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BOHEMIA BOSNIACA

A short-film screenplay

is a film story. Documentary-fiction, a black-white technic; documentary part (from the wartime archives) presented through an amber colour filter, while fiction, through the green one. Time: the pre-war, wartime, and the post-war Sarajevo. For the old people of Sarajevo and our main character, Sarajevo is the city from Marin-dvor to the Bash-charshia. It is an old math professor, who lives alone in one of Marindvor's basements, sharing it with cats, wandering dogs, charcoal, and firewood. The character is tragically bohemian, grotesque in his effort, with a pretended superiority, to fight his despair. He looks such in the scenes before the war. The war figure is radiant, with a touch of the superior self-confidence; almost heroic. The post war one is overcome with the despair, or an assumed serenity.

Professor represents a type of Bohemia - people dislocated from life - flourishing only in Bosnia, on the fertile soil of the frequent political persecutions; of Bogumils, Hamzawis, Communists, Young Muslims... until these last collective calamities of the entire nation. In a flashback is to be used the archival material from Bosnian political history.

A voice, perhaps Basheski's, or of an imaginary tour-guide, heard from the play-offs: "This city has been systematically taught to forget. What destroy not the armies, do not kill the plagues, do not ravage the arsons (like the one by Eugene Savoy), that is slayed by the bureaucracy, hunger and envy. What sweeps not away the history, that is, with a pen, as with a shovel, wiped out by the science of History. What is not choked with the silken rope, that is stifled by Charshia or policy; what is not abolished by the laws (always else's, always foreign), that abrogates a self-denial. Walk of camera through the sites of Sarajevo from the further back and recent past; cemeteries, towers, roads, fountains, historical plates, sacral and other objects, prisons, albums, archives, library catalogues... All what is neglected, destroyed, mutilated..., including humans.

Taught to forget, the city does not know when and why Professor is pushed to the margin of life, into its depth, not metaphysical, but the cellar's... In which he bothered himself about metaphysics, which he once outlined in the street this way. "Stop," said he, "me too, am a creature of suffering. And as for Him, the Almighty,

because of belief in Who they now crucify you, to me the mathematics is His most sublime Epiphany, so they do not bother me. "Mathematics - my Epiphany."

The Informbiro's cleansing, or the Young Muslims', or the individual political sin, no one has wondered, and nobody no one has ever asked him. Who knew, sympathetically kept silent, and he himself artfully hid it even from himself. Pretending madness, or in the way of Bohemia bosniaca, a humanoid kind which grows for centuries, like a weed, rare but persistent, on the fertile soil of the political persecutions.

Shabby urban apparel, the backs bent, but upright when he explains to a random collocutor, "I am, you know, a professor", a bit snifty, slightly fusty, "Yes, a professor, of mathematics. I'm... you know, God reveals Himself to me through the mathematical rules, I do not mind for politics, to me God has revealed Himself through the Pythagorean theorem, listen, you and I, we are $1+1 = 2$, but His oneness is different. Unique, uncountable, unable to be minimised, or multiplied, indivisible, you know I do not need politics... "Shut up!" angrily and ironically, and admonishing at the same time, would respond to him some from among his interlocutors, perhaps a former student, or former co-prisoner. Similar dialogues, or actually monologues, looking for the ears.

The war is on. Besieged Sarajevo. 24-hours shelling grenades, sniper bullets, pam music..., the race under the grenades and bullets after water, food, survivors. Or hush, desolation, time for the Professor and his caravan. What has not escaped by the last cars and buses from the city, descends to the cellars; there being improvised the underground life, chased away from them are their pre-war tenants: quadrupeds, stinky, nobody's, but the bipeds too, like Professor who hardly saves his small basement-flat, are suddenly at the high price. Old-Austrian cellars are most sought after: deep, spacious, massive. The chance for the life is in descent into them. The Professor's into leaving them. And of the dogs and cats, Sarajevo cellar population, which he will lead and of which he will take care during the entire war. The caravan, like a painting of Hieronymus Bosh or Breughel, roams the desolate city, suddenly free; wherever it pleases. Not reviled, not kicked. Stripped in its ugliness, and grotesquely proud. Almost perfect freedom, if only were there not the grenades and bullets, and the death from them, if only was there not a constantly increasing hunger.

