

# The Cancer Monologue of Péter Szil

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I left Hungary in 1974. When it turned out that I have cancer, I had been practising alternative healing techniques for years, and I had already started to work as psychotherapist. I lived on a strict vegetarian diet, not because I was afraid of any serious diseases, but because I simply wanted to live a healthy lifestyle. I was practising yoga, meditation, and everything. It was clear from the beginning that I have no trust in conventional oncology. My wife, Bippan shared with me all that alternative stuff, but when the bump behind my ear started to grow, she told me it was time to check whether it's cancer. I refused the idea for a whole year, and Bippan is not that pushy type, so, instead of shouting at me telling that I immediately go to the doctor, she somehow waited for me to take this step. In the meantime she collected a good deal of information on alternative healing techniques for cancer. I mean, she had some kind of intuition to be prepared for any case. So I was in a “good” situation in this sense, and when the bombshell of the diagnosis struck home, I already had a lot of information.

In parallel with trying everything in alternative healing, I took a psychological approach that already had a significant literature in Sweden in those times. Psycho-oncology is a science supported by empirical results and serious theories. I was also interested in stress research and stress management, which are closely connected with psycho-oncology. After the diagnosis, one of my main strategies was to turn my knowledge into practice. Thus, for example, I regularly met a former officer in the air force, who had become one of the main figures in autogenic training in Sweden. He taught me muscular relaxation and autogenic training, and I started to practice meditation intensively in the same period as I had always wanted to learn about the connections of Buddhist meditation, humanistic psychology and Buddhist psychology. During those years, I regularly participated in up to ten days long retreats of meditation in complete silence.

Stress means not only negative but positive factors as well – fully in line with the theses of Selye, who says that any event demanding adaptation from the organism should be regarded as stress. Selye's stress scale of scores from one to hundred shows that events usually regarded as positive, like a wedding, a new flat, going on holidays, and so on, score sometimes higher than those regarded as obviously negative, like the death of a close relative. Stress management means that you have to elaborate life strategies that make you able to react to these situations appropriately. This stress research is strongly connected to oncologic research: for example to the theory according to which there is usually a half to one and a half year long period before the identification of cancer diseases, in which some traumatic event or something with a high score on the stress-scale happens in the life of individuals, that can easily start up cancerous processes. If one doesn't have an adaptive strategy for this, or the event remains untreated, then all this, besides the symptoms of depression, will seriously weaken immune defence.

This theory is often reduced to a fashionable nonsense in *new age* circles, saying that “everything is defined by your thinking and, as soon as we find the bad thought, your cancer will be over.” Cancer is a disease caused by multiple factors, even if it is true that in certain cases the psychological elements are more dominant. My case also included a psychological element that was easy to identify for me, as it was quite obvious: my daughter, Kati suddenly appeared in our home, as her mother had the sudden idea that Kati has to leave Hungary. There I was thinking that I’m free from the communist system, free from my family, that I had survived the loss of Kati too, that everything was behind me, in front of me nothing but life. Indeed I had begun a completely new life from all perspectives, changing everything radically, and there I was with Bippan in all respects a totally happy and full relationship with a one-year-old child, occupied with new fatherhood and taking care of my child. So all this was really idyllic, until suddenly Kati stepped into the picture. And then I felt – and this can be understood almost literally – I felt as if a monster suddenly appeared inside of me, because I’m there with my daughter and simply cannot handle the situation.

I was terrified by Kati’s coming to join us. She was only seven months old when we were separated, and here she is now, eight and a half years old, looking absolutely like me in my childhood. Moreover, her hair was cut short at that time and, even today, some people tell me, when they see a picture of Kati from that period, how nice childhood pictures these are – of *me*. I was shocked by my past which I didn’t have yet the opportunity to explore in a deep therapy. Plus, and I think this was the unconscious reason, she was not only physically like me, but, in spite of growing up without me (she was not even one year old when I left Hungary) she nevertheless reacted to situations just like I did in my childhood. She talked exactly that way, she had the same gestures, just like me long before. I can’t think about a more perfect example for someone suddenly facing the untreated things of one’s childhood. And my reaction to all that was that I suddenly heard a beast, a monster bellowing. Then I realised that I know this voice very well: yes, this is my father. The embarrassing thing was that half a second later I realised that the sound is coming out of my own mouth, and Kati is standing in front of me, below me, as I am big, and she is small, and suddenly I see a hand raising in a threatening manner, and then I see that this hand is right at the end of my own arm. It was horrific.

This behaviour of course triggered a strong reaction from Bippan, who thought this was not the man she had chosen as her partner, so her question “who is this man?” was fully justifiable. And she told me: I love you very much, and if you are in big trouble, I will help you, but what you are doing is unacceptable! But in the meantime there was the child, who every single night, and I’m not exaggerating, every single night went to sleep crying about why her mother had sent her away. This was an unresolvable situation in itself. At that time we didn’t even know that Kati was manipulated by her mother, and that she had to return three years later because her psychosomatic symptoms had started to emerge. Her mother kept her in a so called *double bind*: while she told Kati that she would come for her very soon, and she prohibited her to build emotional relations with us as she would “betray” her mother, she officially gave the child to us for good. Any of the aspects of this situation is, I think, sufficient stress to trigger a disease.

When we took upon ourselves without hesitation that Kati is moving to us, I didn’t realise the possibility that she would make me face my own childhood and the horrible father living inside me. I already had some ideas about the internalised father figure, which made the situation even more embarrassing and I was totally aware that I should now forget everything else and go to intensive therapy. Nice, but

how do you do this when you have to feed a family? My son Lomi was a small child and we also had Kati. All this was totally traumatising so, although I had been over some therapies by that time, I needed the hit of cancer to force me to finally face it all. Moreover, I had been neglecting dozens of other things that I shouldn't have, for example, my relation to music.

My main problem was that I realised: I can't control myself. I never shared the illusions of cognitive behaviourist therapists or classical psychoanalysts, who think that when you know the reason behind something, your problem will be solved. What nonsense this is! If only life could be so simple. I'm deeply regret that Kati had to suffer so much because of this, as I realised during those three years that we are carrying these demons inside of us, and that if the environment provides no help in overcoming childhood traumas, it has really serious consequences.

