

PETAR MIHAJLOVIĆ

WORKING CLASS CHRONICLES

Translated by Goran Mimica



PETAR MIHAJLOVIĆ

Born in 1979 in Kragujevac, Serbia. Graduated in dramaturgy from Belgrade Drama School. There have been several radio plays, student films and two theatre productions *The Raven* (*Gavran*, Dadov, 2004) and *Writing With a Scalpel* (*Pisati skalpelom*, Knjaževsko-srpski teatar, 2006) based on his texts. He has published a book of short stories *Serial Suicider* (*Serijski samoubica*, 2000). He has just completed a second book of short stories *Nobody* (*Niko*) and a novel *Nothing* (*Ništa*). He won the Slobodan Selenić award for his graduation drama *Just Not in Switzerland* (*Samo ne u Švajcarsku*). This play was published in the journal *Teatron* (issue 148/149, February 2010).

THAT LAUGHTER HURTS

Working Class Chronicles is something of a documentary drama. It talks about the contemporary social situation, reported so often by the media – a long strike in a factory which went bust during the change of ownership. The writer speaks about daily affairs with compassion, understanding and irony. He notices an important paradox: the people caught up amidst social conflict do not have identity, although each participant lives a specific personal drama.

The workers differ only in number and years of service, and the “main worker”, i.e. the worker without a number, is a contemporary *everyman*. “Others”, as suggested by the writer, can be played by the same actors who play the seven workers. This is because all the characters have one thing in common: they don’t understand the situation they find themselves in. They differ in the ways they don’t understand it, and these “ways” depend on one’s social position in a given conflict. The play approaches farce and this saves *Working Class Chronicles* from the triteness of melodrama which, like a shadow, hovers above the sad life stories of the characters.

Particularly special are the play’s dialogues and mono-

logues, which have a documentary element and, at the same time, show that the writer knows jargon well, as well as the language texture of the social milieu he writes about. The ending reminds us of De Sica’s *Miracle in Milan*: there, the poor ascend to heaven, and here the workers fulfil their dream of reviving production. Still, the writer does not stop there but gives a twist and returns Worker to “reality” as the grave digger of his own social class. This a witty moral that shifts the whole case back to audience, who are not just the audience of *Working Class Chronicles* but the audience of daily social dramas. As viewers, we can’t distinguish between people and their dramas, those on strike and those on hunger strike, and those who mutilate themselves or even kill themselves. Because we are not able to distinguish between them, we don’t understand them, and because we don’t understand them we do not understand our situation. By laughing at the play’s characters we, in fact, laugh at ourselves and that laughter hurts.

Marina Milivojević-Madžarev
Translated by Goran Mimica

Characters:

WORKER – Persistent, older man, constantly about to retire

WORKERS (1-7) – they are how they are, they differ in years of work

Other characters:

MANAGER

POLICEMAN 1 and 2

PASSER-BY

WIFE

SON

DAUGHTER

NURSE

POLITICIAN

CAMERAMAN

SPEAKER (voice)

Other characters can be played by the same actors playing WORKERS (1-7).

There is no need to have more than nine characters on stage at the same time.

1. WORKER AND MANAGER

Office desk and two chairs.

MANAGER: So, is this your final decision?

WORKER: Sure...

MANAGER: You won't go back to work unless you see the back of me?

WORKER: Unless we see the back of you! Sure...

MANAGER: Until my place is taken...

WORKER: ... By a man who will fulfil the factory's potential so that even the state can profit, and us, workers, and all the employees, because this factory is not your plaything...

MANAGER: ... My plaything so that I can run it for my own benefit and however I want...

WORKER: ... However you want. That's right!

MANAGER: Dear Lord, what shall I do with you lot?

WORKER: How do I know? All I know is that no-one will work unless we see the back of you...

MANAGER: Back, yes, back! Unless you see the back of me...

WORKER: Back...

MANAGER: You know that if there isn't the minimum of work I can fire all of you and you'll end up on the street without...

WORKER: This factory, and its potential, should be exploited so that it can make profit for...

MANAGER: I know, I know, I get it, but...

WORKER: ... The state and the workers, all employees...

MANAGER: Wait! You wanna have a whiskey with me? What do you say? To relax a bit...

WORKER: ... Because this factory is not your plaything to do ...

MANAGER places two glasses on the table and pours the whiskey.

WORKER: ... To run only for yourself...

MANAGER: Cheers!

WORKER: ...However you want!

MANAGER: What, you don't want any?

WORKER: No! Unless we see the back of you, not a single worker will work and that's that!

MANAGER finishes off both drinks.

MANAGER: Ogh, come on, man! Shut up for once! You've been repeating those three sentences for the last hour!

WORKER: These are our demands, so there you have it, not a single worker...

MANAGER: Well, there's no doubt, they certainly trained you well...What's your name anyway?

WORKER: For you I am just a worker and that's that! A worker who wants to see sitting in that armchair a man who will take the factory's potential and...

MANAGER gets up and puts his hand over WORKER's mouth.

MANAGER: What? Sorry? What was that about the factory's potential?

WORKER gets up and walks around the office mumbling, not trying to free himself from the MANAGER who's following him.

MANAGER: Plaything? Plaything you said? I can't understand... you are mumbling too much...

MANAGER lets the WORKER go and pours himself another glass.

WORKER: ... Only for yourself and however you want!

MANAGER: Is that so?

WORKER: Yes!

MANAGER: ...And no-one wants to go back to work...

WORKER: No-one! Unless we see the back of you! Because this factory has to be run by a man...

MANAGER: Cock!

WORKER: What?... Uhm, a man who will...

MANAGER: Cock-shit-cunt!

WORKER: A man who...who will, uhm, fulfil! Yes! Will fulfil...

MANAGER: A heap of shit on a loaf of bred! Pus-shit-cunt!

WORKER: ...A man who... who...

WORKER takes of his cap and wipes his forehead.

WORKER: This factory has to be run...run by...

MANAGER gets up and starts jumping around.

MANAGER: "Like a virgin, touched for the very first time. Like a vir-ir-ir-ir-gin...when your heart beats...!"

WORKER: Factory... Man... Plaything...

MANAGER: "De do do do, de da da da, is all I want to say to you..." Shitlet, tiny shit...

WORKER gets up and squeezes his cap.

WORKER: Uhm. Boss, you all right?

MANAGER quickly calms down, places his hand on WORKER's shoulder.

MANAGER: Still you are a man!

Pours a whiskey and puts the glass in WORKER's hand.

MANAGER: Cheers! Come on, drink up...

They drink.

MANAGER: So, it's mostly about my back...

WORKER: Sure...no-one will, well, go back to work...

MANAGER starts unbuttoning his shirt.

MANAGER: My back is nothing special. My wife thinks it's too hairy... The people are out there, aren't they. They are waiting... Right, it's clear, I'll show them my back, and let's get back to work... Time is money, isn't it.

MANAGER laughs and, half naked, leaves the office, but the WORKER....

2. WORKERS WITH PLACARDS

WORKERS are holding many placards. They are packed together. They lift their placards in unison. The placards say: "We want what's ours!", "Down with

tycoons!", "Where's my paycheck?", "Minister, can you hear us?", "STOP with privatization, STOP with theft", "They are stealing, we are dying"...WORKER steps forward and climbs on the crate. He reads from a sheet.

WORKER: Fellow workers, they've been lying to us and cheating us for a long time! Well, that's enough!

