

The exhausted and impoverished mundane life

You have to agree – our trip life is as short as a flash of a glow-worm at midsummer night. And the happiness of this short trip is accompanied by family bread: if you were born in a poor family – you will be hanging on like a frog in a milk barrel – and not gain anything; if you happen to be born in a wealthy family – you will be studying abroad, travelling round the world, all the bills will be paid. That is the way our Lithuania is and we are ourselves – more or less somewhere in the middle. The bigger the family is the bigger their poverty, the further from a major city the less educated people are. The further from the capital the less degenerated are their values, the more protective they are towards their ancestors' honour, the braver and more disobedient to the authorities.

When speaking about our today's life, we frequently mention Restoration of Independence in 1990 and the events of 1991. And nowadays in official speeches it sounds as if Lithuania had not existed before those events. However, it had. Even more painful and more courageous than on the 10th of August 2021, or during the events during the night of the 11th of August. This night in the future will probably be referred to as “The Day of Shields and Dawn”. Or something like that. Because that evening and night there were no double crosses on the shields protecting Lithuania and its citizens. Shields were carried by people dressed in black. And by the dawn we woke up being different: thinking – what had really happened and why. And whom is that all useful for? And what have we overlooked – not yesterday – but in the recent 30 years as the word “independence” does not fit into this collocation any more.

The events

The restriction of movement, earning income and freedom of speech that had been lasting for over a year in the country turned into a snow avalanche. For quite a while a free Lithuanian person had not been as much restricted by political decisions as s/he currently is. By the current Government in particular, not by medics – who have to talk in the circumstances that we are forced to live under now. They have to speak out loud. Talk about medical decisions made in other countries and foreign practices. Discuss them loudly. Together with medical workers from other countries. Even though in the nearest future, having turned back we will understand what kind of psychopathic decision makers have got the power over us – we need to survive now. We need to survive while seeing centuries-old woods being cut down, state owned property being privatized, the Lithuanian language being harmed, rights of property and freedom of choice as well as natural family model being brutally violated. We need to survive with the things our current Government promised to fight with: bullying, labels and opinions being formed. If you have chosen to think differently from the majority of people – you will be called “narrow-minded”, “a vatnik” and “an anti-vaxxer”: these labels are being stuck by collaborators walking on the land of my ancestors and producing soap bubbles, calling themselves “journalists” who work for a salary in foreign mass-media enterprises.

The Day of Shields and Dawn

On the 10th of August 2021 I had to get up early. Several nights before that were sleepless due to the preparation for collecting signatures for the referendum and at the same time disseminating information why such a referendum is necessary on the reduction of the minimum number of signatures from 300.000 to 100.000 for initiation of a referendum deprived me of many hours of sleep, because there appeared a particularly unexpected message on the planned last Government's and Parliaments' "loop" on the necks of the people stuck with a bullying label – like myself. And later, another message was announced: that we cannot procrastinate – a meeting is being organized. Although patriotic forced had initially tried to suppress social media channels and orient people towards the necessity of the meeting on the 10th of August – it was obvious that the temperature of people's anxiety is like in a boiling pot. Thousands and thousands will gather. I must be present. It is a possibility to collect many signatures. To talk to many people. To meet those who not only have got some advice but also are able to make decisions. To be helpful where you can and are able to.

In the morning since 7 I had been regulating motor and pedestrian traffic until a police unit arrived at the pedestrian crossing. The flow of people and cars was increasing. Then I went to cut some leaflets for the referendum. I distributed my own pens with the label „Nendrė Černiauskienė“ onto signing tables. And after that – sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by one or several friends wearing green ligaments we were walking in large circles round the nearby streets trying to detect people whose intentions were not very peaceful, stopping to talk to those who asked questions. I got into conversations with police officers: I was interested in their moods, what they thought about the people who had gathered there, about their everyday work. There were also several especially complicated consultations on legal issues, and although that all was extremely time-consuming, I did not feel tired. I did not hear speeches during the event at all. I could hear only separate snippets of sentences heard many times before. Like a pray. Like an unheard pray.

