

COMMUNIST AREA

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1276

USSR: Dissidents

● 26 January 1972

VALENTIN MOROZ' FINAL TESTIMONY

Summary: In November 1970, the Soviet Ukrainian historian Valentin Moroz was tried for a second time and sentenced to nine years imprisonment and five years exile. Samizdat publications in the Soviet Union have made available the text of his final testimony, delivered on 17 November 1970. Several copies of this text have appeared in the West. The following is a slightly abbreviated translation.*

I will not cite the legal code to prove my innocence, for we are not before the court because of just any sort of guilt, as the court well knows. We are judged according to the role we play in the developments which are so uncomfortable for it. There are also people here for whose arrest there are many more formal legal reasons than in my case. But for you it is comfortable to have these people present in the courtroom for they lower the tone of the Ukrainian renaissance, they slow down its tempo, even though they themselves do not understand what they are doing. You will never do anything against these people, and if they accidentally got into your hands you would do everything to set them free. You have arrived at the conclusion that Valentin Moroz raises the temperature of processes in the Ukraine which you don't like, and therefore he must be divided from society by bars. That would of course all be logical, except....

(*) This version is taken from Suchasnist, No. 1, 1972, p. 109 et seq.

Since 1965, you have put several dozen people behind bars. What have you achieved by doing this? I shall not speak here of a trend, though no one has succeeded in stopping it. Have you at least been successful in liquidating concrete, material expressions? Have you, for example, stopped the stream of non-official literature which avoids censorship and is called samizdat? No, you are too weak to do that. Samizdat is growing, is becoming richer and richer in form and direction, authors and new readers. And, what is most important, the roots reach so deeply that nothing more can be achieved with an increase of spies or the assistance of Japanese eavesdropping sets.... Your work has already had one success, but [it was] the opposite of what you expected. You wanted to put out the fire; instead, you have fanned it. Nothing has contributed so much to intensifying political life in the Ukraine as your repression. Nothing has attracted so much attention to the Ukrainian renaissance as your trials. In fact, precisely these trials have shown to the public at large that social life in the Ukraine has come alive again. You wanted to hide the people in the woods at Mordva, but instead you have put them on a stage from which they can be seen by the whole world.... In short, it is about time that you finally comprehend: repression hurts you above all. Nonetheless, you bring more and more people to trial. Why? To fulfill the plan? To assuage your bureaucratic conscience? Or to work off your rage? It's probably some sort of automation.

You have contributed the very thing to the Ukrainian renaissance in the post-Stalinist era without which it would never have matured: the element of a willingness to sacrifice. Belief does not arise until there are martyrs; you have given them to us.

When something alive appears on the Ukrainian horizon you have always pelted it with stones. And it always turned out that, in fact, the stones were boomerangs. They came back and hit--you, yourself! What happened? Why don't the repressions have any effect any more? Why did the time-tested weapons become dull and turn into boomerangs? Times have changed, that is my answer. Stalin had enough water to put out the fire. But you are in a completely different situation. You live in a time where your possibilities have been exhausted, and if there is but little water, then it is better to let the fire keep burning. Every child knows that, for the fire becomes larger.... That means that the social organism in which we live has entered a phase of development in which repressions effect the opposite. Therefore, all repressions become boomerangs.

On 1 June, you put me behind bars, and thereby let loose another boomerang. Five years ago you put me on the stand, and an arrow was shot at you from there. You put me behind the barbed wire in Mordva, and a bomb was thrown at you from there. You didn't understand at all what had happened, and therefore you have begun everything all over again from the beginning. But this time the boomerang will hit you much harder. In 1965, Moroz was only an unknown history teacher. Now he is known,...and Moroz is now slurping his cabbage soup in prison.

Let's ask in Yiddish: "So what happens?" The only Moroz who could be of any service to you would be a bowing and scraping Moroz who had signed a retraction. That would be a blow to all thinking Ukrainians. But such a Moroz does not exist. And if you think that you are creating a vacuum by putting me behind bars, you are wrong: there will never again be a vacuum....

I am now being sentenced in a non-public trial. But that will also become a boomerang, when no one can hear me, when I must be silent in a cell in the Vladimir prison, cut off from the outside world. There is a sort of silence which is louder than a cry. It is very easy to destroy someone. But have you ever thought about such truths as, for example, the one that says a destroyed person can sometimes mean more than the living?

I know very well what you will say: Moroz thinks much too much about himself. But this is not a question of Moroz. It is a question of every honest man who finds himself in my situation....

You always repeat that the people who are behind bars are criminals. You close your eyes and pretend there are no problems. Okay, you can do that for ten more years. And then? In the Ukraine and in all of the Soviet Union the new processes of development are just beginning. In an era when all men are able to write, when there are 800,000 students in the Ukraine alone and all have radios, every important event becomes public knowledge. Don't you understand that you will have to deal with the mass social trends in a very short time? The new processes have only begun and your repressions are no longer effective. What now? There is only one solution: refrain from the obsolete policy of repressions and seek new forms of cooperation with the new manifestations which have become anchored once and for all in our reality....

There is a trial, and everything will begin from the beginning again: new protests and signatures, new materials for the press and radio of the whole world. Interest in what Moroz has written will grown ten-fold. In short, more oil will be poured on the flames which you really wanted to extinguish. Yes, that is subversive activity. But I am not guilty of it, because it was not I who put Moroz behind bars. The boomerang was not thrown by me.