So Kati moved to us in 1982, and the theory proved itself in my case, because around nine months later, physical symptoms started to appear. My cancer was lymphoma and was not just an accident, so the multifactor theory proved to be correct. When they told me that I had lymphoma I suddenly remembered that in my childhood, when I didn't have many illnesses otherwise, I had relatively regularly something, an illness that came with a sudden high fever, and nobody could tell what it really was. And then they called the doctor, and it stuck in my mind, that he said that there was no treatment for this, this what he called lymph fever. So, already in my childhood, my lymph system was my weak point and it is no accident that the disease got me right there.

We lived in a flat with three rooms in a block of flats. Prior to this, we used to live in a commune in a beautiful villa, from which we moved to make it possible for Kati to go to a Waldorf school. Besides taking care of the two children I tried to meditate every morning, which was only possible at dawn so that, even in the toughest winter, I sat on the terrace, wrapped in a sleeping bag designed for arctic weather. What I learned there has stayed with me since, and it's been very useful in everyday life for me. Many people are envious of my ability that I can sit down or rest my head wherever, whenever, and can easily get to the deepest relaxation in practically some seconds, even to sleep, and can come back after some minutes.

However, with Kati I acted in an impatient, tyrannical manner and was continuously mistreating her verbally. I shouted and was out of control. It never came to physical violence, but today I know very well, I'm an expert at this, that we don't need to reach physical violence to make a relationship very oppressive and unpleasant. In the meantime, my physical symptoms were coming, all of which were, as it turned out later, the typical symptoms of cancer: chronic fatigue, insomnia, sweating at night, all that. I used to interpret these as the result of my nightmares: my father was continuously haunting me and I thought that I was sweating because of that, and that I was so tired because the whole situation is really exhausting, and so on. We also noticed that I could not stop eating and that, whatever amount I ate, I just could not get enough. But even this I thought was the result of stress and that I was eating hectically, which was true because I was eating abruptly and absentmindedly as my thoughts were always somewhere else.

It was at that time that, after a lot of turmoil and disruption, I was allowed to return to Hungary. I can remember everything in full detail and what I will tell now is much more embarrassing and counts much more as a taboo than whether I became gay after some homosexual relationship or not. I was at Muzeum korut and suddenly felt a strong urge to take a dump so I went into a restaurant where there was this typical Budapest type toilet which had a flat basin, you don't see them around any more. I am not sure whether it was still that childhood anal fixedness or because I

hadn't been used to this kind of toilet any more, or because everyone growing up in Hungary takes a look down the toilet when they get off, but, no exaggeration, I was appalled to see that there was an almost half meter long tapeworm there in *my* shit.

There are two types of tapeworms, one of them consists of these small, white, worm-like stuff that easily infects children, and the other is this real beast that lives in the guts, eating up whatever you gobble. And you can gobble as much as you like, the tapeworm will eat it up. And when it's so huge that it has not enough space in your guts, you start to shit a part of it. And when you come to this point, it means that the tapeworm is already as big as your gut system. How this tapeworm came I have no idea even today but it's obvious that it weakened my body so much that together with psychological and other stress, cancer had an even easier way to attack. Or maybe the cancer processes started before, weakening my gut system so much that the tapeworm could easily take ground, and these symptoms were parallel – I don't know.

A few months long hassle followed when I was trying to get rid of the tapeworm. Here too, first I tried alternative methods, then I took medicine and all, but by the time I got rid of it, my lump started to appear. I'm very glad that today I can talk about the whole thing even laughing a bit, but the symbolism of it all is really shocking if you think about it: while I was feeling that my father is draining the strength from my soul, and continuously eating up my own self, there is such a horrible, frightening, disgusting monster, as thick as my finger, draining my vital juices inside my guts. And that I'm coming to Budapest, and all this happens right at Múzeum körút, the neighbourhood of my university years, that period of my life when I started to cut relations with my father, and where I decided to change even the family name inherited from him.

Back to the point. The lump started to grow and some people told me that I should finally go to see the doctor but I was totally refusing the whole thing with the thought that "everyone can have cancer but me". Then I even got lured by the opinion of some kind of an alternative healer, who just like that uttered that it is not cancer. And I, instead of saying "let's check it first", used this person to legitimate the fear I, of course, felt. Finally, by the time it became obvious that the lump is really ugly and big and it is growing and growing, I assumed, even before I received the diagnosis, that it is probably cancer, and, just to be on the safe side, in trying to activate my immune defence, I started to inject myself with mistletoe extract, which is used in anthroposophic medicine. I received the diagnosis in May 1984, in the famous Karolinska Institut that was considered to be the best place of the world, but had an attitude that deprives the patients from the human aspect, approaching them like cars that you can divide into its components. But I still had to go there first, because these things function in a way that before I could start doing anything, I needed a diagnosis.

After getting into the medical system I had a continuous, open fight with them for years. It started with the doc telling me that they'll sedate me for doing the biopsy. But I was an informed patient by then and I knew that this was usually done with a local anaesthesia at most, and there is no medical reason for putting me to sleep. The fight between us went on for two days but as on the second day the fellow started to be very aggressive, I finally decided to yield to him as it struck me that the next day I will be exposed to the knife of this person. One of my reasons for not wanting it was a nightmare-like experience of full anaesthesia related to a childhood tonsil operation – actually even academic literature says that anaesthesia is often followed by nightmares. So when I woke up from the anaesthesia, which is usually an 8-10 hours long process and it is really hard to get out of it, my wife was sitting next to me and I

was telling her about the stupid dreams that anaesthesia can give you. But guess what - I was dreaming! In my dream a doc with white coat came in, walked up to my bed and told that the tissue sample was ready, and yes, it is lymphoma, and then he left. And I said, 'gosh, what a terrible dream, it is worse than a nightmare, that a diagnosis could be told this way.' Then my wife started to sob, telling that it was no bloody nightmare! 'The doctor was here three hours before and you fell asleep again immediately. He came in, didn't even sit down, just stood next to your bed and said that the tissue sample was ready, and yes, it is lymphoma, and left. He didn't even think of asking, 'excuse me, how do you feel now that I've just told that your husband has lymphoma?'" And two days later, when I was already totally awake, he came again and told me jauntily: 'Do you want to know why I insisted on doing the operation in full anaesthesia? Because you were right, I had no medical reason for that but I'd had enough of you, because you're the kind of patient of whom I could be sure that you would constantly make questions even during the operation.'

