

This interview of Juraj Lajda about Unification Church Martyr Marie Zivna

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Flowers for Marie at the martyrs' memorial in Ružinov, Bratislava

Question: I heard that you looked for government records.

Since the fall of communism, we can go into the secret police archives. I went there three years ago. The main trial was in Slovakia, in Bratislava, and three or four other trials occurred in smaller courts. When I was in the archives, I saw a lot of materials, a huge amount. I couldn't go through everything. I did learn some interesting things.

For instance, the secret police established almost a hundred points on how to manipulate the overall process. They gave guidelines to the interrogators and the people who incarcerated us. They had planned to start putting us into prison in May or June before a holy day in 1973, but then somehow this plan was not accepted. The prosecutor suggested that they postpone it, so they decided to begin the whole process after the summer holiday, in September, and that is exactly what happened.

The first one arrested was a brother in the city of Ostrava on September 13, 1973. A week later, on the twentieth, at 11 pm, they came to the center where the national leader, Betka Danišková, was living with some sisters. They

arrested them on that night, September 21. On the twenty-fourth, another brother was arrested in Prague. I was arrested on the eighth of October. Step by step, we were put into prison. This is how it happened.

In the archives, I could see some points about how they interrogated people -- who spoke and what he said -- so many materials and documents. The interrogators had guidelines on how to put the questions. This is a fact, documented in the archives. They said that you have to formulate the question in such a way that the answer goes naturally in a direction that confirms the criminal activity. Basically, they manipulated the structure of the sentence to lead to the alleged criminal activity.

Of course, we were young people. We had no experience. They said that we were doing this, this and this, but our motivation was completely different from how they presented it. This is in the archives.

Question: Did you find anything about Marie Živná?

I tried to find a medical report about Marie Živná. They just said that she had seen a doctor, shortly before, the prison doctor, and that some people in her cell said that she seemed strange somehow. So they put her in isolation, solitary confinement.

This is a kind of punishment. They put her in solitary and whatever happened, I think it happened there. It could have been rape; you know, some policeman.... Who knows? Absolutely, I can say that she knew the Divine Principle. That is one point. She couldn't have done it to herself.¹ Also, there was no witness; she was alone. I remember seeing the telegram that her parents received, saying that she was dead. Her parents showed me this when I visited them. It just said that she had died and to come the next day and so on. They didn't explain anything to her parents.

I think when they opened... The policemen were told that they could not show the parents her dead body or something along that line, but they did somehow and she had a very gray face...

Question: She had white hair?²

Yes. Maybe. It was all very strange. The parents didn't know about this when they sent the coffin. It was sealed, a metal coffin, copper.

It has now been forty years; it happened in 1974. I think April 12; it was Easter-time, a Thursday or Friday.³

At that time, we could not imagine what would happen. Even now, how do you describe communism? I, myself, forget the atmosphere thirty or forty years ago under communism. You cannot imagine. We could not do anything and spies were everywhere. But at that time, in 1974, she had a big funeral. That was something unusual. There were secret policemen there.

Because the people could not believe it, maybe a thousand people came -- many, many people came. They knew her in the village. I don't know if it was a thousand, but it was many. It was an event for a small village. They couldn't believe the official report. I don't know what the official report said about why she died, but they couldn't believe it. They were persuaded that something had happened, that the communists had done something wrong.

Even now, we have an ambassador for peace that remembers her. He was in MEPI in 2007, and he was very inspired by that. He is a journalist, a theater critic. He reviews dramas and plays. Recently, we were speaking about her and he said, "It is my desire to make a documentary film about her. I have to admit that I will not be happy until I do this. I even want to ask the government for support. I need more information."

He knew her. He said that she was a beautiful girl; many students wanted to date her. He remembers her like that. He remembers her as excellent and very intelligent. She was in the last year of her studies in the city of Brno. Speaking to this ambassador for peace was interesting.



Marie Živná

Question: How long were you in prison?

I experienced thirty-eight months in prison. The most difficult time was the first year. We were so cold. We were incarcerated and we were being interrogated. There are certain levels in criminal law. At first you are just "accused." Then you are "sentenced." These are legal expressions, but also your status is different, because during the process until the moment you are sentenced, during the trial, you are still innocent, so you have different rights. Also, this is the most difficult time because you are in a cell and you are doing just nothing. They come. They bring people and they go. This lasted a year.

The process itself, the trial, last three weeks. Until that time, they were very careful that I do not destroy myself⁴ or that something happens to me.

But then I have a different status, I am now a criminal. This was confirmed by the trial. We were then moved to another part of the prison and were waiting for an escort to take us to the prison camp. This was a different life. It was prison life. You

were working. You had eight hours of work because there are some companies... We worked in an area of the prison buildings. Of course nobody talked about your crime. You just existed. But you did have give and take. You were living. You were working eight hours and you had some -- not "free" time, but you could watch TV or whatever. You were with other prisoners.

Question: What kind of products did you make?

We made bottles for blood, a special bottle that has a drip valve. This was from rubber. You had to cut a number of them out using scissors from a sheet of rubber. There were so many that you couldn't do them all. We also made laundry clips. The quota was 2,700. Impossible! Fifty percent of the quota was a success. Nobody could do that. Your fingers would quickly become destroyed. This was in the beginning. Later, we had quite good work. We used some machines. We made some spare parts for cars. There was a big sheet of metal and we used a press and just ran the machine. I was the best worker five times.

Question: Similar to Father.

Maybe.

Question: What was life like outside of the work?

