year, in 1970. When our child was about to be born, we agreed that I would give it a Yugoslav name if it were a boy, and she would give it a Belgian name if it were a girl. We had a baby girl. I was present at the birth. Micheline is very kind-hearted. Despite our agreement,

she knew I would be pleased if our daughter had a Yugoslav name. Here, it is customary to fill out a form immediately after the birth, list three names and take the form to the municipality. Half an hour after giving birth, Micheline asked me to write down 10 female names that could be pronounced here so she could choose three and put them on the form. She chose: Milena, Radmila and Ana. Our daughter is called Milena by her first name.

I had a roof over my head and intended to theoretically elaborate on everything I had gone through. I told you I had founded several groups in Paris. I maintained contacts with them and planned to start a newspaper and broader political work. However, it was clear to me that it would not be possible to publish a newspaper, a book or create an organization without financial support. So I decided to open one store first and then a chain of stores in places where our workers were, stores selling our food or similar foods. I managed to convince Micheline to give me the initial capital. She took a loan of 400,000 Belgian francs and gave it to me. No, she didn't know about my organization and political work. I told her I wanted to have my own means because I felt very uncomfortable depending on her. I even asked to work for her father, who had a company maintaining large and well-known Brussels buildings, but he refused. He didn't want his son-in-law to do such jobs.

With that money, Micheline and I opened a shop in Paris. I hired one of our workers, Prinčević, who had been on Goli Otok, and his wife to run the shop. And under very favourable conditions: they lived there for free, took food for free and had half of the net profit. However, as soon as I started it, the French and Yugoslav police, in cooperation, tried to destroy it. The French police often looked for me at the shop and even ordered the Prinčevićs to report when I showed up.

One day, I went to Paris. Of course, quite legally. By then, I had all the papers and a blue United Nations passport. I immediately realized that these two were stealing from me. And not only that. One evening, five policemen, led by the head of the French state security department for Europe, burst into the shop. And with guns in hand. I raised my hands, they searched me and informed me:

"You are arrested because you were expelled from France and crossed the border illegally."

They took me somewhere to the outskirts of Paris to one of those regional police stations. I explained to them that I had received a telex from the French Minister Marcellin in Switzerland suspending my previous expulsion. They thought I was lying, but they checked and found that what I said was true. However, the chief openly told me that there was something strange about it because they had orders to find, arrest and expel me from France at all costs. And that as a very dangerous person. I told him:

"I don't understand why you are persecuting me. I don't interfere in French affairs and hardly know any French people."

"We know that. But we also know that you are against Tito, and Tito is our friend. You are an enemy of our friend, therefore also our enemy. We will let you go if you promise to come to state security at 9 a.m. tomorrow."

"Okay, but take me back to where you arrested me."

He laughed and said:

"A man doesn't know how to behave towards you political emigrants. Before the war, I was head of a department in the police. I was ordered to find Giovanni Saragat at all costs because he was living illegally in Paris. As a socialist, he politically fought against Mussolini, and we tried to maintain the best relations with Mussolini. I didn't manage to find him

then because the Italians hid him well. However, just six or seven years after that, Saragat came to Paris. This time as the President of the Republic of Italy, and I had to engage 3,000 policemen to secure that same Saragat. Who knows, one day, I might be securing you in the same way."

They returned me to the shop and the next day I went to state security. The same policeman received me and said:

"It is true that there is the minister's telex. However, we consider you a very dangerous revolutionary, and the Minister of the Interior Marcellin has decided that you must immediately leave French territory and never return. If you come back again, you will be arrested."

I had to leave France, the shop failed — those two robbed it — and Micheline lost almost 600,000 Belgian francs. She later found out everything, but she never blamed me with a single word.

In Belgium, after that, I met with some Albanian students studying art and tried to work with them on the line of Marxism-Leninism. There were no Yugoslav workers here. If there were any, they worked on highways, far from Brussels. Those I did come into contact with were at such a low level that I didn't know where to start. They cursed Yugoslavia, socialism and communism... What could you explain to them then? Although those Albanian painters were just as disinterested. None of it interested them at all, and I quickly realized it was all futile. They mostly came out of respect for my age and past rather than any interest in Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, my connection with those groups in France was broken. All of it wasn't well established and fell apart.

Then one day, the son of Bogdan Jovović came from the Soviet Union. The Soviets, mainly Mileta, sent him to tell me that a new Communist Party of Yugoslavia was being formed. I didn't argue much with him — he wasn't on that level —

but I openly told him that I didn't like the whole thing, that it was easy for them in the Soviet Union, in complete safety, to put people in the fire, that it was nonsense — and I sent all this to Mileta.

Mileta later came to Paris himself, under the pretext of visiting his son. We met there, and he asked me to hand over my connections in Paris and France and connect him with people. I told him there was nothing to hand over, that we had tried something, but everything fell apart after my expulsion from France. He didn't believe me; he thought I was rejecting him for other reasons.

I disagreed with Mileta on two or three points. First, he believed Yugoslavia should be brought back into the socialist camp, while I was already convinced that camp no longer existed. Second, he justified the Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia, which I did not. Third, he claimed that the West would enter socialism through parliamentary means; I said that was nonsense. Fourth, I was absolutely against creating any new communist party groups in Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union. I even told him that the UDB surely knew everything he intended and that one day, while he sat safely in Kiev, they would round up all those people and send them to prison. We completely disagreed on their program. It was so outdated, like something that had to have been written before or during the war.