So this is how the fight started, which basically consisted of my resistance against hospital medicine and the protection of my civil rights. By that time I'd read the book titled *Medical Nemesis* by Ivan Illich, and I knew everything about the speculative character of the so called medical science, and that oncology is nothing else but making experiments on people. I'm convinced that the history of chemotherapy can also be described as the mafia-like relation of medical science and pharmaceutical industry. And I also think that people can only be cured by a method in which they believe. So, even if doctors mock it, placebo effect exists. Psychology is based on trust too and, if the patient believes that a certain kind of therapy helps, then it has obviously traceable medical effects. So I'm not talking about placebo effect in this jesting manner at all.

Ivan Illich was the first one to describe diseases caused by doctors. Today it is well known that a huge number of people die because of medical malpractice, but these are usually presented as something else by a system which is characterized by its strong corporatism. It is built into the statistics what percentage of patients can die at the operations, more at the planned ones than at the acute ones, without being labelled as malpractice. Karolinska has an enormous technical capacity, working like a factory, so in this respect it counts as the best place of the world. In my view though, it was a phalanx, and at the moment I got in as a young psychotherapist, I faced corporatism too. The so called "professionals" were expected ten times more to accept everything and not to show any individual or personal reactions.

I'd never wish anyone to experience what bone marrow biopsy is like, when one's chest is pierced with a drill as thick as my fist. By that time we had been through giving birth at home, and we knew that women have to give birth at the clinics in awfully uncomfortable positions in order to make it more comfortable for the obstetrician. The same thing went on in Karolinska too: the examination was not done at the part of body where it would've been less painful, or where I would've felt less defenceless and vulnerable, but where it was comfortable for the doctor to reach. Simply this is the reason for taking the bone marrow sample from the breast bone. In this system it is just normal that during such a horrible examination the staff team is suddenly changed because the working hours have ended! Or that when I try real hard to somehow establish a minimum contact, get someone holding my hand during that time, or asking whether it hurts, nothing can keep back fifty medical students coming in suddenly, while I'm stretched out there with a drill in my chest!

So the whole thing is absurd, and it was made even worse in my case, because I could see it clearly and I had an idea about it. Otherwise people regard it as totally normal. But I have experienced through my work that people do have soul and that

this lives somewhere around their hearts. It is not accidental that the Vedas of India also write about that when they described what lives where in the body. Incidentally, Buddhist meditation became one of my work tools as well. The Lomi School that I attended in the States is based, among other things, on the combination of bodily therapies and Vipassana meditation. Basically, I haven't found any tools since then that would teach people more effectively how to be with "what there is" – this being namely the slogan of the technique. The other very practical field for using this technique is pain control. For example, when I was in the toughest period with my cancer and I had lot of pain, this really came in handy. Many people have believed since then that I got some fakir skills because I can stand the most serious dental operations without anaesthesia while I'm doing nothing else but use the simplest meditation technique. This technique is based on that through the meditation practice you learn to pay attention to your breathing, and when you realise that some event, thought, flashback or anything draws your attention away from its object, which is the breathing, you just simply acknowledge the distracting element and return to your breathing. The other crucial element of the technique is that I'm not holding onto concepts in my brain but I'm simply aware of "what there is". The third most important element is what was taught to me by one of my dearest Buddhist teachers, namely that there is only one constant thing in life and that is change. So when I'm sitting in the chair in the dentist's chair and I'm paying attention to the continuous change of different physical parameters – heat, noise, speed, space – it happens very often, that while I think that in the next moment will come the thing that hurts really much, and of which the dentist thinks that nobody could ever endure it without anaesthesia, by that time all that is already over.

What has attracted me in Buddhism from the start is that in reality it is not a religion but a practical philosophy of life. And, in addition, from the very beginning I've allowed myself to keep of it the things I consider important in our culture, and what I can adapt for myself. So, for example, I don't accept the forgiveness practice, but I find very useful the approach that your deeds have a direct effect on the fate of your environment and yourself. It is no coincidence that Buddhists are often "secular activists" too. Buddhist psychology has helped me a lot in finding the very edgy balance between living together with a sly disease like cancer, while continuously keeping up my spirit in the fight against it.

So, well, at the moment that the drill reached the bone marrow, I literally felt that my soul was drawn out of me. And then I started to cry. This made the machinery stop. They simply didn't know what to do with a thirty-something old crying man, with whom they've been talking up to this moment like men talk to each other in a pub, when they try to veil that something hurts very much by laughing loud and patting on the back. There was only one nurse who, so to say, broke the implicit agreement, and asked me whether it was hurting really much. Which made me cry even more of course. And the machinery simply stopped. The doctor got paralysed, with the drill in my chest.

I later wrote down all this in a debate article and put in the context of a professionally ratiocinated criticism of the system supported by psychological knowledge. If doctors by then hadn't really liked me, to put it mildly, you can imagine how it was afterwards! Later I found out that the article was immediately put on the wall of the nurses' room. Of course: nurses are the ones who are in contact with the patients, carrying all physical and mental burdens. At that time I wasn't so gender conscious as now but later I saw perfectly well how macrostructures replicate the same structure as exists in families. So women were assigned the task of emotionally maintaining the whole system and the actual caring, starting with cleaning patients

from shit, putting the bed urinal below them, changing the bed sheets, and all that. And the doctors, ninety-eight percent of whom are male in the field of oncology, just come in, declare something and execute the sometimes really brutal examination. But it is not them who afterwards collect the bloody and crappy paper towels, which they use galore. It's the nurse who has to pick up all at the same time: me, an adult broken down to a crying baby, and the bloody paper towels and everything. The nurses were very aware of this and so, for them I was a hero.

The article had the consequence that doctors simply didn't talk to me and made the unacceptable medical ethics mistake that they started to discriminate against me. Some people even advised me to report this to the medical ethics committee.