On the day of the event we were wearing green ligaments with red edgings and red Gediminas poles we had made in the evening. The previous evening in the last video broadcasts done by Antanas Kandrotas and Vaidas Lekštutis, we reminded people that people with green ligaments will be assisting the police dealing with suspicious people and in case of arising conflicts and incidents. However, we could not manage to get in touch with the organizers of the event and inform them about the planned assistance. And that did not seem important as seemed quite understandable from our mutual experience of organizing events together. By default. That you will be in the place where you can be useful, where you realize that you can help. Even more – with the leaflets for the referendum, encouraging to support it by 12 euros. Because this is the law. You cannot donate more. If you have not declared your property.

The first part next to the M.Mažvydas library was going on smoothly. Until we heard the text from the scene that made us shiver. The words of destruction again. From the mouth of people, you had recently helped – consulting them on legal issues, arriving to pickets with an invitation from them, sharing their

information I social media. Telephone calls started to come in. From the people who had seen live broadcasting, and those who were standing next to the front, who knew my telephone number. What happened? Why were you and other referendum supporters called provokers? “Well, ask the people who have said that” – was my answer to everybody.

At the end of the meeting someone invited the crowd to go in circles. And we, the referendum supporters, lay on a lawn in front of the library. I felt terrible pain. We were sharing our impressions. People continued coming up and asking: who and why from the scene said such negative words about the referendum and about me. Despite those circumstances, the mood was good. After a cup of tea and a banana I had had in the morning, it was time to eat a few candies. We were calculating aloud how many signatures we might have managed to collect. Taking pictures. We said “good-bye” for those who were in a hurry.

The second part started all of a sudden. “Have you forgotten about the picket?” – I was reminded. I went to the arranged place of the picket. My colleagues confirmed that the permission had been received in the evening. It was agreed to be organized until the evening, 22.00. However, the sight was rather unpleasant. People were flocking too close to the gates leading to the backyard of the Parliament. Nevertheless, they did not look threatening. I have come up to the other companions wearing green ligaments and with the help of hand gestures we started showing them to step back. The policemen were only smiling that the people in the crowd do not intend to obey. “It is pointless” – I thought and went away. The members of Parliament who were exiting the building were talked to in quite an impolite way and high voices. The police were monitoring the situation from the distance. Bearing in mind the way the police behaved and their tranquil facial expression, the situation did not seem threatening. I interrupted a conversation among one angry group of people who were surrounding a member of Parliament Antanas Vinkus and calmed them down a little bit: I managed to change their conversation from shouting into a quieter dialogue. People’s questions continued to come in – I went on. I met a member of Parliament Beatą Petkevič and urged her to go home as the tension was obviously growing and there was no sense to stay near the Parliament any longer.

Part three. We heard some announcements that police reinforcement was arriving from Kaunas. Gases might be used. I came up to the group of people flocking near the Parliament gates and not willing to step back. It was obvious that there were some people present who would not give up whatever they are said. I talked to couples and families with children encouraging them to step back to a safe distance at least across the street. As is obliged in accordance with the Law of Assembly. People obeyed and stepped back. I also stepped back min 200 meters from the Parliament gates, across the street.

Police reinforcement arrived – dressed in black with armory, helmets and shields. Together with them there was a former chief of the patrol Algimantas Minkauskas. We have been acquainted for a long time, met each other and communicated both in private and in business meetings. Therefore, I shook his hand and briefly asked: “Do not make political decisions”.

Shortly afterwards, there was a scrimmage with a group of four people who were looking like journalists – they were carrying video cameras and professional photo cameras. These four did not have any certificates or badges indicating that they are journalists. They escaped from the crowd chasing them, took a breath and attacked again. We tried to prevent them from accomplishing their intentions. One of them pushed me with his shoulder and pulled his leg. When I was falling, I grabbed a ribbon of his camera and shouted: “Provocation!” People standing near and behind me were also shouting: “Provocation!” A woman in white standing beside and other people were shouting: “A woman is being pushed!” I was grabbed by my arm by a uniformed patrol – there, on my arm as well as on my back and chest later I found deep traces of bruises. They took me to their chief: „Algimantas, this one is arrested,”– „Take her to the police van” - A.Minkauskas answered him. I did not resist. I only managed to press the button of “Upload” for live broadcast. And threw my telephone into the hands of a passer-by. The bars of a police van shut down. Then – the doors of the van. It is muggy and hot. I shouted that I had no air to breathe. Someone heard me, because I could hear them calling the police. A van was turned on and it overshadowed the sounds from outside. We were standing there for quite a while. Then we started moving. I got sick from the tossing. I have no air to breathe. I sat down on the floor, raised my legs and tried to deeply inhale. I closed my eyes. The car stopped. The door got opened. There was more air to breathe.