We had this conversation in 1973, and right after that, they made that foolishness with the Bar congress. You know how that ended. To make things worse, I had big problems because of it, despite being innocent. Even *Le Monde* involved me in the whole thing, and *Agence France-Presse* made a similar news item. I sent a rebuttal to *Le Monde,* and when I saw they didn't publish it, I went straight to Paris and demanded a meeting with the then-editor-in-chief, Fontaine. I explained

that I couldn't have created any pro-Soviet organization in Yugoslavia because I believed the Soviet leadership was pursuing the same revisionist policy as the Yugoslav leadership. They published my rebuttal.

Soon after, however, an interpellation against me was published in the main Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* by two socialist deputies in the Belgian parliament. The accusation was the same: "How can the Belgian government allow someone from Belgium to create an illegal pro-Soviet organization in Yugoslavia and lead a fight against Yugoslavia, our friendly country, from here on behalf of the Soviet Union?" The Minister of Justice defended me then. He said they were aware of my behaviour and that I had nothing to do with it. Another time, the same *Le Soir* published a statement by Stane Dolanc that I had organized everything with the assistance of Mileta Perović! That Stane Dolanc, as the chief Yugoslav policeman, knew perfectly well that I had nothing to do with it. I also rebutted that. I even added that Stane Dolanc was lying to make my life difficult with the Belgian authorities and in Belgium in general. They published everything.

KIDNAPPING

I maintained good relations with the group in Bucharest. We corresponded regularly and some of them visited me. I decided to visit them to exchange opinions on various matters.

I wrote to Bucharest that I would be coming and also informed a few comrades in the Soviet Union, Poland and Albania, inviting them to come to Bucharest if possible so we could meet and take a common stance on everything happening, including Mileta's Bar congress. Đoko Stojanović, my friend from France, joined me. He worked there as a labourer and independently aligned himself with the same political line. For a while, he was a member of the French Communist Party, but when he realized it too was on revisionist positions, he moved to Brussels, where he worked and lived with his wife and two children. The first evening after our arrival, we were invited to dinner at Đorđe Markušev's place. Aleksandar Opojević also came and immediately warned me that a relative of his wife, who worked in Romanian state security, had informed him that the UDB was planning to kidnap me and that I should be well-guarded, with three or four people always with me. He said the Romanian police would strictly ensure this wouldn't happen.

During those seven days, I didn't do anything special. I met with four or five comrades, walked with them in parks and we discussed various topics. None of those invited managed to come; they didn't get visas. However, two or three arrived two days after my kidnapping. When I realized there wouldn't be any broader meeting and discussion, I decided to shorten my stay and return to Brussels. On the last evening, Aleksandar Opojević invited us to dinner at his place. There were four of us: the host, Đorđe Markušević, Stojanović and me. From Opojević's place, I called Brussels and told Michel-

ine we would arrive in Brussels around 10 a.m. the next day. I asked her to meet us at the airport. Đoko also spoke with his wife, who was visiting Micheline that evening.

After dinner, while we were having coffee and chatting, Opojević's wife entered the room facing the street but soon opened the door and called Opojević. Their house was a large villa with several apartments surrounded by trees. When they left the room, I asked Opojević if there was a problem. He said there wasn't.

Later, I found out that Opojević's wife had noticed many people lurking around the back of the house among the trees and alerted Opojević. However, Opojević was convinced they were Romanian police officers protecting me.

Around 11 a.m., we headed to the hotel. As we left, we met his son, who was returning from somewhere. It was raining. A car passed by and Opojević stopped it. Opojević was the deputy director of a film distribution company, and this was his director's car, driven by the director's son. He agreed to take us to the hotel. Opojević sat beside him and the two of us sat in the back. We had already said goodbye to Markušević. As soon as we started, I noticed a white car following us. We turned into a side street — it followed; we turned back onto the main road — it followed again.

The Belgian embassy was very close, and for a moment, it occurred to me to drive up to the embassy and jump in. I didn't do it because I also thought we were being followed by Romanians. When we entered the "Derebenti" hotel, about 20 people were standing around the lifts. At the reception, our key was missing! I was already on edge. The situation couldn't have been more suspicious. Opojević said, "It's probably the Romanian police who searched your room and forgot to return the key." They gave us a spare key. I left the two of them in the middle of the hall and went to the reception to

schedule a wake-up call. When I turned around, they were gone. I wondered, "What the hell is this?" They were supposed to wait for me. I thought they had gone to our room to see what was going on. I followed them, although I had already decided to rush out of the hotel and run to the Belgian embassy. I got into the lift, and a bunch of those waiting by the lift came in after me. I pressed the button for the fifteenth floor — they didn't touch the buttons. No one said a word. They just looked at me and smiled. As soon as I stepped out of the lift and headed toward the room, a swarm of people descended on me. Blows rained down from all sides. Then I was hit in a way that made me start losing consciousness. As I was falling, I heard the death throes, the gurgling, of the two others.

I regained consciousness for the first time on the floor between the front and back seats of a car. My hands and feet were tied — I was like a package! One of them had a baton shoved deep into my mouth. I nearly suffocated. How don't you know? It's a short baton wrapped in gauze and is used to prevent you from yelling. This guy shoved it so brutally into my throat that the pain brought me to consciousness. When he took it out, it was soaked in blood. My throat was completely shredded. They took me to a villa surrounded by a garden. Later, I heard that they had held Imre Nagy there before executing him. Four of them carried me out of the car and up some stairs to a room. Through my eyelashes, I saw them carrying Stojanović and Opojević as well. First, they threw me on the floor, then one came over, lifted me, squeezed me between his legs and tightened the handcuffs so hard they were completely embedded in the bone of my hands. My nerve is still damaged from that.