The model I came to present is based on the idea that, when you get into the clinics as a patient, you should be told not only where you can find the toilet to leave the urine sample, where is the blood test, the CT scan and so on, but also where you can find the curator, where the psychologist, where the representative of the self-help association for the support of oncologic patients, where someone who has a chat with you, where someone supporting the families, where someone who puts you in touch with already cured people who preferably had the same diagnosis as yours. And also something for the doctors. No wonder they become apathetic and brutal and distant when they have to treat fifty patients a day, knowing that twenty-five if not thirty of them will die, while fifteen reminds them of themselves, their mothers, fathers, wives, or children? But there were no signs that they would try to handle this somehow. No Balint group, nothing. Well, I took up all that, confronting the world famous Karolinska Institut with it.

When I came home from hospital, I asked: how the hell can someone talk to a person like this, and how come they haven't talked to Bippan immediately, asking how she felt and so on? Some friends still recall that I said: I think people don't die of cancer but of the diagnosis! Look at how much they frightened even me, but I won't die of the diagnosis. I don't know whether I'll die of cancer, but I just won't die of the diagnosis. Of course it was just some blabber to encourage myself. But if I'd have been at the point where I am now, I wouldn't even have let them do the biopsy. I wouldn't have waited for the diagnosis, because, as I later realised, the so called "exact diagnosis" serves merely the purpose to let doctors know which chemotherapy cocktail they should give, while one who wants to defeat cancer by strengthening the immune defence doesn't need this at all. I exposed myself to a good deal of suffering, not to mention that the cancer itself got swollen because I let them cut into it, although the lump behind my ear was nicely encapsulated. But because they cut into it, it spread into the loins, the armpit, and so on, that is, into the typical lymph parts.

So I made a lot of mistakes, among others the mistake that I went to medical revisions weekly, later monthly, and then half yearly. I never went alone because I learned soon what you are exposed to if you go alone. These waiting halls are so much full of anxiety that you can almost cut it with a knife. And when the assistant comes out, she's not telling "dear Mr Peter Szil, I hope you didn't have to wait too much, please, come in", but she's shouting your number. So the whole thing is like a concentration camp. It would make almost no difference if they burned the number into my arm! And one time, when I already had some idea that they can't really tell me anything, because I know more about my cancer than they will ever know, and when we'd been waiting there for forty-five minutes already, in this horrible waiting room, Bippan looked at me and said: 'look, until we come inside here, you never look like one who has cancer. But whenever we come here, after half an hour you're like a

real cancer patient.' And I said, 'oh fuck, I feel exactly like that too, so let's fly from here, right now!'

They disliked me because I allowed myself the luxury of being a citizen and not a patient. Because I went to the hospital when I had some problem. When I felt that there's some trouble, then I went in and told them, now would be the time for a CT scan. They were totally outraged about it, how come that I'm telling them what kind of examination I want. No, no: I should go through all the steps of the official procedure every time, and at the end they would prescribe something they regard as convenient. Their starting point was that if I have for example "centroblastic centrocytic non-Hodgkin lymphoma", then I'm in a certain category. But my starting point was that I'm Péter Szil, who has a disease that he has to cure. So I always quarrelled until I got them to do as I wanted. Because I have learned also that this system will actually give you everything if you raise the devil. Just like gypsies do: the whole clan marches in, stands on the corridor, making clear that they won't go unless the relative they brought in is served. The doctors were constantly threatening me, putting spells on me, that I will die of this and so on. So I feel that all the energy that I lavished to preserve my human dignity and my right to self-determination would have been enough to cure four cancer diseases in two years. But I learned a great deal from this and since then many-many people whom I have treated have been very grateful to me for never regarding them as patients but always as humans.

Of course it turned out that a good many alternative techniques just don't work for me and it took me four or five years to find the most appropriate medical treatments. During this time I was in a continuous race for my life and it was uncertain all through who would be the winner, the cancer or me. Psychologically speaking, it was very important that a healthy rage was working inside me as this is a very important element, and thus I was doing it mostly in a conscious way. One of the first things that I read was the survey of Lawrence LeShan, who created the basis for psycho-oncology. He was a psychologist at the oncology of a cancer hospital in New York, and he noticed during many-many years of practice, that the survival rate of the so called "bad patients" is much higher. So those patients come more easily out of the disease, who don't accept the routines, the ones who when the nurse wants to give them an injection and, for example, wants to send their visitors out for that time, are able to say: 'No way! First I finish the talk with my visitor, and you come back later to give me your injection!' The staff profoundly disliked these patients because they didn't accept that it would be their job to make the work of the staff easier but thought that the staff is there indeed to help them get cured. So I regarded this behaviour as a model and I set free all such inclinations of mine because I thought, it should not be a question of that whether I survive cancer or not.

One of my favourite doctors, who is the crazy saint type, a fellow with anthroposophic background, once told me with his beautiful black humour, winking at me: 'Do you know why they make survival statistics of five years? Because cancer patients die in the sixth year!' This kind of stuff helped me a lot. I needed a good deal of healthy sarcasm towards the whole thing as this was all an experiment at the same time, examining whether self-determination works. And for this purpose I really put my back into it. This was my life for some-teen years! And I lived together with cancer in fact, and it was terribly hard to find the dividing line between acceptance and resignation. I had a lot of philosophical contemplation and talks with many excellent people. Plus, I experienced human cooperation, support and love, while I was going through many, many tough things.

I also learned that sometimes you have to say: 'I'm sorry, I really adore you, and you're important in my life, but now I don't want to meet you for a while!'



Because I was consciously trying to make people face what I felt inside of them. For example, if someone didn't overcome the death of a close relative, or had the picture in mind that cancer is equal to death penalty, I didn't want to expose myself to meeting such people. People I met with were forced to look at the horribly huge lump behind my ear that was purple and bruised, and the skin was stretched and tense on it, and the veins and all that... At these occasions I always said that you don't have to feel embarrassed, come and take a look at it, touch it, ask about it if you want, let's get over this first, and then we can talk about something else. Because I can see that you can't pay attention. Anyway, I was unscrupulous about the whole thing, but I realised that I helped people this way.

