

Broken Dialogue

Text - Alice Teodorescu & Valentin Boboc

Is there a measure for suffering? Old ruins, lost objects, lost lives, everything left behind and even forgotten. This is only a part of the communist "heritage", swallowed by the course of History and its oppression.



Is the answer to the question of human relations as simple as the idea of a second self? One that leads the charge in the process of changing and shaping the face of said History?

As we were tracing Albania and its forced labour camps, factories, dissidents' houses and ex-prisons, I remembered another visit, in Sighetul Marmatiei, and its sights of terror.



Maybe one of the reasons is the bewildering and almost ironic schism in the mentality and spirit of both communism leaders and its peoples.



I was a teenager, happily living in a freedom that I didn't question, surrounded by mountains and lakes, when the scenery changed.

I've seen that in the Shadow of breathtaking beauty the land is still moist with blood and tears.

We were inside a political prison, no light, just cuffs and other torture objects, words scratched on the walls, photos of the oppressed, and a pressure that I hadn't felt before.



How can it be that such beautiful landscapes were chosen to let suffering take hold and form?



It never left me since.



Are the landscapes feeding the suffering or is blood feeding the roots of beauty?

The memory is such a traitorous thing, although the crimes committed in the name of communism are only a mother or grandmother away, we take democracy for granted and we erase the traces of some decades ago.



I've seen in Albania what I've known to be true in Romania as well. A good lesson to be learned in terms of what happens when leaders and peoples are lost in the mazes of what means to be.

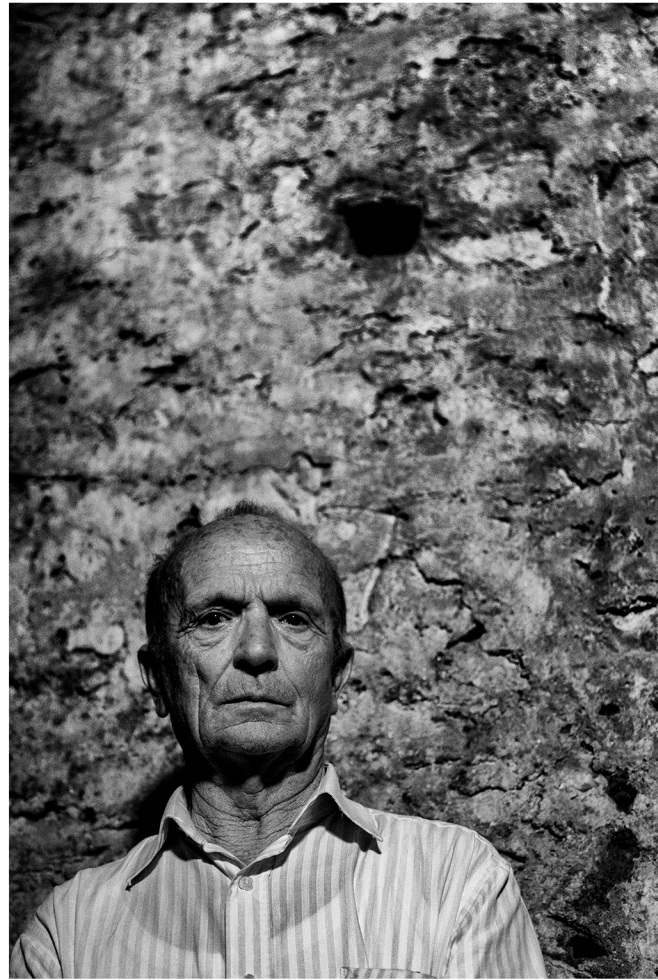


We focus on the big History, we talk about ideologies and grand actions, and forget about the personal histories that need to be told

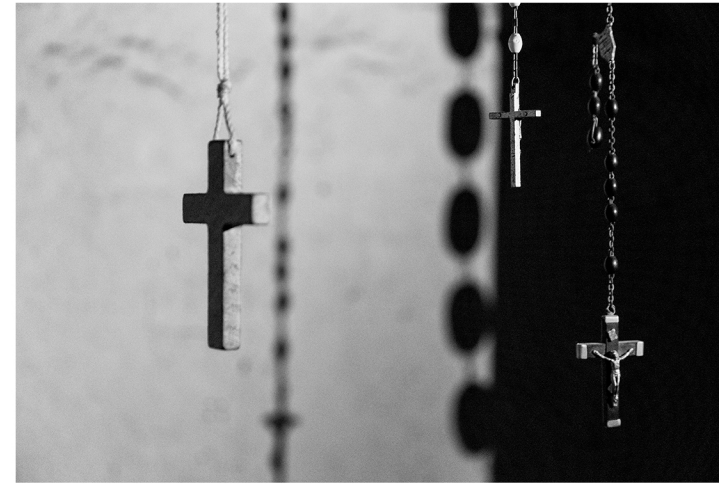


Allowing the Shadow to grow darker and larger in the glimmering light that produces it, whilst at the same time letting it go deeper and further down into the maze of confusion.

Of Simon Miraka, and Musine Kokalari, of the children and old people in Porto Palermo, of the "sons and daughters of so-called criminals" born in deportation camps.



I know that people being punished for beliefs is nothing new, it has been around for as long as there have been people to believe and punish. But to be held up to infamy for belief is to be punished for breathing



But the spaces, even abandoned, never forget.

Being punished for existing is maybe the ultimate joke, but no one seems to be laughing except History.

They have their own memory and a lot of stories to tell. And we have the duty to listen. And to pass it on.



I find it horrifying and baffling how easy it is for people to turn on each other. How can this have also happened in such a small place? Cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts. How have shadows run wild here?



Of the gestures we lose, like seeing the sea for the first time at 46 years old when you were set free or not having a grandmother to hold you in her arms or a grandfather to go fishing with. Of being human.



Or did the shadows take control of the light?

Every personal account is another recollection, another piece of memory regained, another step in keeping it from happening again.



The younger generation needs to open its eyes and look at the abandoned factories and camps and see them as what they are. A reminder of the futility of man in front of change and beliefs. Personal stories fade in comparison to the grandiose aspect.



The younger generations need to know and understand, especially in an agitated sociopolitical context which verges on extremism again, that a single wrong move can take their rights

See the walls built by the hands of the oppressed and the bricks held together by blood as nothing but a reminder of failed experiments that have taken place throughout History. A reminder that in the end nothing is permanent but nature, and nature is unbiased, it engulfs both man and his shadow just as trees, vines and grass engulf the creation of man.

To be born a prisoner in space and thought is a feat worthy of w(o)ander and a reason to w(o)ander in and of itself. How can we pretend to understand freedom when we cannot describe what it tastes, looks and sounds like? We can only comprehend its literal meaning, but we cannot embody it fully unless we can feel its absence.



And communism is closer than it seems. You only need to look outside, at the architecture surrounding you, or even inside, at your own family and their own histories.

Do you remember?

I gained awareness in a world in which my Shadow is in a spotlight, always being watched, but I need constant reminder that light itself produces shadows. Those who have lived through the w(o)andering maze need no reminding though.



They can always feel the Shadow cast underneath their footsteps, entangled and distorted with and by their personalities and history. A follower always tapping their shoulder to get attention and be validated. But despite being followed by it, they choose to look forward, towards the source that is producing it, instead of turning their eyes to grieve.