They didn't say anything; they were very agitated and just moved around. Then a doctor with a stethoscope came, lis-

tened to my pulse and whispered something to one of them. They put me on the bed, loosened the handcuffs a bit and immobilized me from feet to hips. I couldn't move. I alternated between losing and regaining consciousness. They lifted me, carried me out the same way they brought me in and placed me in the middle of the back seat of a car, between two people. I was covered in blood. They had broken my teeth, cut my tongue, shredded my throat, broken my ribs and injured all my internal organs. I asked for water, thinking I would die of thirst. I kept falling to one side and then the other. They pushed me and eventually put a cloth over my mouth and nose. I completely lost consciousness. I woke up the next evening in Belgrade's Central Prison, in a basement cell.

The former head of Romanian state security, General Ion Pacepa, wrote a book called *Red Horizons* after defecting to the USA, describing my kidnapping. He claims that the Romanians handed me over to the Yugoslavs in that villa, about 15 kilometres from Bucharest. However, he wrote that the agreement to kidnap me was reached personally by Tito and Ceausescu during Ceausescu's visit to Brijuni. I don't believe that. First, state leaders never make such agreements. Such matters are handled by police chiefs with political approval. Second, I don't think Ceausescu was involved. After the incident, he cancelled a scheduled visit to Yugoslavia and dismissed the head of the Bucharest police and the Minister of the Interior.

I was severely injured and placed in the prison hospital. They emptied an entire wing for me. A UDB officer constantly sat by my side. They treated me extensively, took me for X-rays and braced my ribs — incorrectly. They healed crookedly. I spent a month and a half in the hospital, and when I recovered, they transferred me to a military prison on Ustanička Street in Voždovac. The entire third floor was

mine. The interrogation began the next day. The first to come were the head of Yugoslav state security, Ćetković, and his two deputies — Đerković and Jovanović. They knew everything about me. There was absolutely nothing new I could tell them. I was kidnapped on August 8, 1975 and handed over to the court on December 22 of the same year.

I immediately clashed with the investigating judge and prosecutor. They wanted me to sign that I was arrested when handed over to the court, not when I was kidnapped. The investigating judge was polite. He introduced himself as an investigating judge of the District Court in Belgrade, while the prosecutor shouted:

"We are treating you well, but we can change our tune!"

So I had to tell him:

"Why are you yelling, you brute!"

When they asked me to name a lawyer, I said I didn't know. It took guts to agree to be my lawyer. I asked them to inform my sister Danica and brother Milutin and authorized them to choose a lawyer. The only one brave enough to take the case was Jovan Barović, who died in a traffic accident shortly after.

For almost a month, they didn't allow me to meet with my lawyer. I had to go on a hunger strike. On the seventh day of the strike, the warden of the Central Prison — where I was transferred again — came with the investigating judge. I was in a death row cell, the same one where that terrorist Hrkač was held. The warden promised I would meet with my lawyer if I ended the hunger strike. Barović was doing everything to meet with me but couldn't succeed. They didn't even allow him to see the investigative material. We met after the warden's promise. A week before the trial, Barović and I were called, and they claimed that I had tried to overthrow the working-class government in Yugoslavia by force, that I

had given Macedonia to Bulgaria (as if I were selling tobacco and Macedonia was just a pack of cigarettes!), and Kosovo to Albania, and that I wanted to put Yugoslavia under the dominance of a major foreign power!

It was all worse than the worst. Each of these charges individually carried the death penalty. What was most troubling was that none of these issues were mentioned during the interrogation, so I realized something fundamental had changed. I naturally rejected everything as sheer nonsense and even told them they knew well it was all pure absurdity. All I had done was fiercely oppose the revisionist policies of the country's leadership and connect with those who believed those policies needed to change. Thus, it was about my relationship with the leadership's policies, not my country.

They handed me the indictment only two days before the trial. I agreed with the lawyers — Barović had also enlisted a lawyer named Kovačević — that they would defend me solely on legal grounds, as I was kidnapped as a Belgian citizen on foreign soil and forcibly brought to Yugoslavia. I prepared my political defence myself. When I entered the courtroom, I noticed Micheline, Milutin, quite an audience and journalists. Danica had already passed away, dying four or five months after my kidnapping. Barović told me, as he often saw her, that she simply died of grief. However, at the start of the trial, the judge declared the proceedings secret. He mentioned state secrets and similar matters. I stood up and started shouting that it was an outright lie, that there were no secrets regarding me, that my political activity was public, that I was kidnapped as a Belgian citizen in Bucharest and forcibly brought to Yugoslavia, that I was nearly fatally injured in the process, that this severely violated international norms and Yugoslav laws which criminalize kidnapping as a serious offence, and that this was just a blatant political show trial...

Nothing helped. The judge cleared the courtroom. They didn't allow Micheline or Milutin to attend the trial. It was a farce. I proposed about 30 witnesses to testify. None lived more than a few kilometres from the courthouse. None were called. Instead, they brought convicted Cominformist prisoners from jail as prosecution witnesses, a Paris-based agent of theirs and Lale Ivanović, who had been with me in the Soviet Union, and his wife.

The lawyers and I insisted on establishing where I had been for the four and a half months from August 8 to December 22. They claimed I was arrested in the act of hostile activity on Yugoslav territory on December 22. The presiding judge rejected all of this, saying it was irrelevant. Imagine, it was irrelevant! I even asked him, "Would it be irrelevant if you were imprisoned for four and a half months?" When those who had been with me in Albania, the USSR and France testified, the lawyers asked that their statements, which contradicted parts of the indictment, be entered into the record. The presiding judge refused this as well. The lawyer Kovačević even told him: "What kind of court is this? You refuse to enter anything into the record that serves our client's defence but include nonsense that has nothing to do with reality and that no sane person could believe."