We are in the year 1949 again: Forgive or Punish

Seizure of personal stuff. Fingertips taken. A photograph. Having the rights read out. Filling in the documents. Body inspection. A mattress, pillow, a blanket and two sheets. Metal doors and bars. A room sized 2x4 m. Two metal beds along the wall and under the window on the opposite side. Two tables, two stools and two taller tabled. Everything attached. A corner separated by a small door behind which you can find a toilet and a sink. To buttons for water to start. A window sized 0,50x0,50 m. I make my bed and fall asleep. I have not done anything wrong. I will be released in the morning. Night lightening.

The lights turn on. Iron doors get opened. I am called by my surname and urged to get up. I force myself into morning exercises. Sitting. I am after a surgery. My stomach was operated. I warm up the upper part of my body and legs. I wash my face under running water. Breakfast. Through a hole in the doors. I am not going to eat it. I ask what time is it. I am trying to realize how long has it been since my arrest. I am waiting. Meditating. Lunch. I am not going to eat it. I am calling the buzzer. „I have not been interrogated for 15 hours”. I am napping sitting down. Or maybe meditating. „I have not been interrogated for 16 hours. When is interrogation planned?” I am napping in my bed. “I have not been interrogated for 17 hours. I am after a surgery operation”. I do my exercises. “I have not been interrogated for 18 hours. I need to be taken the stitches out today. If you are planning to keep me here longer, demand a medical check-up.” The iron door opens. There are two human beings behind it: one dressed in a white gown and a dark one, with her hand on her right hip. I put on my spectacles. A police officer is standing behind a nurse. Her hand is holding her gun-case. Both of them are shouting at me: “People like you are not provided with medical assistance! I do not see a reason to provide it to you!” “Do you realize how many policemen were injured because of you?” “There must be some kind of misunderstanding” – I am trying to justify myself. The door is closed.

The door opens again. I am taken somewhere without any explanations. A tiny room. The corner is separated by the bars, there is a chair inside. "Go over there" - I am urged by a police officer. There is a table with a computer on it and a chair squeezed in between. There are several more chairs along the other wall. The other door. Passing system with entrance cards.

A pre-trial investigator comes in. Next to the wall there is another human being sitting in front of an opened computer. He introduces himself as a state solicitor. The investigator provides the papers for me to get acquainted with the accusations. I am reading them. It is surprising. So many surnames. So many episodes. Where is mine? The interrogation gets started. The solicitor is raising his eyebrows. On my way back I glance at the number of my cell. „23“. „23 is my lucky number” – I said to the police officer escorting me on the way back. Supper. I am not going to eat it. The lights go off. It is very dark. I am waiting for the night lights to be turned on. Trying to get oriented in the room, reach the buzzer. Press the button, introduce myself. "Maybe I have got cat's eyes, but would you please turn on the night lights? – I am asking.

It is morning. I do my exercises sitting. Meditation. Breakfast. Lunch. I refuse to take it – I am not going to eat it anyway. I drink plenty of water. „Interesting, those who have invented all that – are they complete psychopaths or only to a certain extent?" "And those who are implementing all that – are they doing that for money or because of fear or perhaps from personal beliefs? If they are doing it for money – are they poor or stupid?" It is supper, I am having a yoghurt.

36 hours will pass since the moment of my arrest before I meet my solicitor. Behind the same bars, in a tiny interrogation room. A van is working. Permanently. Loudly. I am running out of imagination to fantasize what has been producing that noise: a forest or the sea. There will soon be a howling in my ears. I ask for some paper and write down several complaints. I am escorted somewhere again. I am taken for home perquisition escorted by an angry police patrol. We get into a conversation. I am trying to understand what they are expecting to find.