WORKER 1: That's enough!

WORKER 2: More than enough!

WORKER 3: Too much!

WORKER: This humiliation has to stop immediately, right now!

WORKER 4: Right now!

WORKER 5: Before right now!

WORKER 6: What is before right now?

WORKER 7: Yesterday!

WORKER: We are not asking for more than what belongs to us!

WORKER 1: We want only what belongs to us!

WORKER 2: Even less than that!

WORKER 3: Only what you can spare, Sirs!

WORKER: Hot meal coupons and the last eleven months' salaries!

WORKER 4: We want our paychecks!

WORKER 5: We want our hot meals!

WORKER 6: Even if they're just heated up!

WORKER 7: Even tepid!

WORKER: Annul this privatization and have a new one!

WORKER 1: Annul it!

WORKER 2: A new one!

WORKER 3: Just in case, the next three should be annulled right away!

WORKER: Find a strategic partner!

WORKER 4: But not from Croatia!

WORKER 5: We don't want Americans either!

WORKER 6: Yeah, and we don't need Russians!

WORKER 7: Free all Serbs in the Hague!
WORKER: We want modernization of machines!
WORKER 1: Modernization now!
WORKER 2: But with respect for tradition!
WORKER 3: Restore the monasteries!
WORKER: Distribute the state's share in companies to workers!
WORKER 4: Distribute according to merit!
WORKER 5: According to the years of work!
WORKER 6: Even better, along party lines!
WORKER 7: Better "first come, first served!"
WORKER: Guaranteed 10% increase in salaries for the next two years!
WORKER 1: 20%!
WORKER 2: 30%!
WORKER 3: 50%!
WORKER: The workers committee to choose the manager and his deputy!
WORKER 4: Workers to elect!
WORKER 5: We want elections!
WORKER 6: Down with foreign mercenaries! Boo to the fifth column!
WORKER 7: Boo to with masked commies! Go to Russia!
WORKER: Cancel the night shift and extend the lunch break by half an hour!
WORKER 1: Paint the canteen!
WORKER 2: Beer in the canteen!
WORKER 3: A cook with big tits in the canteen!
WORKER: The company to be the best in the country by far, and in the region!
WORKER 4: Everyone to get recognition!
WORKER 5: According to merit!
WORKER 6: Better, along party lines!
WORKER 7: Paaarty!!!
WORKERS applaud. A mobile phone rings (OFF).
WORKERS stop applauding. Dead silence. WORKER 4 takes out his mobile.

WORKER 4: Hello? What?... Fucking hell! Right, bye!
(Puts the mobile back in his pocket) Hamburg scored in extra time! It's a draw!
WORKERS *(All)*: Shit, fucking hell! In extra time! Damn! Fuck football! Almost! Who wants to strike now! Cheeky motherfuckers! No sense in continuing this strike! No! Tomorrow! Let's go home, mates, home!
WORKERS throw the placards and leave, but WORKER...

3. WORKERS IN FRONT OF A SHOP

WORKERS are sitting on crates. Drinking beer. Eating bread and salami.

WORKER 1: My folks came here from the south... From Sandžak, maybe Tutin, or Raška, or maybe somewhere else. My father did nothing but work, so when he lost his job, we came here. I was three, or less... How's that that they were there? where did my father come from? I don't know exactly, but I know it's somewhere in Croatia. He stayed, I guess, alone after the war. Times were such... My mother came from somewhere in Kosovo, wherever, I never asked her, and she didn't talk much, even if she wanted to tell me herself, she never did, she forgot. She used to sit, cook, wash our underwear, our shitty arses... Obeyed, did what she was told, had children, what else could she've done? My father, like me, I never let him down, worker, labourer, whatever they give him, he works. Got a job down there, on the railroads, where else. Unloading, what else. We used to live there at the beginning, in some barracks, close to railroad tracks, us three families. Us, father, mother and me, then another brother, and then one more. Sister was born later, when they evicted us, when they knocked down the barracks.

Next to us, only a wooden wall divided us, were some Bosnians. Husband and wife, but children, I guess, they couldn't have them. He used to beat her, beat the crap out of her, yelled that it was her fault they couldn't have kids, but she was such a nice woman, as much as she could be, she loved us, kids. The third one, they were somewhere from Zaječar, some village there. Three daughters, like triplets they were. Older, pretty, all alike, except one was blonde, one brunette, one dark. They used to take the piss out of their father, like was he sure all three were his, but he was a good man, loved them, didn't care. It was cold in winter, in the barracks, hot in the summer... The best was in summer, in the evening, at dusk, us five, six children, running around the barracks, along the tracks, chasing trains, who's faster. There, sometimes we wrestled, three of us, who's stronger, because of the girls, they were tall, I was older than my brothers, and I wasn't even up to their ears. We were dusty, muddy, the girls laughed. I wasn't even thirteen... We gathered in front of the barracks, sitting on wooden steps, all of us, like chickens we line up, two up, one down, three in the middle, however we like, and the Bosnian woman brings the whole tray, the potato pie she made. She smiles, nods her head at us, then makes out she is angry cos we are dirty, wet, we'll catch a cold, and cuts the pie. We are sitting, staring at the tray like its some God, we don't see anything else. When she cuts it, she brings the tray closer, fat is dripping, and we, faster than snakes, grab a piece each. Everyone looks for the biggest piece, to grab it, but they are all the same size, as if measured with a ruler. We are sitting like that, eating the pie, potato pie, silent, we feel good...the best...

WORKER 2: When I got a bit older, a lad, seventeen, going on eighteen, school finished, moustache just

beginning, I became aware of myself, arrogant... A full hard-on five times a day, on its own, I thought I had reached God and grabbed his you-know-what. I sat, we were having lunch, and I threw it all in my old man's face! I said: "Forget you and your workshop! You can keep greasing yourself in that oil and swallowing petrol all your life, if you want, I'm going to university! To be a man, not repair some loser's car!" I had no time to swallow the bit I had in my mouth when he, across the table, slammed me right in the middle of my face. He had a heavy hand, like a lead, my old man. Heavy hand, like the devil himself, and huge, this big! He slammed on my cheek and caught everything. Forehead, and an eyebrow and ear, mouth, chin, everything. I couldn't open my eye for three days. Grabbed me by the neck, like this, and threw me out onto the street. I didn't even have time to put down my spoon. I left, slept at my uncle's, mother sent some dosh every now and then, and fine, I enrol for economics. Shall I do law or economics, so I pick economics. And it starts fine. I knew it wouldn't be plain sailing, I wasn't keen on books, to be honest, but I started fine. I sit, listen, look around, read what's needed, I don't remember everything, but I read everything the professor says to. I have a lemonade during the break, have a pretzel, sometimes not even that, there was no money for more, but that's student life for you. The others too... So I am thinking, it's going too good, I struggle, but I am pushing, and the old man, like, he's a bit less angry, mum says, he's started asking about me... I knew some shit was coming, just cos it was all going fine and there it was! One day, I am barging down the corridor like I'd invented it and put it there, I look left, look right, like I am a model, when suddenly BANG! Some classroom door opens and straight into my head. Bloody hell, as if my old man slammed me

again, me eyes closed again, and my head rang like I was in church. I could hardly stay on my feet, then I look with the second eye, and there she was! Holy motherfucker, it's easy to say now, she almost knocked me out, instead of slapping her across her mouth, I'm like this, mouth open, like a frog. Beautiful, like fucking hell, beautiful. That hair, those tits, legs, thin, firm, green eyes, like you are staring into two olives. Jumper tight, turtle neck, washed out jeans... I sweat just thinking about it! I am fucked, poor me, she is apologizing, on and on. Me, like talking to a wall. I can't hear anything, nor does it hurt. Who cares, just let me look at her. Don't know what she's saying, I don't care, I just keep nodding. I barely come to, and the two of us are sitting, she's ordered some coffee, chatting. Even today I don't have a clue what about. And so, bit by bit, colleagues, then acquaintances, then friends, and then she kissed me one day. She kissed me, my mouth almost fell off. Had no idea where was I walking for a week. University, school, who gives a rat's arse for that. When I am with her, it's like I am dreaming, when I am not I am waiting for her to call, to meet, I run...