I started putting my back into it in '84. I tried everything and in a relatively short time, I managed to establish that the lump was stagnating although it hadn't decreased at all. I was very consistent in strengthening my immune defence and, at the very end of '85, we saw that the lump had stopped growing. And even Karolinska acknowledged this. So the lump first appeared at the end of '82 and from then till May '84, when I got the diagnosis, it was growing spectacularly. The small knot behind my ear, which was not visible at first and only I could feel that it was there became, without exaggeration, a middle-sized potato which stuck out three centimetres next to my ear. Today there's a hole in its place and the trace of the cut that you can see there is from the biopsy, that is, the tissue sampling.

The lymph system is circulating like blood circulation and, if a lump that was localised earlier gets into the lymph system, neither operation nor radiation make sense any longer because radiation is only useful at a well localisable area. Of course it was impossible to cut into it anyway because it was too close to the facial nerve and everything. So the only thing they suggested was chemotherapy, to which I said a radical 'no' at first. Years later, they would have tried to treat it with radiation, to which I said how the hell they could suggest radiation, when they themselves had taught me in '84 that it would make no sense. Then they were only humming until I told a doctor very categorically that either he won't mention the whole thing again, or he tells me immediately what he is talking about. And then he said – that was already after the article, when they too were already rough with me – 'look, then I'll tell you what: we've never met anyone as stupid as you are! You're walking up and down the streets with this huge lump, looking very ugly, while we could make the lump disappear with radiation in a minute! So this is it, radiation for aesthetic purposes! 'Thank you very much for caring,' I said, 'but let me decide with my beloved ones and the mirror what I regard as ugly and what I don't!' And besides, I won't expose myself to something that I know has side effects and can cause metastasis, or appear in another form, weakening my immune defence on which I've worked so hard and so long, and the whole fuss just to make it seem like I don't have something, which I know very well that I do have. Then I rather choose to have the lump behind my ear! By then I'd learned that when I'm stressed and I don't pay attention, it gets a little bit bigger. And I told even the doctor: don't be nuts, you're an oncologist, and you would have to know much better than me that I'm real lucky until this is here outside. Because if you do the radiation and put an end to this localisation, the same process will still go on in my body, but it'll go inwards, and then I would get onto the operating table when my liver is already rotten, or my bone marrow is infected all over inside me. I'm extremely lucky that this goes outwards and that there's no metastasis in my bone marrow.

I knew that the moment I have metastases, cancer has won. So I also knew that as long as the cancer is only in the lymph system, I still have a chance. And when they suggested me chemotherapy, I read everything about chemotherapy. And maybe I'm

not immodest if I think that I knew more about chemotherapy than some doctors did. About its history, for example. I even asked some of them whether they knew the history of chemotherapy. And of course they had no idea that it was discovered in 1945, around the end of the Second World War by an American doctor, after there was a mustard gas explosion on a ship seized from the Germans. When they examined the blood of the marines, it turned out that their white corpuscles disappeared. So this was the way this doctor discovered chemotherapy! And the basic material of that is still mustard gas, and they add all kinds of materials to that. Chemotherapy kills everything: the healthy cells and the ill, cancerous cells as well, so they are bombarding the body with it as long as the proportion of those two kinds of cells reaches a critical level. Then they change the cocktail again, or pause it for a while. So they are constantly experimenting with this limit, but the whole thing is based on the fact that they can't spot just the ill cells.

My approach was totally different. I wanted to find a healing method that is not bombarding the lump, which is only a symptom, but one that is strengthening the immune defence. Because every minute, you can find a crazy cell that wants to deviate from the genetic code and doesn't want to die. A cancerous cell is the one that doesn't want to die. So, we can describe cancer as a process when such a cell manages to break through the wall of immune defence, which means that there's a hole in the immune defence. This is like when the firewall stops for a moment and the virus gets into the computer. Human cells have expiry date. There are cells which die after a day, others after a month, and others only after years, but there is no human cell which lives longer than seven years. So the human body is a genial paradox: it can die of the fact that some of its cells just want to be immortal.

So I wanted to strengthen immune defence in a very conscious way, and by the end of 1985, we reached a point where even Karolinska had to admit that the growth of the lump had stopped. And what do they say at such an occasion? 'Okay, congratulations, you were right, and please, tell us, who you turned to, and what you did, so that we can suggest that to other patients who are in a similar situation...?' No, of course not. What they said was that in that case, maybe we should check it again, maybe the diagnosis was wrong! And by then I reached that point that for New Years Eve of '85, I proposed Bippan that we could have a child. Bippan had been longing for one more child very much but I'd said that with the cancer, of course, no way, and she knew it very well too. By then we had been using and teaching natural birth control, with which you can identify the time of the ovulation, and this way we caught the fertile period of Bippan easily, and she knew at once that the child was conceived. She could feel it.

This was in the beginning of January, and we were still in the middle of that month, when suddenly, the lump started to grow again. My contact with Tolmi is interesting in that respect too because in Lomi's case I was there from the first thought one-hundred-fifty percent as a father and I was singing to him during pregnancy six times a day, so much that even after his birth that song I'd used to sing to him when he was in Bippan's belly was the only thing that really calmed him down. Tolmi in this respect was totally left out, because during the pregnancy I was constantly occupied with surviving cancer. Moreover, this was the year when a series of things happened, of which there should be one at maximum in a whole life.

It started with my cancer getting active again in January. Then Olof Palme was killed in the streets in February, in Stockholm, the town where we lived, at the same place where we had been walking just a few hours before. This was a real huge national trauma which many people couldn't still overcome since then. Its horrific and traumatic character was not only apparent in that Swedes were crying in the

streets, but also in that from one to another disappeared the well-based feeling of a whole nation that they can be an exception in a violent world. And that the killer was not found in two days, and still not found up to the present day, was affecting Sweden in a horrible way. And of course it made us question inside, whether it was a good decision to come home from California. Because when we'd decided to have our first child, we still lived in California, and we didn't think of coming home, as Bippan was as happy as a dog with two tails, that she'd finally found a place with a nice climate. But when we began to think about having a child, both of us felt at once that we couldn't stay there, because, despite all of its attractions, California is in the States, which is an awfully violent place, where you are likely to have the experience whenever, that you're walking home one day, and someone runs out of a bank he just robbed, and shoots the first person coming in front of him. Or where, in the peak of the day, you can be knocked down for your wallet at the bus stop. And we felt that we couldn't have a baby there, so we went back to Sweden.