Number of the Professor's followers is ever increasing. Joined by the pets, purebred dogs and cats, some still richly clothed, as they follow the wanderers, a lower race, but skilled to find a chewed or

smelled bone, or rotten food remains thrown out of the houses of their masters, before the last run away headlong, as leaving to the fate their "pets".

Tito's street from the "Eternal Flame", down to the "Marin-dvor", full of the broken glass. It is the morning after Sarajevo's "Kristalnacht". There has to be composed a smashes-full music about the night throughout the Old Post Office was shelled, and on similar nights. The city is stunned, frightened, desolated. Professor, contrary, is perked up; at him has smiled the meaning. He now takes care of an entire Sarajevan populace; he is its political leader; its father; saviour; its humanitarian organization; its America.

Digging up the trashcans, collecting of discarded humanitarian lunch-packages (smelly, or with the pork), then cooking into Professor's animal imaret. Large rusty can with hot porridge for the cats, in one, and with the mash for the dogs, in the other hand. Shopping bags for the voluntary donations - an animal charity. Not one city corner, passage, park, ruin, not one alley that this bohemia bosniaca and of its party not to pass through (at the time the sirens sound the danger); in order to save from death, from starvation, from wounds, or to comfort the most, desolated, the most disadvantaged Sarajevan - who walk on the four legs.

The end of the war. Things are moving into the opposite direction. Basements are again only for the animal class and Bohemia bosniaca. Human kind fights, with the underground means, about above ground apartments. The professor is alone again. He was first abandoned b the proverbially disloyal cats which now hang around restaurants, pizzerias and cafes. Costly kitties and dogs, the breed ones, systematically being stolen from the Professor's caravan, even before the end of the war, the new rich city elite. The rest was picked up by city cafeteria which advertised in the newspapers: that until then and then citizens can adopt a pet for themselves, after which date all un-adopted will be consumed... like a foam in our bathrooms. The very way in which, during our post-Second war childhood, was the rumour that of the dogs are being made the soaps. Decades long aversion to the cleanliness, which can be achieved with the soapy water. Advertising with a pet for a new shampoo.

Professor breathes his last on his iron bed, with despairing / or radiant expression. Eyes fixed on the empty cans - his war trophies, his golden lily. Last glance, washed with tears, is lining up about the bed an honour guard of four-Sarajevo war veterans - dirty strays, of the dogs and cats, and those with the ribbons and expensive necklaces around their necks.

* The main character of this synopsis, sent (in vain, of course!) on the one of the post-war competitions of the Ministry of culture, the Foundation for Cinematography, is identical to the main character of the my poetic prose ODDS AND ENDS, published as a part an extensive poetic and prose book, originally written and published in English under the title SARAJEVO ROSE / WAR RHYMES.

I no longer remember whether I ever remembered The Professor's name, but being neighbours, our encounters usually occurred in Titova Street, between Oriental Institute (about whose burning down in April 1992, the famous FAMA has said or wrote not a word!) and the Clinic in Vrazova-street. All this within intervals of my imprisonments, and my exiles. The subject of our conversation was, of course, The Revealed Absolute, i.e. God, and synopsis that you read will summarize some of them.

Our meetings will be multiplied in Sarajevo during the war, in the focus of whose life I am going back as leaving behind my London safe haven, and The professor coming out of the dark and the cold of his basement suite (about which I had no idea). We both will try space apart the peacetime limits of the possible, which will the old dear loner stretch to the impossible. And will remain a permanent memory (for me, at least!)