Poor me, I think, she feels good with me too, that she too, the moron that I am, is thinking about us all the time, but my ass, fucking bitch! That year there were those demonstrations, '68 it was, so we all gather, the whole university, and onto the streets. If you asked me now, what the fuck were we protesting for, I wouldn't be able to tell you exactly, but I can tell you that then, in the middle of those demonstrations, she left me like some ass and was gone with some philosopher, the one who talked the most, protested the most, yelled from the stage. I tell her, let's go, we'll get beaten up, she says that I am coward, stupid, uncouth! Me, uncouth? fuck your mother you bitch, I ask her nicely, and she pulls out some book and slams

me in this very eye, this cheek, if it wasn't for the people around to catch me, I'd have fallen like a candle. The book was heavy... That was the last time I saw her, later I dropped out of university, cos while I was staring at her, the others, I guess, were staring at the books, professors, exams and I couldn't catch them anymore. Fucking women, fuck them! Somehow mum managed to convince the old man to take me back to his workshop...

WORKER 3: I finally decided it's time to get married, have a family, I had a job, making peanuts, still you can get credit, you buy what you need, no worries, you know you are good to pay it back, no hurry, no-one's after you... No need to act like a rabbit, not like now. You just run around, look for money to pay back, listen, are they after me? you run, hide, fuck that! What was I saying? Yes! I decided to get married! Look now, when I didn't want to get married, girls were aplenty, but now, suddenly, not a single one. Some ask, what's your job, have you got a flat... No flat, I say. When they hear that, scam, don't even wanna finish their drinks. I yell after them that I'll get credit, that I need a young one and a few working years just for the pension, but they won't listen, gone. And so, one, two, three, no-one wants me, and the one who does want, it's like you are standing in front of a grave. I ain't no Alain Delon, but I ain't the ugliest motherfucker either, I reckon. And so it goes, and I see that it's not going to be good, almost getting used to the idea of staying a bachelor, then suddenly one comes my way, shit. Nice, smells good... Says she knows her way around the kitchen, she knows whatever from before, she knew how to dress, to fix it so she looks good, she doesn't give a damn about the flat, she says, and says she wants me... I reckon, this is too good to be true, I am "suspicious" but, I say, why not? and so we

start dating. Not even two months pass, we get to know each other, I can see it's all true, I wasn't wrong, good, nice, and I tell her let's get married. I lived at some old bat's, had a room, not big but enough to start with. I had no-one in the city, my folks stayed in the country... But she says, and then I realised I nailed it when I was "suspicious", that we have to move in with hers. I says, me to "marry in"? no way. I ain't one of those that my wife and hers can feed and dress! But she says that's the condition. That or nothing. She says, her father's horribly ill, he's in bed, mother can't handle him alone, wash him, feed him... Says, at least until he dies, we have to stay with them. What could I do, it hurt, I am not a woman, no-one in my family ever moved in with in-laws, but it's like, alone or have a family, I was too old, so I agreed... We get married, sign, and that's that... Ehhhh, I ate a huge shit by agreeing! Forget the huge flat, it's was military, we had our own room, the mother-in-law so-so, but the father-in-law! He's lying there all day and screams, screams, and screams! Everything hurts, everything bothers him, he weeps, moans: "I am dying! I am dying, people!" Just die, I thinks, but he won't, damn'im, he won't. I tell my wife, let's go, and she goes, let's wait for him to die. He won't die, I tell her. I'll go before he does... Here, my oldest kid has left school, and he's still lying there. Mother-in-law died 15 years ago, but him, nope! He must be ninety now, I don't know... Forget his military flat, and military pension, fuck it all, he's sucked my soul... My wife is more around him than around me. She's aged like an old bat, grey, tired... He's sucked out her soul too... He is a bigger Commie than Tito! At least Tito died, this one won't even do that... Sucked me soul...
WORKER 4: We left home right away. Mine and hers. Hers felt fine about me taking her away. They even gave us some change and plus what I had, sold

grandpa's country house, that plot, dad said ok sell it, so we put it all together and bought a small house, semi-detached, it was narrow, the yard just enough to park the car, but it was enough for us. We didn't have a car, then for a short while I had a Fiat 500, but there was enough space to dry laundry, put a couple of chairs, sit when someone stops by... Neighbours, people that lived next door were nice, quiet, don't-disturb-me-I-won't-disturb-you, and they were old, they never disturbed us. She worked, my wife was a hairdresser, I worked, not here, but close, down there, in "cables". Everything was fine, I didn't complain. Shall we have a kid? Let's. A boy, from the first shot. Shall we have another one? Let's. A daughter, what can you do? Shall we have another one? we are doing fine, we are struggling, but, we reckon, everybody is, but that we were going to struggle that much, we couldn't have known, how could we? We enter the 90s, we are waiting for the third kid, we are working on it, when suddenly, dear boy, they called me up, let's go to war, they drafted me! First in Šid, and then wait. Wait, wait and wait, you can hear the rumbling across the river, they are burning, shooting, night sky alight, and you wait. Enough with waiting, fuck your mother, I say. Either let us die, or go home. Wife told me the third one is about to come, I left her pregnant when I took off, I wanted to see him, take some leave and be there when they get back from the hospital, but it's not happening. I was about to leave the next day, when they sent us across. What happened, what was there, you'd better not ask me. I had never put a cigarette in my mouth, but there I started smoking like a Turk. You don't know what to do with your hands. If you don't find some work for them, you keep them on the trigger, you fall asleep, you shoot in your dreams, who knows where the bullet can stray... Were they wrecking? yes they were, shooting, burning

whether it was needed or not, more when it was not. Blast it over there, that's where they are, then blast over here, it's us who are running away, stealing and running. You just walk, and nearby, in the ditch, a woman, bloated, rotting, about to burst, a bit further, a child, further more, a puppy, this small, bowels all spilt whatever hit it I don't know... We enter a village, not a brick survived, if it was not for the sign saying such and such village, you wouldn't know where you were. The wind blows from one direction, burning, blows from the other, brings someone's wailing, blows from somewhere else, rot stinks, through your nose straight to the brain.. You look further, over the rifle, through the sight, a man just like you, eyes this big, unshaven, shaking just like you, just that he's Ustasha, yes, mate... Where we passed, where we went, even God, if you asked him, wouldn't know what to say. When we were sent back, behind the lines, grab a phone, call and say that you are alive, so that they don't worry, you ask how they are doing, you are worried too... Hello? Hello! Is that you? It's me, I say, alive. How's the child, born yet? She screams, cries, says, she had no idea where I was, was I alive, whatever, she miscarried cos of worry. Whoa, fuck this country, I say, the war and the people, you can't say who's worse, crazier, fucking bastards! I return home, we lost the war, hmm, it wasn't the first one, and what do I see? My wife turned even greyer than myself. Kids are sniffing all the time, hungry, whatever, sad... They fired her, she says, she didn't say earlier so I wouldn't worry about that, too. She says, they had two hairdressers already, and she was the last in. Fine, I says, I got that job, and they'll pay the military service one day, but my dick, the company went bust, who needs cables? all the factories we used to deliver to were over there, some in Slovenia, some in Croatia... They stamped my worker's ID, sign here, sign there and

goodbye, as if they never knew me, and I gave almost 20 years there. I had done hundreds of jobs, I'd done it all before I ended up here. Children are growing up, they need clothes, shoes, they are not old enough to work, and my wife, poor woman's doing her best, but she is a total wreck. She still mourns that child that was born dead, what can you do? From time to time gives a hair cut at home, earns a bit, hooovers, cooks, washes, but she can't find a stable job. As if there were 300 hairdressers in every street, fucking hell. As if people's hair is not growing the way it used to, or what?