The trial lasted five or six days. They kept me there all day, not giving me anything to eat. When it came time to announce the verdict, I refused to enter the courtroom until the public was allowed in.

"Vladimir Dapčević is sentenced to death!"

Before that, they read the explanation of the verdict, which was nothing but a verbatim copy of the indictment, only to say at the end that the death penalty was commuted to 20 years of imprisonment due to my age, family situation and participation in the National Liberation War.

I served time in Požarevac's "Zabela" prison, as you saw. I intended to request a transfer to the prison in Sremska Mitrovica, to the section for foreigners. The conditions there are incomparably better. In general, "Mitrovica" is far better for inmates, especially political ones, than "Zabela."

"Zabela" is one of the worst prisons in Yugoslavia. Maybe only "Niš" is worse. Inmates told me so. After all, you saw the difference between the conditions in "Zabela" and those in Slovenian prisons. They can't even be compared.

I was temporarily sent there but ended up staying until the end. During the kidnapping, they broke my teeth and I had nothing to eat with. The five stubs I had left were unusable and they just cut my tongue. In the Belgrade Central Prison, I requested dentures. They said, "We don't have a dental clinic. The only proper one is in 'Zabela.' An excellent dentist, Dr. Ćirić, works there." Dr. Ćirić really did the impossible. On those five stubs, he made a bridge, which I still wear today. Unfortunately, he died of a heart attack, but he was one of the best dentists in Yugoslavia. He tried his hardest. He was a tall, handsome man, and he knew me from when he was a military student. I had given them lectures after the war.

My prison days in "Zabela" were mostly uneventful. They didn't harass, insult, beat or humiliate me. They must have been ordered from above. Although they saw me as the greatest enemy of the state, they fulfilled some of my small requests, treated me when I was ill, and allowed Micheline and Milena to visit me. I asked to be alone in my cell, which they granted. From the first day, I refused to work, and they didn't punish me for it, even though every inmate is required to work. Anyone who refuses is sent to solitary confinement. I read constantly. First, 12 hours a day, and when my eyes weakened, 10 hours. In the meantime, they reduced my sentence to 15 years.

The biggest event during all that time was your and Kalezić's visit. Honestly, I still don't understand how you managed to get to me and what was behind it. For all those years, they kept me in that hell — you saw: it's a prison within a prison — precisely because they wanted me completely isolated, for no one to know about me, as if I didn't exist.

Of course, I had to fight for such treatment and every little thing from the first day. For example, after the quarantine — when an inmate arrives, they first spend some time in quarantine — they placed me in a cell with three criminals. Four of us lived in 10 square metres. Life was impossible. First, they were informers — the administration put them with me to report on me. Second, one of them — he had butchered his wife and severely disabled his son — made my life unbearable with constant provocations and threats. I went on a hunger strike, and only on the seventh day did they agree to move the three to another cell.

During my entire stay in "Zabela," not counting the orderlies and canteen workers, I only interacted with Bata Todorović. He was in the cell next to mine and we often talked unless we had a fight. He was a cultured man, had completed two degrees and travelled the world, but his views were 100 per cent bourgeois and opposite to mine. He didn't hide his hatred for socialism. At the same time, he tried his hardest to get out of prison and feared that associating with me might harm him. He sucked up to the guards and occasionally said something nasty to me. I would then send him off in colourful language... After such fights, we wouldn't speak for a year. In the end, his sentence was commuted. He had cancer, didn't know it and was sent home. His condition worsened and he was taken to the hospital. When he was already in a coma, they brought an act of pardon. He died that day.

He too had been kidnapped but in Italy. The Italian mafia

kidnapped him and illegally handed him over to the Yugoslav police at the border. He was first held in Ljubljana for a while, then transferred to Belgrade. He told me his kidnapping was part of the then-existing conflicts and rivalries between Serbia and Slovenia.

I was held for nearly 12 years, including the 14 months in pre-trial detention, from the kidnapping in Bucharest in August 1975 to my release from prison in June 1988 — it was 13 years minus two months. They released me due to serious interventions by the Belgian government, and following immense efforts by Micheline for all 13 years. It got to the point where the Belgian government didn't grant approval to the new Yugoslav ambassador to Belgium for several months. They even indirectly hinted to the Yugoslav authorities that diplomatic relations might be severed if I wasn't released. I am a Belgian citizen, and such a stern intervention was triggered by the Yugoslav authorities' failure to honour a formal promise made to the Belgian ambassador. According to that promise, I was to be released a year and a half earlier.

Two days before my release, a high-ranking Yugoslav state security official visited me. He didn't say I would be released but asked if I would take a Yugoslav passport and if I would be loyal once released. I replied that it takes at least two for love or hate and that my behaviour would depend on theirs toward me.

"If you send provocateurs and play tricks as before, I will retaliate in kind. Let's be clear."

He responded that they still needed to know what I was doing there.

I told him:

"With what right do you ask me to be loyal when you admit you won't be loyal to me and will send agents?"

"If you are released, I hope you will express gratitude to

the Presidency of the SFRY."

"For what? For keeping me in various prisons in this new Yugoslavia for twenty-one years and two months? For beating, torturing and humiliating me in ways perhaps no other person on earth has suffered? Should I thank you for ruining this country with the help of those around you? How can you even say that to me?"

He fell silent.

On the last evening, around 10 p.m., the commanders of the entire prison guard and Slavko entered my cell. You remember him. He finished seminary and then became a prison guard. You interviewed him. They searched and took away my belongings. In the morning, Slavko and two guards took me to the administration. I changed clothes and Slavko told me, "Your wife has arrived. She is outside." She had come with the Belgian embassy advisor. While in that room, two or three people, including Commander Spasić and a dental technician, came to say goodbye. Then they took me to Marko Sovilj, the deputy warden. He handed me my passport. Warden Tadeić, if Sovilj hadn't called him, wouldn't have come to say goodbye, I believe. He was probably still angry about the incident with you. We had coffee, said our farewells, and Slavko led me outside.

