

Csihajda

It was 1919, May, and a May mood, which wove a colored, quiet bouquet out of the sailors' deep dreams...

The sailors deep dreams were born on the hard, sparse grass, when the twenty some red sailing lads heard Pál Csihajda speak.

"There were four of us: Szakács, Tóth, Kozák and me, sailor kids with four carbines, who arose for a quiet patrol, when the sky darkened over the trees."

To put it short: we got a secret lead that some scheming officers would be meeting in the monastery that midnight.

We stopped in front of the monastery, and knocked on the copper door. "Who's that making noise there?" and I say: "It's the Soviet, the people out here, open up, your reverend!"

"What good wind brings you here so late, my son?" and I answered: "Excuse me for the bother, doorman-father, but we've got some interest in one or two Atilla-hussar monks of yours."

"I'd like you to walk in front, and lead us, of course with a lamp, holy doorman father..."

There they were, in a lavish hall with mirrors on the wall, there the officers conspired amongst priests and wine bottles.

“Good evening,” I say, and pretend that I’m terribly, horribly mad,  
“Your communion feast is over, it’s over alright, so stand up officer gentlemen!”

But one didn’t stand up, and said while sitting: “I’m Zichy. The Count. A captain of the Hussars. Chisel this into your skulls: Count Zichys have never stood to attention, not ever – in front of a stupid wild peasant!...”

“A commissar,” he said, “who was once an estate guard? A sowherd’s bastard in charge of a battalion? Give me two weeks, and I’ll slice a belt out of the middle of your back, red sailor sir.”

“Enough, my lords, of your impertinence. Time is running out, and running out fast!” And as I touched him with my gentle palm, the great count came along too.

“These days,” I said, “one or two battalion commanders arise from the ranks of peasants. These days the sons of starving coachmen will become the Red Army’s generals. Ministers will come from the ranks of servants, the descendants of wild peasants, blacksmiths and carpenters. And one day we’ll see Hussar captains made of the most lonely of orphaned swineherds.” This is how I answered softly, moderately, so this white trash could see what an officer is made of, and what a sailor, what a count is, and who the stupid people are. “But... and I swear it, red sailor heroes, battle is beautiful, and beautiful is the attack, beautiful the rush, and the mannlicher, but dictatorship doesn’t mean just milk and honey!” “Of course,” said Mihály Tar, who had fought in Lenin’s army across the border. “When we fought, I mean in Russia, the first order was: ‘Clean your rifle and study!’”

And when Lenin gave us that flag, 'Reds,' he said, 'dear fellows, the first order in the revolution is to study, tovarish, and grab your gun! ...'"

And one day in the sailors' camp (as a sort of rare relaxation) unexpectedly we got a great box of books and a serious little man.

The next day in the sailors' camp the battalion stood at attention, four companies with a proud 'right face' saluted the severe teacher.

They wrote their wild chalk experiments on the blackboard. Arrows, circles, snakes and triangles — towers of letters one on the other.

All the sailors sweatingly struggled in that storm of drawings and letters, because the enemy lines were filled with 'rates' and 'values' and 'production'.

That evening a lot of good sailors had a sort of Marxist dream, as the yellow moon settled, excited on the row of windows of the old barracks.

It was 1919, noon, on July the 30<sup>th</sup>, when a troop train rushed wildly towards the city of Szolnok.

Csihajda stood next to the engineer, and Csutora next to the fireman, and on the roof of the wagon stood Mihály Tar, and a row of steel-grey machineguns.

To the north were the bourgeois Czech divisions, to the south the Serbs and French, and the Romanian royal rabble-choard roared and tore at the Tisza.

Within the army: cowardice, and preparation for bloody betrayal. Then Csihajda came up from below Szolnok with four battalions of red sailor lads.

The bourgeoisie fled in terror from the good old city of Szolnok, and the final charge of the sailors struck like lightning all amongst them.

On Szolnok's main square, covered with many a dead body, up stood Csihajda and grumbled, "Szolnok is red now, and Hungarian..."

The sailors stood there in silence, in deep-deep silence there they stood, for they all knew, that though Szolnok was theirs, the Commune had really fallen.

It was 1919. Dusk, on July the 30<sup>th</sup>. And into the deepening evening rushed a troop train away from Szolnok.

Who can tell where it may go, where it will turn, and where it may stop? Where, where are you going, Pál Csihajda, in this deep black Hungarian night?

They've seen him by the fast waters of the Taxo, below Barcelona, and in Madrid, and they've seen him taking an international battalion into fierce battle near Saragossa.

They've seen him build a foundry in the Urals...

...and antennas in the north...

... and they've seen Csihajda rushing in the blind night, and at dawn,  
they've seen him in the subway in Pest, and walking by the black  
walls of factories.

And they even say they've seen Csihajda in Moscow's Kremlin  
wearing a medal or two.

The End

Drawings by Imre Sebők. Based on the poem by Emil Madarász.  
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