The first year was just waiting in a cell, which was very small. I remember that once... It was terrible. There was one person who was accused because he misused his daughter. Spiritually, it was terrible, and it was for the second time in his life. Sometimes, I thought a fellow prisoner was a murderer. You are incarcerated with them.

There was always coming and going, but I was there for a long time, so once we were two in the cell, three, four, five. This changed all the time. In prison we could meet other brothers and sisters, though during the trial process, we were completely isolated. We might have influenced each other. Once we were sentenced, they didn't care anymore. So we were together.

The place to which they sent us had criminals, real criminals. The prison camp was outside Bratislava (the capital) about 120 km, in a smaller city. It was a fortress, a fourteenth century fortress... Even during the Hapsburg Monarchy, they used it as a prison. It had very thick walls. During the Second World War it was also a prison. Political prisoners -- when the communists persecuted people -- they always put them there.

The policemen, when they saw us in the prison, said, "But they are not criminals." They could see it in our faces. In prison you can see the character of a person very quickly because you are with the person twenty-four hours a day -- you cannot escape. You are in one cell for twenty-four hours, so there are very quickly conflicts or some situations. Through these you can see a person's character. If you are free -- if you are not in prison, if you don't like someone you don't meet him. In prison you don't have this choice.

The policemen, they were of course not university people, but I wouldn't say they were primitive. They could see; they had a sense, from working with these prisoners. "You are not criminals. What happened?" Of course, we couldn't talk and they shouldn't have asked us. It was not allowed.

We could make friends with them, with the prisoners. This is the next point. We tried to serve them. In one sense there were norms. It was a workshop. Normally you had to make a certain number of products during eight hours, but sometimes it was impossible to make the quota and you were punished by receiving a half-ration of food. We were young at the time, but there were also old people there.

There was a rule that when you criticized the country's president -- called him an idiot or said something bad -- you could go to prison. There were such cases with older people, some of whom couldn't do the quota. So we were giving to them. You know, I made 150 percent, so I gave him 50 percent. Somehow we helped each other. And we tried to listen to their stories. I think they could see. We were always quiet. We were always thinking about True Father in Hungnam. Without this, we couldn't survive. We made a relationship to serve them.

I think True Father was behind us. I remember that many years after we came out of prison, after the fall of communism, when we were free to meet many other brothers and sisters around the world, some Japanese missionaries told us that they remembered that in 1975 or 1976 at a Sunday service in the morning, Father went to the holy ground and prayed. He didn't say for whom, but he was praying for people in prison.

I was moved. He protected us. We didn't know. Because anything could happen. One prisoner told me once, I will cut your ears off. I said, Okay, please do.

You know, some people were crazy. They had been three, four, five years in one place with no family -- all the conflicts, all the resentment. They were crazy. Anything could have happened. Somebody might kill you and nobody knows who. So I was moved by hearing about Father's prayer.

Basically we got out of prison; we survived. Also I have to say that during the interrogation process, they speak to someone at your school, some teacher or someone else to speak about you, give an evaluation. They asked what kind of person you were, about your character. Or they asked the local authorities where you were living.

They were expecting people to write negatively, because this was the whole atmosphere in society but suddenly good people appeared. They said, Never. I will not sign this!

In the university where I was studying, the head of the department was a very strong communist. She wrote a very bad character evaluation of me. The other professors said, "We will not sign this. It isn't true. You will have to rewrite this. We do not know him like this." This moved me. There are many things I might say. Somehow we didn't lose faith. This is the only point. There were other brothers and sisters who

left; it was very difficult. I have no resentment. I think twelve people from that time survived and then we started to meet each other, secretly. It was up to you. Either you survived or you disappeared. There was God and you, no central figures, no brothers or sisters, nothing.

Question: Some did not survive.

For instance, some members married during that time, and we knew that we cannot marry. This was clear. Of course, some members left completely. Some survived. That was how it was.

Question: When they released you, on what grounds did they say you were free?

I finished my sentence. I asked for half. After half the sentence has been served, you can ask, but I was rejected.



Juraj Lajda at Marie Živná's grave

Question: Did your record stay with you?

Yes, yes of course. After five years it is automatically erased, but you can ask after half that period that they erase it, if you are a very good citizen. I did this and I received that. It helped a lot. I had been in my final year of university, and when I was arrested, of course, they kicked me out immediately. When I came out of prison I wanted to continue my studies, but the dean kicked me out three times. He said, "You? You want to study? You, the enemy of socialism? You were already given a chance and you failed. You disappointed society."

So, I tried in Prague and in other cities, but I still had this record. Then, the next year, I applied in the city of Brno and the record had

been erased. So my documents were much better. Of course, the police knew, but the law was that for official use you don't need to speak about it. It is as if you are not a criminal. But very deeply the police knew.

This helped me. They accepted me and I could finally finish. The school did not know much -- but it was strange. I was thirty years old and studying with eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds. Nobody knew who I was but people in Brno are very good. I thought they didn't know, but then they found out somehow but they kept silent.

Question: When were you blessed?

1982

Question: All the people in prison were single?

Yes. Of course. We were shocked when we were offered the chance to go to the blessing because we thought we must first fulfill the first blessing. I should be perfect myself and then God comes to give the second blessing.

Question: Such pure faith!

Notes:

1. That is, she would not have committed suicide.
2. In an interview in 2001, another fellow prisoner, Dorota Simikova, had said that Marie's hair had turned white.
3. April 12 was a Friday that year. Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter Thursday.
4. Dr. Ladja's direct way of referring to suicide