Micheline was standing outside.

We drove to Belgrade in the Belgian ambassador's car, straight to the Belgian embassy. The ambassador greeted me, visibly terrified. He pleaded with me not to leave the embassy until the flight to Brussels. However, Micheline had already told me that my brother Milutin was seriously ill, and I knew I had to see him. I barely convinced the ambassador. It helped that they wanted to give me a Belgian passport immediately, but I didn't have any photos. So, I had to go with the advisor to Terazije, to the "Bezistan," to use the photo booth. The

booth wasn't working, and neither was the next one or the next... so I ended up wandering around Belgrade and managed to see some parts of it for the first time in 30 years. I didn't get my photos because none of the booths worked.

I firmly insisted on seeing Milutin and they relented, but only if I travelled in the ambassador's car with the advisor and Micheline. I talked with Milutin and his family for half an hour. We returned to the embassy, had something to eat — I even joked a bit, and the ambassador eventually relaxed and warmed up — and then we headed to the airport. The advisor accompanied us until we boarded the plane.

From all this, I realized that the Belgians had promised the Yugoslav authorities that I would go nowhere, have no contact with anyone and take the first flight to Belgium.

No, I haven't returned to Yugoslavia since. Not even when Milutin died. Micheline is too scared, and I was also advised here not to go without guarantees that nothing would happen to me there.

Of course, I want to see it. Yugoslavia is my country, regardless of political agreements or disagreements with its leadership. History will show who was right. I suffer for all her troubles today and am deeply saddened by what is happening and that what I invested a good part of my life in is crumbling, with the risk of total collapse. What pains me the most is not being able to visit Ljubotinj and see the graves of my relatives... No one directly forbade me, but from the behaviour of the Belgian ambassador, it was clear that I am not welcome in Yugoslavia. That's why he was so terrified when I insisted on seeing Milutin. If it were otherwise, I would have stayed in Belgrade for a few days and then gone to Belgium.

I AM TIRED

So, I've told you almost my entire life story. Truthfully, in a very short amount of time. So short that it was very difficult for me to precisely formulate my thoughts, which means that someone who isn't familiar with all these events might even get the wrong impression of me, my political activities and everything I've talked about. This is especially true since what you've heard is only a rough overview of what I've actually been through and survived. To understand all my activities and, as some might see it, my unbelievable and foolish stubbornness, this continuous opposition to everyone and everything — some might even think I was a kind of madman or something — I want to say at the end that my actions were, after all, rational and always based on my ideological and political beliefs. Throughout my life, I've strived to remain consistent with what I believed in, regardless of the consequences for me.

I was first shaped in my family. It was one of those typical Montenegrin families with a patriarchal way of life and patriarchal values. There, I simply absorbed, imbibed all the basic patriarchal values: honesty, bravery, the willingness to help someone in need, a sense of personal dignity and its defence at all costs — under the motto "everything for honour, and honour for nothing in the world." These values I acquired in my family and the environment I lived in merged with the idea of communism and its basic values and principles. Since I joined the Communist Party at a young age, at 16, all this was connected with direct revolutionary work. As I understood and became absolutely convinced that the victory of the idea of communism was the only way for humanity to free itself from exploitation, oppression, egoism and all the flaws that class society brings, I adopted communism as an idea

and felt it was my duty to invest all my strength and abilities in the struggle to implement this idea, without yielding to any dangers or difficulties.

Even before the war, in the full sense of the word, I became a Marxist-Leninist, a revolutionary — in both theory and practice. Participating in actions, I felt it my duty to act as expressed in a verse by Mažuranić:

What a good shepherd speaks to others,
he confirms with his own actions.

Therefore, I took on the most difficult and dangerous tasks myself. I considered it immoral to call others to fight, battle, demonstrations, confrontations with the police and clashes with the Ljotićites, without first showing them by example. This led to all my battles, injuries, arrests, fights with police chiefs, policemen... even though I was always aware that the consequences would be 10 times worse for me. In all these things, ultimately, I was defending my human and personal dignity based on the values I mentioned, values that had been developed over centuries in Montenegro. Once, when I was called to the administration for a conversation in Bileća, I told Mijović, the deputy warden, exactly that: "I'm doing nothing here but defending my personal dignity."

I've told you a lot about Goli Otok. From all those details, you could understand what happened on that island, but I haven't told you the main thing. During the former Yugoslavia, I went through many prisons, experiencing terrible beatings, nearly to death, and various tortures, but all that was relatively short-lived, and things were clear: who your main enemy was and that they were doing it to maintain their power. From what I told you about 1948, my dilemmas and views, you could see that I did not see my comrades at that time as

enemies but rather as comrades making mistakes for some reasons and needed to be pressured to change their stance. I had no other ambitions at that time.

It was only on Goli Otok that all my illusions were shattered. Initially, I couldn't understand what was happening. In Gradiška, I thought that everything they were doing to us was done by Ustaše. Because these were methods that should never be used against anyone. They were so inhuman, so sadistic and so horrific that they simply cannot be described. There is no justification in the world for doing that to anyone ever again. On Goli Otok, I realized that they had completely crossed to the other side of the barricade and, like all renegades, were taking the most vicious revenge on their former comrades.

Those comrades of mine, some I knew well even before the war, initially had to drink booze just to be able to torture us like that. I remember that Šašić, Janeković and their company drank brandy from those large water glasses. Later, they got used to it, and those crimes even began to give them satisfaction.