Tolmi in Bippan's belly, me ill with cancer, and this kind of crazy violence shakes our life. And one month later came Chernobyl. And we were in the worst zone, where people doubt even today, whether it is advisable to collect mushrooms in the forest. This was March. Then in April, my mom was killed in Budapest. Yes, just like I say it. A madman walked in and beat my mom to death in her own flat. Not shooting her but literally beating her to death. Meanwhile I was in Bristol, at the Bristol Cancer Help Centre, a very famous alternative clinic, founded by Penny Brohn, a therapist with a life story similar to mine, when she was ill with cancer. And this is another story, by the way, which would be worth a book. My mother's death and everything around it. And then, I still haven't told how much I, who always held fatherhood so important, was affected by the fact that I couldn't constantly be present while Bippan was pregnant with Tolmi.

Before I left for Bristol, I called my mom to tell her that I'm leaving for a week, and I will let you know so you won't complain that I didn't call you! I had to do this because she was awfully worried about me. And she was desperate if I didn't call once a week at minimum. I called her exactly for this reason, to tell her that I won't have contact to anyone from Bristol and I'll only call when I'm back in Sweden. She said, great, she's glad that I'm telling it. And on Wednesday evening I had the feeling that I have to call her immediately. And I started calling her from the clinic, from a phone box, and I didn't stop until Friday morning, when someone finally answered the phone. This person was a policeman, who'd just got into her flat, and then he told me what happened. And then from Bristol I came straight to Budapest. Two months later the police found out finally that my mom was killed on Wednesday, exactly when I had the feeling that I had to call her immediately – in spite of making sure in advance that I don't have to talk to her. And all this was no mysticism, as by then I was through the therapist training, where I'd been writing a dream diary for three years, and I knew very well, that for example, I was regularly communicating from the other side of the ocean, from California with people living in Sweden. Literally communicating, just like we talk on the phone. So I had strong intuition... And in the summer of 1986, I had a feeling that I was leaving. Which caused a serious outrage, starting from Bippan actually, I had to fight the first battle with her, although she was really great in the whole thing, and we were really in harmony, but even she started with this *new age*-like discourse, that I shouldn't tell such things, because then it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. To this I told her that I don't think it but feel it. And if you don't take it seriously now, then we might miss the chance of saying goodbye to each other properly. Do take me seriously, I'm not playing with this!

In the same year I also visited a famous Mexican clinic where they were carrying out both alternative and traditional oncologic treatment. Their opinion was that alternative treatment together with my hard work for strengthening my immune defence was successful because, although I had contained the cancerous process, that was still not enough in order to get rid of the cell mass that is the lump, and they know how to eliminate the whole thing with a reduced and carefully controlled chemotherapy. And that I had real good chance for it, as my immune defence was strong, so the side effects would be smaller. I accepted this, and I went to Mexico to this clinic. For years, I had been flirting with the idea of having my hair shaved completely, although at that time it hadn't come into fashion yet. And even Bippan told me, phew! don't even think of it, because then she wouldn't kiss me and wouldn't caress my head, so I didn't want to risk that before. But at this time I told myself: finally, here is a good excuse! And when, on the way back, in the motel where I stayed in Los Angeles, a mop of hair stayed in my hand in front of the mirror in the morning, I said, yeah, that's it, and before going to the airport, I went straight to a hairdresser and had it all shaved, and I came back to Sweden completely bald.

So I took this cocktail which was indeed a reduced portion, plus they gave me this medicine named Leatril, which is very effective, and condemned by conventional medicine, although it have saved the lives of many, many people. So that really minimised the side effects. I took to chemotherapy at ten in the evening, and at two in the night, the lump said 'oops!' and it started to disappear. And then I got awfully scared! Because my first thought was, oh damn, how will my body handle all that crap that was collected in the lump for years? Will my immune defence be able to eliminate all that is circulating there inside? And how can a cancerous lump that might have taken twenty years to develop disappear in three hours just because they injected into me some kind of horrific liquid? This all seemed very shitty to me.

So, when I came back to Sweden, I made Karolinska go mad again. Then they really held a grudge on me because I went in, and told them that now I want chemotherapy, and I have with me the receipt that tells them what they should give me: not their own cocktail, but the one prescribed by the Mexican doctor. They were reluctant but in the end they gave me the second dose. Then I asked them what chemotherapy could do more. They said, absolutely nothing, if the lump left after the first dose. Chemotherapy doesn't cure, doesn't strengthen anything, at most eliminates cancer. I said, then I'll stop it. And then they started to tell me, well, but as the doctor prescribed it, to which I answered, excuse me, does it make sense or not? Does it do anything or does it not? And then they said, of course it doesn't do anything. Good, then I'll stop it!

So far so good, but I made an awfully big mistake, a very serious one: I stopped all my hocus- pocus too. When I went to Mexico, I even took some work with me to the clinic, which I took on me on also because I knew that it could be useful for me there. I translated a book about acupuncture into Swedish, and meanwhile I intensively tested on myself the techniques described by the book. And it worked indeed. Before I accepted the proposal of the Mexican clinic about the combination of limited chemotherapy and Laetril, I read a book about chemotherapy, and when I got to the list of possible side effects of the chemo, I ticked them one by one: vomiting I don't need, sickness, no thanks, and so on, only when I reached the falling out of hairs, then the little devil inside me was happy, telling that this one can come, because then I'll have an excuse at last to have my head shaved bald, an idea I had been flirting with for a long time then. So at the Mexican clinic, I was translating that book even in bed, and meanwhile I was trying out on myself everything I thought could help me avoid side effects. And indeed, none of those came, only my hair

started to fall, but that was on the way back home already. Doctors wanted to keep me at the clinic, saying that I should teach them what I'd been doing to myself, because I was their first patient who had no side effects. So, when, after taking the second minimised dose at Karolinska, I decided that this was enough for chemotherapy and me, I stopped pressing the points, too. Then, by the end of summer, all my bodily functions started to cease. And two months later I suddenly had a vision of a paragraph of the book I read about chemotherapy, and when I checked it in the book, unfortunately it was really there: attention, the side effects of chemotherapy can appear even months after finishing the treatment! And I simply forgot about this sentence! Of course I should have continued with everything for months in order to eliminate the harmful effects! And when I came back from Mexico in August 1986, everybody triumphed, saying hurray, the lump is over, and I look so good, and I won against cancer again, but I had the feeling that there's huge trouble, and I'm on my way to die. And the lump wasn't coming back yet, although that also came back after two months, but my body simply started not to function: my thermoregulation and gut system stopped, I couldn't keep control over when I shit and piss, and like a snake, I started to shed my skin.