WORKER: Maybe then, in the 90s, they used to kill more, starve and kill, but at least no-one lied to you. Fuck it, it's war, fuck it, it's crisis, it can't be worse than this! No-one used to look you in your eyes, slap your back and talk nicely, politely, promising, saying he understands, just be a bit patient, saying he sees, it's hard for him too, die asshole! Man, I used to maintain this company when no-one else did a thing, when it produced and sold nothing, when they, like vampires, sucked everything that there was to suck. They used to suck our blood, and now, that we are dead, they suck our bones, they scrape even the dirt under our nails. I've been working almost 35 years, out of which 20 in some sort of state of worry, this company and this state have eaten me like a cancer! If I had cancer I would have suffered less... You just start thinking something nice is coming your way, finally something better, we removed the old ones and let the new ones come, when this privatization's arrived, fuckers, bastards... Once again, be patient, and I tell them, I would, but how, man, for how long? I am about to retire, and they wanna fire me, the kids are about to grow up, and I can't even keep my job let alone find one for them. The first time they told me to be patient, my son was 19, he doesn't like study-

ing, but you can see that he's got brains, he'll always manage, my daughter was 10, happy, a child is a child, smiling, and my wife, as if the colour had returned to her face, man, she looked like a woman. I say, all right, carry on, I'll be patient. If they said, fine, you are the oldest, you kept this company functioning with your own hands, you wanna be a manager? I'd say, no, just give me work. The next time they told me to be patient, my son was 25, struggling with school, up and down, he wants to know "Why should I graduate?, I'd rather go abroad", daughter was 16, she ain't a child anymore, she learned everything wrong. If you've got money you are good, if not, you are nothing, it's better if she puts make-up on, not study, and my wife, from chair to chair, flicks from channel to channel looking for good news, as if they can't lie if ordered to, and she's just sighing, puffing. If they said, you were the one who pulled when no-one else did, you held things together, do you want to be the first to take the good deal, honest retirement? I'd have said, bring it on! Give it to me, I'll start my own business, take my son to work... But for that money, what could I have done, what could any of us have? Pay a doctor to straighten me out, to heal all that I've wrecked in this company? I don't know if he could even save me. And now, to all of us, they say again to be patient. Just a bit longer, for what, to starve to death, or what? My son, almost old as myself, wanders the streets, sells this and that, and what he earns he takes to the bookies, drinks it, throws or burns it, I don't know, brings none home! Why didn't you let me shoot off abroad when I wanted to, he yells at me. My daughter, she's 20 and still hasn't left school! She couldn't do it then, and she still can't, she has no time to study, cos of all the rush, make-up, all night, who knows who she is with, where, she is looking for someone to give her a ride,

to walk with her, to marry her, to have money so she doesn't have to do a thing. My wife, turned this big, as if she's been stuffing herself with dough all day long! I've had it up to here with her, like, what are we gonna do with him, with her, what's gonna be with us? Poor me, poor us, and her blood pressure's 120/80 like a girl, but mine hits 200 when she starts like that every day! And? What now, people? If I knew there was any hope, but like this, look at those on TV, travelling around, enjoying it but they sing the same tune: help us Europe, then help us Russians, Americans, Chinese... The blacks are only ones left worse off than us, my head is all... People, we have to get serious with this strike...

WORKERS eagerly clink their bottles together, take swigs, but WORKER...

4. WORKERS BLOCKING STREETS

Two dumpsters and a crowd barrier between them. WORKERS, carrying placards, are everywhere. There are two POLICEMEN towards the side.

POLICEMAN 1: Who are they?

POLICEMAN 2: What do I know? As long as they don't act up, wreck around and throw eggs...

POLICEMAN 1: You think they can afford eggs? They haven't been paid for 14 months.

POLICEMAN 2: What do I care? They should have studied to become managers not workers.

POLICEMAN 1: Why are you like that, man? Don't you feel sorry for them? Man, they don't have bread to eat! You could easily've been one of them.

POLICEMAN 2: I could've but I ain't. And you, if you like them so much, go to the shop and buy them a carton of eggs. What they don't throw at the ministers they can scramble and eat.

A PASSER-BY enters the scene.

PASSER-BY: You had to strike today, didn't you? I have an appointment with the homeopathist. I had to change transport three times because of you lot.

PASSER-BY jumps over the barrier and leaves the scene.

WORKER: I'd like to see you if you didn't even have a shirt on your back!

WORKER 1: What did he say, appointment with a homo...what? Is he a poofter? Hehehe!

WORKER 2: We should have blocked the boulevard. I've just seen at the bus station, only the 31 and 33 come this way.

WORKER 3: I told you to go to the bridge. That's the best place to block!

WORKER 4: Right! Should have been the bridge. We aren't obstructing enough here...

A PASSER-BY enters the scene.

PASSER-BY: You had to strike today, didn't you? when we are doing a presentation for an important client! I have nowhere to park.

PASSER-BY jumps over the barrier and leaves the scene.

WORKER: A fat cat, for sure, a gentleman. If he worked an honest day in his life, you can shoot me dead!

WORKER 1: He gives presentations to clients! Cunt! That's what he is. A cunt! Hehehehe!

WORKER 2: I reckon this kind of strike don't make no sense. Only two TV crews came.... They barely asked me anything! We'll do a better strike tomorrow. I hope those from the government finally see off those foreign visitors who are supposed to give us money....

WORKER 3: Better the day after tomorrow! Our handball players are returning from the World Cup tomorrow...

WORKER 4: I've just spoken to my wife. She says that the TV told people not to use buses 31 and 33 today. They didn't even mention us...

A PASSER-By enters the scene.

PASSER-BY: You really had to strike today! I had hundreds of errands to do today and I'll be late for each of them because of you! You paralyzed half the city!

PASSER-BY jumps over the barrier and leaves the scene.

WORKER: What kind of errands are those if he can do a hundred in one day?

WORKER 1: He's some politician, I bet. They can do more than hundred errands cause they bullshit 100 per hour... Hehehe!

WORKER 2: Fuck it, I see now, I should've taken that early retirement...

WORKER 3: Damn right! This is too much of a drag. They cut off my eleccy. When they remember us they'll cut of my water and gas and arms and legs...

WORKER 4: I've just talked to my wife. I've got to go home. She's on the night shift, no-one to take care of the kids.