On the other hand, all that they did to us, I believe, was the result of their terrible fear. A double fear. Fear of losing power through Soviet army intervention or rebellion in the country, and having to answer for the crimes they committed against their own comrades. And the fear of their internal split. Like someone who kills their own father. Because, for them, the break with Stalin and the international communist movement was exactly that. These fears turned into rage, which they unleashed on us in a way that no one on this earth has ever done. Such torture didn't exist in German concentration camps, in Soviet camps, in American camps in Korea or French camps in Algeria... Nowhere.

Imagine, with that perfidious breaking of people, they

forced some prisoners to become executioners, to hunt, torture, beat and humiliate their own comrades. They implemented an unprecedented and historically unrecorded internal terror in the prison. On Goli Otok, the most terrifying thing wasn't the daily beatings, the hunger, the thirst, the torturous labour or the lack of sleep... Although each of these things was terrifying in itself. The most terrifying thing on Goli Otok was the atmosphere. It's impossible to explain to you today. An atmosphere of horror that was constantly felt in the air.

In that atmosphere of horror, I concluded that one must fight to the death against those who commit such crimes. There could be no more conversation between me and that leadership. We were mortal enemies. Especially since my investigator Zlatić — who helped me as much as he could, even telling me when someone ratted me out — once openly said to me: "When it comes to you and three or four other people here, we absolutely do nothing without strict orders from the very top."

After all that, could my feeling be anything other than a feeling of hatred and revenge?

That, along with the realization that the highest Yugoslav leadership had switched sides to save their power, betraying the communist idea, determined the rest of my life. I embarked on the battle in the most difficult conditions and circumstances.

Naturally, I had to pay for it. Everything I did from leaving Goli Otok to being kidnapped in Romania was based on those two things.

Before I tell you how I view all my political activities in exile today, I need to return to 1948 for a moment. There has been so much ink spilled about 1948 in Yugoslavia. You know what was written. And it's still being written today.

That "historic NO" to Stalin was exalted as the greatest event in contemporary Yugoslav history, as the defence of Yugoslavia's independence, and the huge role of Yugoslavia in what later happened in Eastern European countries and even in the Soviet Union, leading to what is happening now in those countries.

Alongside this, those of us who sided with the Cominform Resolution in 1948, meaning that Yugoslavia should stay in the socialist camp, have been vilified and spat upon to this day in the worst ways: traitors, Stalin's servants, sell-outs, bandits, NKVD agents... They also gave us the name "Cominformists," presenting us as the greatest enemies of our people. They did this for years, day after day, and never gave us, the other side, even the slightest opportunity to tell the truth. That's why people accepted it as it was. I'm not surprised you have such a view on all that.

Therefore, I want to say that it is impossible to judge 1948 today without considering the specific situation in the country at that time and, since it was a conflict among communists, without viewing and measuring the entire matter with communist principles and criteria. The question is: who adhered to those communist principles and criteria, and who didn't?

The bourgeoisie imposed nationalism on its world. In contrast, we communists established internationalism as a fundamental ideological stance. The idea of communism and internationalism are inseparable. One without the other is unimaginable. Therefore, we had to choose: either bourgeois nationalism or communist and proletarian internationalism. There was no third option.

At that time, the world was completely divided into two parts: the world of socialism and the world of imperialism and capitalism. Two hegemons had emerged: America, as the main hegemon in the world of imperialism, and the Soviet

Union, as the main force in the world of socialism. In many European countries, it was still unclear who would prevail. In Romania, there was still a king, in Hungary, a party of smallholders together with the communists, in Czechoslovakia, Beneš and the bourgeois democrats, and similarly in Poland. The Cold War had begun, which could turn into a real war at any moment. In such a situation, any weakening on any part of the imperialist front meant strengthening the forces of socialism, and vice versa, any weakening of the socialist front meant strengthening the forces of imperialism.

1948 came. From all my doubts, dilemmas and reflections, one thing crystallized as fundamental. I didn't care about individual sentences in those letters and resolutions. What mattered to me was only one thing: whether we would go with the Soviet Union, the socialist camp and the international communist movement against imperialism, or whether we would, whether we liked it or not, go with imperialism against the Soviet Union and the international communist movement? It was clear to me that socialism in Yugoslavia was doomed if we took the latter path. There was no third way. That's what I think even today, 41 years later.

I perceived our leadership's decision, as I already told you, as a departure from the fundamental principles of internationalism and a shift towards bourgeois nationalism. In a recent interview with *Pobjeda,* Đilas admits that in 1948 we abandoned internationalism once and for all and that our greatest contribution to what is happening now is that we destroyed internationalism. So, Đilas, one of the four leaders at that time, confirms my thesis.

Thus, we Yugoslav communists in 1948 were divided into those who remained faithful to internationalism and were ready to pay any price for it, and those who switched to the positions of bourgeois nationalism, emphasizing the alleged

national threat to the country, although no one was threatening it then. If there were any plans for troop entry into Yugoslavia, their goal was not to change Yugoslav borders but to overthrow the then-leadership because of its anti-socialist policies. Đilas confirms this too by quoting a Hungarian general.

Those of us who remained faithful to the communist principle of internationalism at that time were declared traitors, while those who genuinely betrayed this fundamental communist principle were declared heroes. However, I never, not for a moment, felt that I had betrayed anything or anyone. On the contrary, I was always proud to have remained consistent with internationalism, despite everything I experienced because of it. All my subsequent activities were primarily guided by this. Because of internationalism, I even fought in the Soviet Union.