I don't know even today, how much it was due to chemotherapy hitting back, and how much this terrible year of 1986 added to it. Because, for example, I've been trying to overcome my mother's death since then, but I'm still not over it. And I didn't even tell how all this influenced the life of my daughter Tolmi, who is a survivor, after all. This is also a very interesting story, of which I learned a good deal, and I can use it in my work as well. Because it is regarded as a medical fact now, that the milieu inside the womb influences not only your personality, but also psychosomatic tendencies. And Tolmi was growing inside her mother's womb in an atmosphere where Bippan was constantly having justifiable doubts whether we were irresponsible, whether you can bring a baby into this world, where Olof Palme is shot, where Chernobyl can happen, where my mom is beaten to death by an idiot in her flat. And me, in addition, irresponsible fool, brute, which was another issue we overcame in the meantime, because luckily we went to therapy, and we could talk about it, that while Bippan adored me and was worried about me, she was also totally angry with me, just like me with myself, asking how the hell could I tell her that we should make a baby, when I started dying afterwards? What an incredible cheek! And Bippan was absolutely right. And it was startling, how the eleven-year-old Tolmi started to utter the sentences that appeared in Bippan's mind during her pregnancy. She even described an imaginary scene about her mom giving her to another family, because her mom can't do it with two children, because her father has died. She was transmitting Bippan's thoughts word by word.

By the way, Tolmi almost died, when she was one and a half year old. There is a theory in anthroposophical medicine, as they believe in reincarnation, which I've met in other spiritual traditions and oriental teachings, too, that people not only reincarnate when they're conceived, but there is a period after birth, during which babies decide whether they really want to stay in this world, and if yes, they reincarnate once again. Many people say that this is one of the possible explanations for the sudden infant death syndrome, that the babies decide that they don't want to come to this world. So reincarnation can be taken back. Tolmi didn't grow until the age of one and half years, even then her weight was appropriate for a baby of four-six months. At that time I knew about post-traumatic stress syndrome, and she was looking exactly like that, with that expression in her eyes which those people have who've gone through a serious trauma, who let's say survived a plane crash, and you

can see on them that they're absolutely somewhere else, but they can't talk about it, 'cause they have no words, 'cause maybe they survived the catastrophe in coma.

So I could put into words in August '86 that I was going away, and I managed to persuade my family and friends that they have to help me in this now. They are still mentioning it from time to time, Bippan and my closest friends from Sweden, that they've never lived a more beautiful and more human period with me. That in those times I was really like I'd always wanted to be: real relaxed, and I was not a Buddhist, but *Buddha himself!* And indeed, it was really beautiful how I said goodbye to everyone and everything, and I really felt that I had perfect harmony inside me. And since then I know, that I'd like to finish every single meeting in a way that I can feel that this was okay. We can never be nasty, there's no such thing as we'll make it okay next time, because maybe there's no next time. I can die at any moment, because it's much easier to die than what we'd think.

So while Tolmi was to be born, by the end of August 1986, my belly and my lungs got filled with liquid. This is by the way very rare, as usually it is either the belly or the lungs which get filled. So I didn't even have to decide whether I'd breathe or eat, because none of these was possible. Then I had another great turn with Karolinska, where I had to go immediately to have a CT test, and to check whether there are cancer cells in the liquid, whether it is cancer itself, or something else. And then what they did to me was that they pierced my lung, which is a horrific feeling similar to the bone marrow test. And there, when I can feel that finally the doctor who with his shaking hands stabbed me five times with a needle that would be enough for a horse, succeeded, because I can feel that he starts to draw the liquid, and after three weeks, I can finally take a breath, as there's enough room for the air inside my lungs, he suddenly takes the needle out. And I say, why don't you draw more liquid? And the brute then answers that this is already enough for the diagnosis! Well I was really totally weak then, but I swear, if I'd have had just a little bit more energy in me, the first time in my life I would've given up my pacifism and stabbed him with a needle or anything!

When Tolmi was born, I was really going away. We were lent a neighbouring flat for the time of the childbirth, so that I could have a place to have a rest, because by then I could not be up on my feet longer than for half an hour without a break, and then I simply fainted. Childbirth had been going on for a while, and I was to go to the other flat. And then some voice inside told me to go back to the bathroom. Bippan was in the bathtub. Originally, she hadn't wanted to give birth to Tolmi in the bathtub, although delivery in water already existed in Sweden, but Tolmi came out in a minute. Our friends told it also, that for about three hours, while everything happened, and we were admiring the child, during these three hours I was alive again, and I had strength, as if I'd had no problem. And then Lomi, my six-years-old son cut the navel-string, which is not cut immediately when the childbirth happens at home, indeed sometimes they're waiting for hours, until the pulse in it totally ceases, and the child has really arrived here. And when all this was over, then suddenly – puff! – I collapsed. And soon they had to take me to the hospital, because I simply needed twenty-four hours continuous care. I was completely incapable of doing anything, and Bippan stayed there with the new-born baby and the six-years-old child, and she couldn't take care of me the way she would've wanted to. Therefore I was taken to the clinic, so that until I die, they take care of me there. And then the story of my return started.