WORKER 4 leaves the scene.

POLICEMAN 1: What's the time?

POLICEMAN 2: Almost half seven.

POLICEMAN 1: Shall we change the place? They are dispersing slowly, and it's all getting boring, really. What did the guys from above say?

POLICEMAN 2: They said we should get ready when... And Hamburg will start any minute now. It's live...

POLICEMAN 1: What did you bet?

POLICEMAN 2: Two...

POLICEMEN leave he scene.

WORKER 1: Are we done for today? Here, even the pigs are leaving...

WORKER: We can't give up now, men!
WORKER 2: We are not giving up, we are just forgetting about it.
WORKERS push the dumpsters and take the barrier from the scene, but WORKER...

5. WORKER AND FAMILY

A table and four chairs.
WORKER: Where's the good-for-nothing?
WIFE: In the betting shop.
WORKER: Why is he there again.
WIFE: He says he'll win this time for sure...
WORKER: How much?
WIFE: Ten times your salary...
WORKER: That's three more than the last time he was going to win for sure, and he didn't...
WIFE: Well, Hamburg levelled the score in the 93rd minute... Not his fault.
WORKER: It's never his fault, mummy's boy. It's not his fault he never wanted to study, not his fault for not wanting to work, not his fault he's thick, not his fault I have to feed him like he's disabled... Where's the little bitch?
WIFE: At her boyfriend's...
WORKER: Is he finally going to marry her!
WIFE: He says so, as soon as he finishes military service...
WORKER: So when is finally going to the army?
WIFE: Don't know. He was exempt cos of his flat feet...
WORKER: Meaning never!
WIFE: Never what?
WORKER: He'll never marry her and take her away from here...
WIFE: How can you say that about your own daughter?

WORKER: How else can I put it? In Greek? Even if he wanted to take her, where would that be? What is he? Director, scenographer, some kind of artist? People like him take drugs all days long...
WIFE: She is our favourite child...
WORKER: She used to be when she had ringlets and was five. Now she's got three "Fs" in hairdresser school and calls me "daddy" only when she knows we've been paid some pittance. What's for tea?
WIFE: Take your pick: beans with sausage or sausage with beans...
WORKER: Smart arse... give it here!
WIFE: No bread...
WORKER: Fuck you, you know that?
WIFE: Why me?
WORKER: I've been sitting outside all day, blocking streets, doing all sorts of things, and you couldn't go to the shop and get some bread.
WIFE: I was on my way, but I started chatting with the neighbour and the bread was sold out...
WORKER: What's there to talk about that much, you jabbering bitch?
WIFE: Her husband died on Thursday evening and she buried him at the weekend. She says, he came back home from work, put his feet up on the pouffe and died.
WORKER: Was he healthy?
WIFE: To pull the tail off an ox...
WORKER: Did you ask her how's that that she found a place in the cemetery so fast and where did they find the money? I know they haven't got any.
WIFE: I did...
WORKER: And why are you so interested in that, you cheeky bitch?! Are you planning to bury me too this weekend, so you are asking around? fuck you.
WIFE: "Rub your nose and give two winks and save us from this awful jinx..."

WORKER: I am supposed to put my feet up now and kick the bucket? You drop dead! You fucking bitch!
WORKER lifts his hand as if to slap her. The SON comes in sin with the bread.
SON: Here's the bread!
WORKER: Got the money?
SON: Hamburg fucked me up. They drew.
WIFE: Again?
WORKER: Instead of finishing school, you are rotting in betting shops, with scum... But that's your problem. I don't care. When you are thirty, out you go, moron...
SON: Excellent...
WORKER: If you want to screw it up, then go ahead...
SON: I will...
WORKER: I don't give a shit, your problem, your life...
SON: You don't give a shit?
WORKER: I don't!
SON: Excellent! Great! We are clear. Now you can shut up.
WORKER: I can shut up? How dare you say that to your father...
SON: All right, man, so what? You said what you had to say, I says fine, you said you don't give a shit, I says great and that's that. Forget it, fucking hell, c'mon...
WORKER: Fuck you, you asshole, you can't talk like that...
WORKER lifts his hand to slap his SON. The DAUGHTER comes in, crying.
DAUGHTER: He's left me!
WIFE: Who's left you?
WORKER: Who do you think? Her brain!
DAUGHTER: He left to do civil service in the theatre and has run away with a ballet dancer!
WORKER: Instead of improving your grades, and getting married, and finding an honest guy, someone with skills, you are tarting yourself up, primping,

spreading your legs to conmen, arty-farties. But that's your problem. I don't care. When you are twenty, out you go from this flat, you cow...
DAUGHTER: Excellent...
WORKER: If you want to screw it up, then go ahead...
DAUGHTER: I will...
WORKER: I don't give a shit, your problem, your life...
DAUGHTER: You don't give a shit?
WORKER: I don't!
DAUGHTER: Excellent! Great! We are clear. Now you can shut up.
WORKER: I can shut up? How dare you say that to your father...
DAUGHTER: All right, man, so what? You said what you had to say, I says fine, you said you don't give a shit, I says great and that's that. Forget it, fucking hell, c'mon...
WORKER: You little piece of shit, to your own father...
WORKER lifts his hand to slap his DAUGHTER. The WIFE places a pot on the table.
WIFE: Here! Reheated beans!
They serve themselves. Break pieces of bread. They eat, slurp and bang with spoons.
SON: Mum, beans is for gods!
DAUGHTER: How did you make the gravy?
WORKER: Could have been a bit hotter...and saltier...
WIFE: There's more if anyone wants...
The SON grabs the last piece of bread and crams it into his mouth, but WORKER...

6. WORKERS ON HUNGER STRIKE

A few field hospital beds, WORKERS lying on them. Above them there's a huge sign: HUNGER STRIKE! DAY 16. A NURSE in a white coat is standing nearby smoking.

WORKER 1: I've never thought you could get this hungry, bloody hell...

WORKER: Hopefully you never will again, if we get what we are fighting for.

WORKER 2: Hope we never come back to this...

WORKER 3: What is there to come back? we haven't eaten in 16 days.

WORKER 4: I guarantee that my stomach is digesting itself!

WORKER 1: Fuckin' hell, I'd give anything for some tripe! Lamb's head in tripe!

WORKER 2: Yes, but at Milutin's! And a beer! And if someone could bring me a couple of garlic peppers, I'd love him more than my brother!

WORKER: People, let's stop this, for God sake! You're just making things worse!

WORKER 3: Not really! Give me something from the BBQ, mate! Smoked loin, pork, liver in bacon, intestines, sausage, hot and greasy, twenty kebabs...

WORKER 4: Beer!

WORKER 3: Beer, mate, beer! Cheese salad, sauerkraut, chilli peppers!

WORKER 4: And spoon?

WORKER 1: And spoon! For sure!

WORKER 4: Lamb strew, stuffed cabbage, about five, six pieces, liver-stuffed cabbage, the same, wedding cabbage, beans...

WORKER 1: Then, lamb, fucking hell! Lard, hard as soul, white as cream, plus a litre of white! Then a bit of roast pork, crispy skin!

WORKER 2: Piglet-and-lamb! Chicken-and-lamb! But only legs and wings! I want fish too! But the bones taken out!

WORKER: C'mon, guys! You are not helping, for Christ's sake! Let's shut up, go to sleep, it'll be easier...

WORKER 3: I want pork, too, but "Balerina" style! I won't touch fat, mate! Some "Adidas" style bacon too!

