

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

SREČKO KOSOVEL
HUMAN

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Srečko Kosovel: Human

Our intelligentsia, who in its melancholy
romantic nationalism
has got used to appreciating
and respecting only substantial nations,
has become despondent, believing in
God's justice and the League of Nations.

As this intelligentsia has torn away from the people,
as it has lost contact with the spring of life and remained
a minority, mainly focusing on its own
life, thus digging a gap between itself and the
people, it has also lost all the vital juices bursting
out of the people, still strong and healthy.

*

Genealogy

Slave. Slave Servant.

Servile Slave Servant. Slaving Slave Servant the Humble. Slave II.

Slave the Humble III.

Servant IV.

John the Humble, the Cowardly, the Ambitious.

*

But it would be ridiculously sad if we died on
the eve of capitalist imperialism.

It would be ridiculous if we found it too long to wait
another day for the ultimate solution, for ultimate
salvation, having waited for such solutions for centuries.

It would be ridiculous and distrustful if we discarded all the
energy supplied by our ancestors
in their unreasonable
yet often extremely self-sacrificing efforts.

It would be ridiculous if we trusted the League of Nations
and all romantic Wilsonisms.

Our trust in foreign instead of our own
assistance is a sign of our declining intelligentsia,
deteriorated so much as not to be trusting
its own potential anymore.

*

Poem of a Small Nation

A small nation and small people,
this is no good match.
In my soul, in my heart, there are aches everywhere.
Man, despair!

Small nation, big scoundrels
and the gravy train,
people, tread onwards and upwards,
know no bounds!

Be a minister, a chameleon,
and minister!
You, who have ideals, work for free
and destroy with me!

*

In our history full of the bitter experience of a
timid nation, paralysed by culture for each
instance of resistance, *characterising*
our national path: *harsh and persistent resilience*.

Resilience, born not from a slave's awareness of
power, but from *insulted indignity*.

Today, however, is the time for man to break free,
aware of his own natural rights in the current
state of man's development.

*

I have told you
we are no longer a nation,
we are mankind.
A cell, with a cell spreading, waiting
and rising
and growing
into the honeycomb of mankind.¹

1. First stanza of poem *Rekel sem vam*.

*

Is a nation separatist, for wanting to live?

For wanting to develop in its own direction, wanting
to crystallise its body in its spirit.

Let us be of one spirit and one love, but preserve
Our own faces.

*

Dreaming of a Kingdom

I dream of a kingdom,
but without a king.

As if I could feel
a new atmosphere on my face,
a light in my eyes. –

This is no longer a dream
of autumn evenings in fog.

I feel a man
who out of invisibility
is creating life
for all.

Invisibility turning into visibility
and dream into life,
like a bird, free
in the air nesting
on earth,
hatching, giving birth
to its race,
so that someday
they will rise easily and gracefully
into the boundless air
on a new journey.

*

Everything rises from one:
a family from a father, the
world from God – truth
from Truth.

Thus I stand
at a crossroads
in harsh light alone
and train
my clear voice
to summon Truth.

*

Defiled a thousand times, defiled a thousand times
my human dignity.
And the mission of man denied.²

2. First three verses of the poem Padati.

*

The demonic force of capitalism is pushing this machine to
the end and there is only one solution:
that this machine break open and this man become free.
But there is no liberation.

*

The world can be divided into two groups only: *the suppressors*
and the suppressed.
The League of Nations is a league of suppressors.

*

Elegy

The League of Nations is a lie.
I have seen our generation: it is dying,
half a million waiting to die,
half a million, half a million. Half
a million without protection
under the heels of these magnates,
half a million, half a million.

Our famous delegates,
slow-witted and bearded,
corruptible at any cost.
But they don't know: only one, only one
thing in the world,
makes life worthwhile.
That is: the fight for rights.
Every honest man must be imprisoned
or keep silent
and betray his heart.

*

Destructions

Oh, a lie, a lie, a European lie!
Only destruction can kill you!
Only destruction.
And cathedrals and parliaments?
A lie, a lie, a European lie! And
the League of Nations a lie, a lie,
a European lie.

Demolish, demolish!
All the museums of pharaohs,
all the thrones of art.
A lie, a lie, a lie.
Oh Sophia, o cathedral.
Oh the dead who will save
Europe. Oh the white
dead who are guarding Europe.
Oh a lie, a lie, a lie. Demolish,
demolish, demolish!
Millions are dying,
but Europe lies. Demolish. Demolish. Demolish!

*

When Columbus discovered America, the Indians
then still natural as children, grew fond of glass and
glass trinketry. They were happy to give gold in exchange,
but the Europeans cheated them. They gave glass
in exchange for gold, gold chains for golden freedom.

*

To suppress, to crush, to kill, to create by force,
are *anti-humane* principles.

However, if written in the *nationalist ethics*,
we don't mind; we stand for the *ethics of humanity*.

*

Contemporary Lethargy

Misery, misery, misery.
Politics kills, truth kills,
thought kills, religion kills,
everything killing, killing
man.

Only the fight ensures power, only fight,
the fight for a new religion.
For a new religion of the sun
shining into people's hearts,
making their eyes kind,
making their steps light.

Our dreams are white clouds
in the sea of azure.
The only beautiful thing remaining
in the world is the sun.
The only grand thing in the world
the sun – man.

*

Expansions

All of us marching,
in coats of spring,
we:
sick and healthy.
quiet and merry,
we:
hard workers,
we, constructing
the building of the future
a building spreading on the wings
of the soul
marching –
all of us marching
with the dawn – sails
set in our souls
for a bright freedom –
all of us, marching.

*

It's only at night you realise
how many stars there are in
the sky.
How many brothers you feel
within your heart.
How many brothers of the world.
How many brothers of the world.
Only in the middle of the night
you realise how many eyes
are closing in slumber
and you are not alone
deserted
only at midnight when
the stars are shining
from above, from a golden dawn.
Each with a calm
silver-green face.