The officers unlock my doors themselves – with the help of the key seized during the arrest. My son meets us. The child is frightened. I am trying to briefly explain the circumstances to him. The seizure of some things. Description of the items being taken. The items meaningful for the process are not found. We are coming back to prison. There is a long traffic jam.

There was a distant trial after approximately 42 hours since the moment of my arrest. The judge asks to place on the chair, and not behind the bars as she cannot see the arrested person via her video camera. The trial begins. The judge asks me about my education, working area, income, social connections. "MA in Law, doctor of social sciences, have got two children, one of them under 18, almost 16 years old. Am an assistant of a member of Parliament Valdemaras Valkiūnas. Coordinator of the referendum. One of the three: - I am narrating.

A prosecutor reads out the accusation. "It is practically better to be exiled into Siberia", - I think. No, be burned in autodafe!" „A reality show on LRT channel is going on" - I am thinking. "What is the size of the reward, I wonder?" „For the procedures or for head hunting?"

I start talking about the circumstances of my arrest. The officer sitting together with me raises his eyebrows, shaking his head. The solicitor narrates by minutes - where I was, what I was doing. That the telephone in my hand is not a stone throwing which I am accused of. That I was not resisting the officers, although the opposite was written down. I did not damage the police vehicle, did not throw any explosives, did not hit an officer with some heavy blunt item.

Prosecutor continues and suggests to keep me arrested until the 21st of January. A mind creeps into my head: “It is the last day of the referendum, it is a long time.” The judge asks again. The prosecutor corrects himself – until September. He provides his arguments: I do not have any social connections, any commitments, can hide or influence the process, can escape. The judge clarifies the circumstances. “Most probably, the fact that I have got a bank loan, a child under 18, a work, and public activities does not count” – I am thinking. My cell. I am meditating. Praying. “If they release me, there are some work I still have to do” – that is what I am thinking.

After 47 hours I get released with a detention until the 11th of September: a promise not to leave Lithuania, not to attend public assemblies. It is getting dark. It would be nice to get something to eat. East or west, home is best.

I am looking back at what had happened during that “Day of Shields and Dawn”. My neighbours shared a post in a Facebook group “Our insane neighbor has been arrested” And there followed millions of comments with suggestions to break my windows. “Very nice neighbours” – I thought - “A real Lithuanian cepelliniada”. I suggested them to come round and ask questions if they are interested in the circumstances or details.

Why are we afraid to be patriots? Why do we need to be ones?

Surprisingly, but my 79-year-old mom and 95-year-old dad calmly react to these events that had happened to me. Perhaps that is due to the fact that they belong to the generation having survived several political systems, and more than one historic wing. The generation that has reconciled with the losses and deprivations brought by wars and the generation believing in what they were doing for the sake of freedom in 1990. They are both awarded with January 13th Defender Medals. My dad Liudas Ragalevičius is a medic, associate professor in medical sciences, a pulmonologist, who has been a lecturer at VPU for many years. My mom Gražina Kliveckaitė is a daughter of a Lithuanian military officer who disappeared, Jonas Klivečka. She is a former teacher of mathematics, having spent 25 years in economic emigration and just returned to Lithuania. If they, my ancestors, have survived historical turns, did not relent to collaborators and occupants – why should I behave differently? I value our motherland, and our language. And I am not indifferent what my companions are being through. There is no difference whether they are vaccinated or not. It is the same choice like going to bed wearing your shoes or having taken them off. It's up to you. Since the ones who sleep with their shoes on are as important for the state as the ones who sleep without them. That is exactly what I would like to hear from our authorities. Just as important – not the second class.

Yes, I am a patriot. With my blood and my mother's milk. And I am proud of it. Because this is the land of my ancestors. Only thank to their fights and struggle I was born, am living and exist. And I can be A Free Person!

And you?

17. 08. 2021: The darkest night is before the Dawn, my son, congratulations on your 16th birthday!