WORKER 4: "Adidas" bacon, mate! Smoked beef salami, pancetta, pork crackling, black pudding, pork-fat sausage, lamb goulash... Sausage pressed in skin, Alpine, Parisian, with pepper, whole peppercorns, too...

WORKER 1: Yeah, fizzy beer, flat, a can, whatever...

WORKER 2: Sardines, boiled egg, even just the white, pâté...

WORKER 3: A spoonful of lard and some red paprika, a pinch, a nip, a needle-tip...

WORKER 4: I hate Turkish Delight, I am allergic to mayo, but I'd eat that too! I'd spread mayo on Turkish Delight and would eat that, I swear to you!

WORKER: A bread crust... a dry bread crust with nothing on it.

A POLITICIAN comes in with WIFE. Followed by a CAMERAMAN.

POLITICIAN: Are you recording? Record... Dear friends, gentlemen workers! You are the locomotive of this country! We, the others, we are all just wagons: cargo, passengers or first class wagons! If the locomotive isn't working, what happens to the wagons? They are useless, rained on, getting rusty! Dear friends, gentlemen workers! Don't let our Serbian train be pushed off the fast tracks of Europe, cos we'll get rusty and block the tracks for the more intelligent, harder working, faster ones! Dear friends, gentlemen workers! Get up! Get up, our locomotives, and go back to the factories! (*WORKERS do not react, to the CAMERAMAN*) Turn that off! (*to WIFE*) Which one is yours? Go to him, and do as we agreed! (*to the CAMERAMAN*) You follow me! Are you recording? Turn it on!

WIFE approaches WORKER. POLITICIAN, followed by CAMERAMAN, is visiting other WORKERS. He shakes their hands, talks to them. He grins, looks worried.

WORKER: What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you not to come?

WIFE: I was worried about you...

WORKER: My ass. You finished all the coffee and all the soap operas are done, so you had nothing else to do, is that it?

WIFE: Not true, I swear on my kids. This is all taking too long, and I am worried. You must stop it. People are getting ill...

WORKER: Stop this? No way! To throw away 16 days of hunger strike without accomplishing anything?

WIFE: If you eat something, the others will follow your example, they'll eat too...

WORKER: Eat something? Shit, perhaps! We'll stop when we get what we want and that's that!

WIFE: Your son will get a job! Sir comrade, the one in the suit, promised! For sure...

WORKER: Where is he gonna find him a job, eh?

WIFE: Why do you care? He'll get him a job. He is already 33, you can throw him out of the flat, as you planned! And your daughter is getting married!

WORKER: When?

WIFE: Waiting for you to finish with all this. She won't, she says, have her wedding without her father.

WORKER: Who is she marrying this time?

WIFE: This time it's for sure! The groom is nice, a bit older, so what, better than some youngster. Sir comrade, the one wearing the suit, promised to marry her. For sure...

WORKER: Marry her to a politician?

WIFE: Why do you care? She'll get married. She is already 23, you can throw her out of the flat, just as you planned!

WORKER: Has the sir-comrade, the one wearing the suit, promised anything else to you, lying fucker? Did you know that he's been coming here for 16 days and promising all sorts of things, but never promising what we want! (*Hacking cough*) Get out of my sight...(coughs again) When I get home...(coughs).

POLITICIAN: Nurse, for God's sake, help this man!

Nurse puts out her cigarette and takes out her stethoscope. Approaches WORKER and starts examining him.

NURSE: Breathe in, hold it... Breathe in, hold it...Open, close...Open, close... Cough, don't cough.... cough, don't cough... Don't cough! Problem solved. He isn't coughing anymore.

POLITICIAN: Is it anything contagious?

NURSE moves away, lights a cigarette.

NURSE: Nope. Just that he hasn't eaten for 16 days. You know, they are on hunger strike?

POLITICIAN: Yes, yes, sure...(to the Cameraman) Are you recording this, man?

POLITICIAN takes WORKER's hand.

POLITICIAN (To WORKERS): Dear friends, gentlemen workers! Is this the solution? Is the solution that the best among us perish, perish by their own will, and we are talking about easily solvable problems which have been complicated to the point of insolvability thanks to the crisis in growth at world level of only 13% quarterly, before the autumn conference! I beg you! Deficits, in relation to profit, although we are talking about the classic totalitarian attitude of tycoons towards the market, which, of course, we do not gladly allow to the level they want us to, despite the gross income at the state level, fiscal year, regionalization, quarterly, statutes! I beg you! To demand budget during legalization of transitorial nationalization, according to the subministry of subministries, is not possible and it is all a consequence of the reckless state governing of the 1990s!

POLITICIAN lets go of WORKER's hand.

POLITICIAN: Dear friends, gentlemen workers! This is harder for us than for you, believe me. Perhaps it doesn't look like it, because our stomachs are not growling at the moment, but we're just wagons! We'll do anything to fulfil your demands! Of course we will! Yes! As far as our capabilities go, and so forth. Indeed...

WIFE, NURSE AND CAMERAMAN applaud. POLITICIAN takes out a bag of candies from his pocket. Opens it. WORKERS get up from their beds, one after the other, and help themselves to candies. They unwrap the candies, put them in their mouths and suck, but WORKER...

7. WORKER IN A SHOP

A shelf with shoes, a counter and a cash register.

WORKER: And those, how much?

SHOP ASSISTANT: They are on discount. 9,300...

WORKER: How much were they before?

SHOP ASSISTANT: A bit over 12,000...

WORKER: Ouch, 12,000 for these?

SHOP ASSISTANT: Well, they are not 12,000 anymore...

WORKER: I know, I know, now they are 9,300... Still, anyway...

SHOP ASSISTANT: Let me tell you, our shop, however you put it, is the cheapest. In the shopping mall they are about 11, 12,000, with the discount. They are imported...

WORKER: I can see they are imported! I say here, mate, so what if they are imported? So, I should give my all wages, which I haven't received for the last two years, only because they are imported?

SHOP ASSISTANT: Well, you don't have to give anything...

WORKER: Look now, please, I have to give a fortune for shoes, then wear them with dirty socks, or step into some shit and there you have it. Throw 12,000 into shit...

SHOP ASSISTANT: Sir...

WORKER: C'mon! What kind of sir am I! Worker, mate, worker! I work not far from here, in the factory. Can't you see, mate, my cap, trousers, everything...

SHOP ASSISTANT: Still, sir, you don't have to buy these shoes...

WORKER: Holy crap, mate, I know I don't have to. What do you think I am, stupid? Now that I've touched them, I've got to take them...

SHOP ASSISTANT: No, no, I am just saying. Here, down the street, about 100 metres, you have a market and I've seen people selling even used ones...

WORKER: Buy shoes on the market?

SHOP ASSISTANT: And of course, you've got cheaper shoe shops...

WORKER: So, for your shoes, for them I ain't good enough, so I have to go somewhere where they sell them for 300 dinars or go straight to the market and look for used ones, worn, without sole, shoelaces etc?

SHOP ASSISTANT: That's not what I meant, I told you that because you clearly said that 9,300 is too much...

WORKER: Wait, mate, what am I?

SHOP ASSISTANT: Sorry?

WORKER: What am I?

SHOP ASSISTANT: You? A worker, I mean...

WORKER: Customer, my dear, I am a customer, and you are, I guess, a shop assistant, isn't that so? And now, and so much is clear, you are supposed to sell what you usually sell, isn't that so?