After the war, while I was a commissioner of Yugoslav artillery, I had significant disagreements with the Russians. There were many of their advisors in artillery then. Especially over drinking and their demands that did not correspond to our capabilities. Once, I even went to General Barskov, the head of all Soviet advisors with us, to complain about the behaviour of some of their advisors. They got drunk, got some of our officers drunk and caused a scandal. I told him they should not allow individuals to compromise the Red Army and should behave according to the moral and other norms of the country they were in.

There were more such examples, and sometimes I had serious criticisms of the behaviour of the Russian advisors, although I felt and accepted them as my own, as comrades and brothers. Then I first questioned what was happening and why they behaved like that. We all viewed the Soviet Union as something ideal. In our army, for instance, it was

unimaginable for a general to get drunk the way General Ivanov, the head of Soviet advisors in our artillery, did. But I didn't give much importance to my initial disappointments. I found reasons to justify them.

On Goli Otok, I was carrying a large log with Remza Durartović when two investigators, Levkov and another, passed by, and Levkov shouted:

"Vlado, the Russians are coming to us! They are coming to us!"

It wasn't pleasant for me, but I replied:

"That's good. First for you, then for us!"

In the afternoon, we were lined up in Žica and they broadcast Khrushchev's arrival at the airport over loudspeakers. The first thing Khrushchev said was that they were wrong, that Beria stirred it all up and similar, and "that they apologize...!" The prisoners, who had endured so much suffering and beatings because of what this one was apologizing for, couldn't believe the General Secretary of the Soviet Party was admitting that Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were right. People were devastated. They came to me in desperation and asked, "What is this, Vlado?" I told them it was a temporary phenomenon and that it was simply impossible for it to last, even though it was one of the most painful moments for me.

Then came the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the secret speech and the most severe attack on Stalin and 1948. I experienced that congress as a temporary victory of revisionism in the Soviet Party. I considered it opportunist, revisionist and, ultimately, counter-revolutionary.

The first thing that shocked me when we arrived in the Soviet Union was that people kept approaching us on the street, offering some business, trade and smuggling. After about 15 days, someone even robbed us. Once, we watched as some hooligans attacked and beat a major of the militia

in the middle of the street! Later, as I told you, I saw that there was a terrible level of corruption there. It had penetrated every pore of society. Even Khrushchev once admitted this in a circular and warned that it had reached such proportions that it threatened the system's survival. Theft and waste were everywhere. I asked people if it was like this during Stalin's time. Everyone assured me that during Stalin's time, this didn't happen. They said there were no social differences either. Everyone was equal.

Watching all this, I concluded that Soviet society had entered a phase of bureaucratization in which the bureaucracy had turned all of society's property into its private ownership. And of a feudal type of bureaucratization. They really lived like feudal lords. Those party leaders, ministers, marshals and the like had, for example, enormous villas for holidays, complete with staff, which they didn't visit for five years. The staff was paid, the villas stood empty, though they could have hosted 500 or 600 guests annually if converted into hotels.

It was evident that the Soviet leadership had also abandoned the basic principles of socialism, started living like the bourgeoisie, adopting bourgeois ideology and was heading towards the restoration of capitalism. Here's what, for instance, a rector of a Soviet university had. He had a salary of 2,000 rubles (together with his wife), a five-room apartment in the city, a villa — a former mansion on the seashore with a large park, a small boat, his own car and a state car with a driver. His driver, who told me all this, had a tubercular wife, three children, a salary of 80 rubles and lived in a basement. Once he said to me:

"What kind of 'comrades' are we, him and me? Either he's not a 'comrade,' with all that, or I'm not a 'comrade,' with all this I endure. Probably neither of us is a 'comrade.'"

I understood that in the Soviet Union, what Lenin had

predicted in an article had happened. He asked whether it was possible to restore capitalism during socialism and answered affirmatively. He wrote that it was possible in two ways. First, by the unification of the capitalists and the violent overthrow of proletarian power. Second, by the bureaucratization and bourgeoisification of the Party and state apparatus. In the latter case, counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism come from above, from within the apparatus itself. This is what I witnessed in the Soviet Union.

Despite all the foolishness Khrushchev did — creating those *sovnarkhozy*, planting corn in the north and similar — he wanted to go further. However, he faced fierce resistance from the masses. There were demonstrations, even casualties. The situation was almost revolutionary, and he retreated.

Brezhnev's rise to power gave hope for changes in internal relations and foreign policy, especially in policy towards the Chinese, as there had been a total break. We political emigrants also hoped that things would take a different course. However, it turned out that the Party of Labour of Albania was the most realistic in its assessment. It immediately judged that it was Khrushchevism without Khrushchev and that one could expect even worse bureaucratism and greater deviations from Marxism-Leninism.

And that's what happened. The state and Party apparatus completely separated from the people and became materially wealthy. The same happened with the intelligentsia, artists, writers... For one book, due to its enormous print runs, one could earn up to 1,000,000 rubles. They couldn't spend that in their lifetime. The average salary was 100 rubles, and with it, a family could live decently.

You ask why everything that happened in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union didn't shake my basic Marxist-Leninist position. It simply didn't. Not in the least. I saw all this as a

new battlefield. Then and now, I consider the theory of Marxism-Leninism scientifically correct. I concluded early on that the fundamental contradiction of socialism and its first epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the contradiction between the new social relations and the old consciousness. I saw what I witnessed as a struggle between those new relations and the old consciousness...

Okay, the latter won — temporarily. Let's be clear, if an idea is scientifically grounded, it cannot be destroyed. Policies of certain people can fail, but the idea remains. The communist idea provides answers to fundamental problems of class society, to the issues of relations between the exploited and the exploiters. As long as there are exploiters and exploited, as long as there are rich and poor, the communist idea will remain as the only way and direction to solve that problem.