SHOP ASSISTANT: Well...

WORKER: Don't "well" me! Meaning, I can fool around with you and talk crap about your goods, say they are expensive, that there's better, and more beautiful, and you are supposed to smile and persuade me to buy them nevertheless cos it's your wages... I have no idea how you work, are the goods yours? do you get a percentage? or whatever...

SHOP ASSISTANT: I've got a fixed salary...

WORKER: Fuck it! Still, if you sell well, if you sell a lot, they might raise it? What do you know about how he,

the boss, the top dog, thinks, the man you work for... You should make an effort to sell them, and not to send me to the market or wherever...

SHOP ASSISTANT: But I thought that...you said...

WORKER: All right, I know what I said, but maybe I am just a bastard who doesn't feel like spending so much on shoes, so he bullshits like everything's expensive, but still has to buy them cos he's going to a wedding. My daughter's finally getting married, she graduated, found a nice guy and, so, I need shoes cos it's not nice to go barefoot, is it? And my son found a job, decided to treat his old man, gave him money for new shoes and a new suit, says, here, take it and get yourself something. So you've got something nice to wear and... Forget it, what I am on about... You just make sure you are selling...

SHOP ASSISTANT: So, are you going to buy them, then?

WORKER: Mate, I'm going to buy them even if I don't need them. I wanna teach you something, you get it...?

SHOP ASSISTANT: So, shall I wrap them?

WORKER: Well, I guess you know how to do that part properly? If I am going to buy them, you have to wrap them up...

SHOP ASSISTANT wraps the shoes.

SHOP ASSISTANT: You really confused me, I have to admit...

WORKER: What's there to confuse you? I am paying and I have the right to behave how I feel. You have to do what you are paid for...

SHOP ASSISTANT: You are right...

They go to the cash register.

WORKER: If everyone did what he was paid for honestly our country would be better, and he would be paid more... Isn't that so?

SHOP ASSISTANT: You are right. I am, for example...

WORKER: That's why I am going to teach you your job, cos you don't know, and then you will teach someone else, and he someone else, and so on. If everyone did the same, in a few years we would all be better off, I am right?

SHOP ASSISTANT: I agree, though, our people are a bit strange... Some wouldn't like to...

WORKER: have someone else tell them what to do? Well, they've got to learn that too, that they don't know everything, that there is someone smarter than them...

SHOP ASSISTANT: You're right about that, too... So, 9,300...

WORKER: Yes...

WORKER takes some money out of his pocket.

WORKER: 100, 200, 300... and 50... Doesn't look like it's enough... What now?

SHOP ASSISTANT: But... sir!?

WORKER: You know what? I'll pop to work, not far, I work in the factory, to get some money, and I'll be back later? Is that ok? And you keep those shoes under the counter...and the bill... All right?

WORKER is leaving.

SHOP ASSISTANT: You're not coming back, are you?

WORKER stops.

WORKER: Probably not...in fact, for sure... But you have learned something, haven't you, and that was my aim, so everything is fine... That's the way it is...

WORKER leaves, but SHOP ASSISTANT...

8. WORKERS CUT FINGERS

Big table. On it there are some knives, a couple of cleavers, a bucket with ice and a bottle of schnapps. WORKERS pace nervously. WORKER stands motionless.

WORKER 1: C'mon, people, let's think a bit!

WORKER: Haven't you had enough of thinking?

WORKER 2: There must be another solution, damn it!

WORKER: Haven't we tried everything already?

WORKER 3: There must be someone else we can complain to?

WORKER: Haven't we talked to everyone and complained to everybody?

WORKER 4: We should disturb and irritate them, if nothing else, obstruct them, until they fulfil our conditions!

WORKER: Don't you remember all the blockades of their roads, rails and squares?

WORKER 5: How about going at them with full force?

WORKER: Full force almost died out when we tried the hunger strike.

WORKER 6: The people will think we are crazy, that we should be locked up!

WORKER: Isn't this kind of life leading us to the lunatic asylum or jail?

WORKER 7: People, there must be a less important part, one that hurts less!

WORKER: Aren't we alive and well, and they almost ripped our souls out?

WORKER 8: Oi, mate, it's not that easy, damn it, it's not going to just grow back the way it was!

WORKER: Aren't we doing this so that we are never again the way we were?

WORKERS stop. They gather around WORKER.

WORKER: People, no more! Here and now we are going to see our cause through. Our children will be grateful, our sons, our families, ancestors and descendants... All honest people, the whole nation, industry, economy, history, geography... Only honesty, truth, justice, endurance, the very life, fuck it all! It's all with us! Everyone is with us! There's nothing to wait for! No more! No way back!

WORKERS (All): That's right! No more! No way back! Forward only! Fuck them all! It's enough! Let's show them!

All WORKERS approach the table. WORKER is in the middle.

WORKER: This, what we are about to do, is the only thing that remains! This is the only smart solution! This, so to speak, we must do! This, so to speak, people expect us to do, cos what else is there to do? We, workers, as always, will show the path to the others! As always, we'll pave the way for those who follow behind!

WORKER takes a cleaver. WORKERS step back and position themselves around him.

WORKER: As the oldest, as a man with three years to go to retirement, I'll lead the way!

WORKER raises the cleaver and cuts his finger off. Forefinger. Screams. Blood shoots all over the table. WORKERS applaud. WORKER takes a swig from the bottle. Puts the severed finger in the bucket. Leaves the table.

A workers' tune (OFF) (for example: "Keep the Red Flag Flying")

One by one WORKERS approach the table. They take cleavers or knives and start cutting off their fingers. Some cut off a thumb, some forefinger, some the middle one... They drink from the bottle, scream, place fingers in the bucket and leave, continuing to applaud. There is more and more blood. It drips from the table, spreading on the floor.

SPEAKER (Off): The President of the Serbian Armourers Union Mr. So and So, who's been, for many years leading the armourers' strike in Such'n Such town, cut his finger off yesterday, his forefinger to be more precise, due to, as he told our correspondent, this state's total lack of care for the workers who have been starving for years, although they've been hon-

estly earning the salaries, which haven't been paid all this time. The act of finger cutting, forefingers to be more precise, was supported by his colleagues who, one by one, too, cut off their fingers in some kind of, so to speak, camaraderie collective madness. At first, the workers declined medical help, refusing to give the ice bucket where they stored the severed fingers to the authorities, but, after the intervention of Mr. So and So, President of Such'n Such Committee, they agreed to undergo the surgery at the medical centre, where each of them had their fingers sewn back on. The doctor on duty stated that he hopes there hasn't been any confusion and everybody received their own finger. Though rather radical, this action by the workers has been understood by the public as something to be expected and, what's more, very intelligent. Other news: FC Hamburg, against all odds, managed to equalize in extra time.

9. WORKERS WORK

POLITICIAN stands in front of the red ribbon spread across the whole length of the proscenium. CAMERAMAN follows him, recording everything.

POLITICIAN: Our government, known for its sharp instincts, for its vision, has recognized, with help from foreign investors, the potential of this town, this factory, but above all, the potential of these beautiful working people without whom this state and this town wouldn't exist, without whom this factory wouldn't work, without whom this heart of mine, and allow me to say, the hearts of every member of the government, would not beat! Hoping that you will be proud of us, at least half as much as we are proud of you...

POLITICIAN takes a pair of shears, and slowly cuts the red ribbon.

POLITICIAN: It is my honour, thus, to declare this factory, with new, completely new and modernized facilities, open again for work! Therefore, happy work and... good luck...

POLITICIAN leaves, followed by CAMERAMAN. A few machines, working desks, some tools, dismantled rifles, pistols, revolvers. WORKERS are standing, each in front of his machine. All of them have one finger grotesquely bandaged. Some have their thumbs bandaged, some forefingers... They are laughing, working, assembling weapons...

WORKER 1: "But, how can I, it stinks?" she says to him, and he goes: "Well, let the motherfucker suffocate!"

WORKERS laugh.

WORKER 2: That's an old joke, mate, real old... I've heard it...

WORKER 3: Have you got a better one?

WORKER 4: Yeah, sure. Not a single one is good enough for him, not one is funny, each one is old, and when you tell him: "C'mon, tell us one," he can't even open his mouth...

WORKER 5: Yeah, but he'll beat the crap out of you anytime time in a joint. At least he doesn't get wasted on three beers...

WORKER 6: And who are you? His lawyer?

WORKER 7: Lawyer or no lawyer, he's right! You remember when you came to mine for the saint's day? You'd just arrived, not even half an hour had passed, where's the man, look left, look right, and he's under the table, the man slipped under the table... Not even three bottles he'd emptied.

WORKERS laugh.

WORKER: If anyone had told me we were going to pull this strike off, that we would endure, I wouldn't have believed him...

WORKER 1: Spot on! But I am sorry, mate, for all those people who were gone before their time...

WORKER 2: But, who forced them to retire? If it was worth it I'd have done the same...

WORKER 3: At least they've got all ten fingers...

WORKER 4: You've got them too, fuck you!

WORKER 5: Who are you, you only cut off your pinkie? As if you need it for something other than picking your ears...

WORKER 6: Sure, he should like you, crazy bastard, have cut off his thumb, so now he wouldn't even be able to hold a spoon.

WORKER 7: Well, for that reason, I cut off my ring finger! My wife wants to kill me cos I can't wear my wedding ring, but I don't care, I am fine!

WORKERS laugh. Rifles, revolvers and pistols which they are assembling, are slowly getting their final shape though workers bandaged fingers are obviously making it harder.

WORKER: What do you say about these new machines? I see, it's all nice, oiled, no squeaking, it all smells like new, mate, just somehow a bit complicated...

WORKER 1: I used to be able to put three together, and now, here, not even this one is finished...

WORKER 2: And it's all written in Chinese. I haven't got a clue what I am doing. I do it from memory, whatever happens...

WORKER 3: For me, hell, it's all in Russian!

WORKER 4: At least it's all in Cyrillic, fuck it...

WORKER 5: For me it's all written in American! I guess this is American...M-a-d-e i-n...

WORKER 6: Touch wood, now when they pay us and the extras, plus hot meals, you can enrol in some school, so you can learn languages, you're the youngest anyway, then you can translate for us slowly...

WORKER 7: You picked him to learn Chinese? He can't even speak Serbian properly...

WORKERS laugh. It's getting harder to handle the weapons, to assemble them. They "break" rifles, turn barrels towards themselves, screw and unscrew, "play" with safety, cock the guns...Weapons click empty.

WORKER: It'd be nice if we get that job for the Iraqis, the one they announced. Hey, mate, they want a million pieces! That's big money! If we get the contract, and we managed to somehow do it, if we handle a million pieces, they'll have to increase our salaries...

WORKER 1: Wait a minute, mate, let them first pay us on time what they promised. We'll easily come out again for the increase, when it comes...

WORKER 2: You can strike again if you want, no way I will. One finger is enough from me, yeah! I can hardly work like this...

WORKER 2 turns the gun towards himself and it goes off. WORKER 2 falls down. No-one reacts.

WORKER 3: What's the matter with you, people? Why strike again? Did we ask for what we wanted? Sure! Did we get what we wanted? Sure! There you go!

WORKER 3's gun goes off. WORKER 1 falls. WORKER 4 suddenly turns towards WORKER 3 and his rifle goes off. WORKER 3 falls. No-one reacts.

WORKER 4: You are like some old granny, really! What do you think? now that they gave in to us, they can't fuck us around? Well, my mate, wait a sec, you'll see...

WORKER 5: No-one has been born yet who didn't want to screw the workers, at the first opportunity, and if there is plenty of something here, then it's exactly the opportunity...

WORKER 5's rifle goes off. WORKER 4 falls.

WORKER 6: But, on the other hand, there is not a worker who wouldn't want, in his life, to fuck and replace at least five managers! They can't pay me as little as I can work... *WORKER 6's gun goes off.*

WORKER 5 falls.

WORKER 6: Fucking finger...These bandages are...

WORKER 6 turns the gun towards himself and shoots. WORKER 6 falls.

WORKER 7: May you all be well! Nobody forced us to be born here, to live here, to vote for this and that... But, let's finish for today, while we can still see, then across the road, to the joint...

WORKER 7 turns the barrel towards himself and it goes off. WORKER 7 falls.

WORKER lifts his rifle in the air.

WORKER: Here! Done! Put together! This rifle is like clockwork!

The curtain slowly comes down. He jigs between the tables and machines, showing off his rifle, but WORKERS...

10. WORKER BURIES WORKERS

WORKER steps in front of the curtain. His finger is in bandages. He carries a shovel. Starts digging.

WORKER (To himself) Later, when we finish, nobody goes home, you hear me? We go to a bar... It's on me! I am paying, of course! This morning, my daughter called, she woke me up, she called at 4 in the morning. There, in Australia, it was already noon, whatever, she says: "Dad, you are a grandpa again!", she says: "A grandson!" Who knows when I am gonna see him, grandpa's little fucker! I haven't see even the first one... They won't come here soon, too expensive, they say the airfare is too expensive. Maybe they'll visit next year. Until then, right, my son should be free... It didn't turn out too bad: six months like this, plus a year conditional, though it eats me, he says, as soon as they let him go, he'll shoot across the border. Says,

now that they cancelled visas for us, no-one will check on him, he can walk out, like a gentleman. First he wants to go to Hamburg, to piss on their stadium, to spit on their football team there. Says, if it wasn't for them, he would have won big money on betting, could've left this place already, done something with himself, or something. Then, I don't know where he'll go... I know, I said as soon as he was thirty I'd chase him out, I said and then took it back. I've got no other son, what can I do, though he's ate my liver...

Stops digging. Takes off his cap and wipes his forehead with it.

WORKER (To the audience): Me and the wife, we're almost dead. As if we've been competing, I reckon, like who'll be the first to go, so that the other one has to do everything alone...hehehe, so we sit, stare at each other, and when we get sick and tired of each other we scream, though I don't listen to her, nor does she hear me... For me, here, there's today left to do and then I retire for good, finally. The company, went bust, done for, they sold it to someone, he sold to someone else, whatever, they found me this work, they felt sorry, they said, you have so little before retirement, gave me a shovel and said, dig here, and here, and here, then fill it up and so on... What else is there to do in the cemetery? I wanted to fight, to strike again, but gave up, I am too old for that and it's better like this, I say, not to stir things up when I have so little left. Today, here, they sent some guys, three of them, poor bastards, suffering souls, some workers I guess, they said, I didn't see them cos the caskets were closed, that they, poor bastards, set themselves on fire, or whatever. So, just to bury them and that's the end, then...

The End