What happened and is happening in the Eastern countries is a normal consequence of what happened in the Soviet Union, just as what happened in those countries during Khrushchev's time was a consequence of his policy then. And Khrushchev brought his cadres to power in all those countries. He only failed to do so in two countries: Romania and Albania. When what is now happening in the Soviet Union occurred, it was only a matter of time before the same happened in other Eastern European countries. Gorbachev has 300,000 troops in East Germany, about 80,000 in Poland, about 60,000 in Czechoslovakia, about 30,000 in Hungary, and it was not difficult for him to use them and his current policy to force Honecker, Zhivkov and Husak to step down. He simply ordered Zhivkov's removal. This is openly written about in the West.

You see how these connections work. The countries that managed to separate from the Soviet Union — Albania and, to some extent, Romania — and developed independently,

managed to resist such Soviet policies...

I don't understand what you're talking about. I didn't say that these two countries are proof of achieving the communist idea but that their independence and self-reliance in relation to the Soviet Union managed to protect them from the penetration of revisionist ideas. Their parties didn't submit to the policies of Khrushchev, Brezhnev and all those who followed, up to Gorbachev.

I know less about Romania and don't want to be subjective about its policy because of what happened to me in Bucharest, but I must say that Romania has several things, broadly speaking, that are quite in order. First, complete collectivization. If socialism wins in the city but not in the countryside, socialism in the city must collapse. The classics of Marxism have argued this. Because small-scale production every hour, every minute, produces the bourgeoisie, and that on a massive scale. Second, socialism cannot be built with capitalist means. Third, it remains true that socialism cannot be built without a leading Marxist-Leninist party.

I know Albania well. It's a small country, and in the two years I spent there, I almost completely toured it. I saw it, talked to people and observed it critically. The policy of the Party of Labour of Albania left the best impression on me. I consider that of all the parties in the socialist countries, it leads the most consistent Marxist-Leninist policy. Of course, it's laughable to expect life in Albania to be like in Switzerland. Just 40 years ago, it was the poorest country in Europe, with 90 per cent illiterate, without industry, without railways, practically without anything.

In Albania, complete collectivization was also carried out, and complete social ownership of the means of production was achieved. Secondly, wage differences in Albania are the smallest in the world. The ratio between the lowest and the

highest is one to two. Thirdly, the Albanians invested huge resources in educating people because they rightly considered it one of the foundations for the progress of socialism in general. Already by '59 and '60, when I was there, there wasn't a single person under 40 who was illiterate in Albania. Fourth, they retained all the positive values of patriarchal morality and united them with the new socialist morality.

In 1945, Albania was at a much lower economic, cultural, industrial and every other level than Yugoslavia. Take the well-known general indicators and compare Albania and Yugoslavia today. You'll get devastating results for Yugoslavia. The difference in favour of Albania is the result of their system and their policy...

No, I'm not offering the Romanian or Albanian system as a model for implementing Marxist-Leninist ideas. You can't offer one system for all countries. But I'm talking about the fact that the wisdom of leadership is finding the best form in which a country will most quickly and with the least difficulties build socialism. I believe the Albanians have found the best form for their country. Today, I admire no one as much as the Party of Labour of Albania. I say this fully aware that many will not agree with me.

Failed? How? That's not true. Neither has the Marxist-Leninist idea failed in the Eastern European countries, nor have I ever been deluded about it. True, opportunist, revisionist and counter-revolutionary elements in some of those countries have temporarily taken power, but it should be clear to you that only now is the field being cleared for the battle. I have no doubt that the genuine, not the apparent, Marxist-Leninist idea and practice will prevail. It will prevail in Russia and all these countries despite this temporary retreat. This retreat will make it clear to the masses where this right-wing and opportunist policy leads. And the masses will rise.

Somewhere sooner, somewhere later, but they will rise.

The battle is just beginning. I believe that this jubilation that the world bourgeoisie doesn't even hide today, especially its representatives Mitterrand, Bush, Thatcher and others, is a bit premature. Class struggle will continue. In class struggle, as in any struggle, sometimes you lose, sometimes you win. We have been losing to the advance of revisionism for some time. It's time we start winning.

Look at these two centuries since the French Revolution. We've constantly had the alternation of revolutionary tides and the rise of reaction. This alternated constantly, one after the other, up to the present day. What's happening today, in my deep conviction, is a temporary decline that will ultimately turn out well. It will mobilize the masses in the fight for real socialism, against bureaucratic and revisionist socialism because both are not true socialism. Both are half-capitalism, even worse than capitalism.

Me? I won't participate in that battle anymore, unfortunately. I regret even agreeing to this conversation. I doubt that all these battles of mine will interest anyone today. I am an old man, tired, tormented as no living person on this earth has been tormented. I told you that I spent a total of 24 years in prisons in Tito's and the former Yugoslavia. I was in the war for four years, wounded four times in it.

I spent 20 hard years in exile. Add it all up, and you'll see that I've been in active political struggle for over 56 years, and out of that, I spent 48 in prisons, war and exile.

Now I have no more strength, I have a family, and, worst of all, I'm in poor health. Very poor. Now I can only follow things and get upset about what's happening in Yugoslavia. Because for us who built Yugoslavia through blood, through suffering, in the most terrible conditions, that Yugoslavia is something entirely different from what it is for you who re-

ceived it ready-made. No matter how it is. In the most literal sense of the word, we put a part of ourselves into that Yugoslavia, and I even invested my whole life in it.

I'm tired, I tell you. If I were young, if I were your age, I'd ask. And quite seriously. As it is, for me, everything is over. I just have to tell you that verse at the end:

Those eyes were once live embers,
now the embers have extinguished under the snow of the eyebrows.