This was really the clinic about which I'd dreamt all my life. It was real bit of luck again, because this clinic had been opened just half year earlier. This was the first anthroposophical clinic of Scandinavia, a real healing place, in a small village not

very far from Stockholm. It was so nice, that I think I came back from death because this place would've been good for dying, too. In the case of the other sanitary institutions, I was really annoyed by that all of them, absolutely independently of whether they practised conventional or alternative medicine, strived to *they* arranging that I don't die. So sometimes it happened that when I came home from somewhere, I told that now I'll die just out of sheer spite, just to make them cross, so no doctor could boost his ego on me. It was in this clinic, with these doctors I first saw put in practice a concept I'd held for some time by then, that curing is in fact *accompanying*, and not the elimination of something. Because there are times when somebody has to be accompanied in fighting against physical symptoms, but sometimes you shouldn't fight against, but the person has to be accompanied in dying in a nice way.

At this place I finally could feel relieved: this is it! Here the practice was not like in other places, where when somebody died, they quickly pulled the screens until the corpse was taken to the cellar. Here, in the middle of the building, at the most central place, there was a funeral chapel, where, after a while, after all roommates could really say goodbye to them, the dead were taken in nice clothes and decoration, and then the doctors and all other patients and everybody could go there to say goodbye, and they could talk about death. The whole thing had an ideological background, too, as they believed in reincarnation. And they put their beliefs into practise, so when the recovery of someone was really beyond hope, they still stayed there with the person, and accompanied her or him. Plus, there was Einar Berg and the other crazy saint doctors, who were practising medicine as an art, as they had the intuition which allowed them to attune themselves to other people. And in this respect, I think absolutely like they do, because, as a psychotherapist, I regard the picture of Magritte titled *Clairvoyance* as my painted motto. The painting is a self-portrait: Magritte is sitting, and painting a beautiful eagle with spread wings on the canvas, while on the left side you can see his model, which is nothing else but an egg. So, as a therapist, I have to see the eagle able to fly inside the egg. And I think that medicine is exactly about this, and not about the handling of symptoms. And these people there were truly doing this, and I think that I came back to life, because I was in such a place where it was no question of prestige whether I die or not, but they were accompanying me, and then I could keep easy and let myself be.

I was lying in bed for weeks. My daughter Tolmi was brought to me every day, but I was so weak that I couldn't even raise my arms. I remember, when they put her on my belly, and she was so small, from my navel up to my chest, and I felt her breathing there, and when everybody was silent, I could even hear her sniffing, although otherwise I could hardly feel anything in my body. But I was thinking a lot, and reading a lot of Buddhist literature, and Buddhists, if anyone, are really professional in helping people through death, into death. And somehow, I slowly started to come back. I remember when I could first go out to the corridor, and I struggled to a table at the corridor, and sat down in the sunshine. There were small information leaflets on anthroposophical medicine put out there. And in one of these, the theory of Rudolf Steiner was described, which many people had tried to explain me before, but I was somehow unable to get it. And then I read three or four pages of this leaflet, and suddenly the whole theory became clear for me. Actually the whole thing's really easy.

The point in Rudolf Steiner's theory is that the thing we call health is nothing else but the balance of two illness processes: one is the group of illnesses with inflammation that produce heat, like for example a flu, which show an extending tendency. That's why snot is coming from the nose. The other group is formed by the

illnesses which are cold, and tend to condense, which don't produce liquid or heat. The school example for these is cancer. Steiner thinks that health is not the absence of illness, but the balanced status of these two processes. And then suddenly it became clear for me what they knew in Karolinska too, and they were talking about it, that cancer patients don't catch a cold, they don't have such everyday illnesses. Actually I knew this from my knowledge of alternative medicine, and, moreover, even conventional doctors used this approach at that time, that a cold or a flu has an important role, because the function of fever is to heat the immune defence from time to time, like a stove.

And I remember, that at five in the afternoon, in the light of the setting sun I had the idea, that in that case what I need is a superhuge inflammation, which I can't even imagine, maybe that would set me right. And, no joking, at seven in the evening, my right ear started to ache. Not where the lump was, but the other side. At nine in the evening, my ear was aching terribly. At half past nine, they called the chief doctor from home, who came in immediately, and he asked, because the nurses didn't think of it, that sorry, did you measure his fever? And they said, there was no point in measuring my fever, because I never had not even a slight temperature. And then they measured it, and at half past nine, my fever was thirty-nine point eight degrees Celsius! And they called the whole staff at once, somebody got some flowers from somewhere, and they came in, congratulated me, and they were happy. Because, in an anthroposophical hospital, when a cancer patient gets high fever, that is a celebration. At half past eleven they called Bippan, telling her that something's happened and I should be sent to the nearest big hospital.

There's a small, longish bone behind the ear, which is famous of being the only bone of the human body having no exit. This means that if the bone marrow in this gets inflamed, then the pus can't flow out of it, and after a while the inflammation explodes into the head, the brain. So this is one of the most dangerous ear inflammations. And this chief doctor had the suspicion that this might be my case, and they have to check it with x-ray immediately. At other occasions they try to avoid these examinations as long as they can, but now they said that I should be taken to x-ray with an ambulance at once. Then my fever was between forty and forty-one degrees. They took me to a horrible place: ice cold walls, green like babies' shit, the whole place was awful. And before they took me to the doctor, they wanted to give me antipyretics immediately in order to take down my fever. And I said no. First they didn't understand, they thought I was talking nonsense because of high fever, and they wanted to inject it into me.

In the anthroposophical hospital, they use cold pack instead of antipyretics, and when fever gets really very high, then they uncover you totally or put you out on the snow, or they give you lemon packing on the calves, which makes fever lower by a full degree. We also used this later with the children. And while my teeth were chattering from high fever, with the help of Bippan I successfully fought against the antipyretics. My first question was whether they had a hot water bottle. They didn't even know what that was. Then I told I didn't want to stay there long. Back to the point, I got to the doctor at last, they examined me, x-ray, and of course, it was the ear inflammation that the chief doctor had been talking about. They took me to the ear-specialist in attendance, who told me that if I don't get an intravenous antibiotic-cocktail immediately, I'll die by seven in the morning the latest. Then I asked, sorry, what's the time? It was half past two at night. I said, please call a taxi then quickly, because I don't want to die in such an ugly place.

This was the point when even Bippan became uncertain. She was standing there with our little child, and they were saying that I'd die latest seven in the



morning, I can understand her, I don't accuse her at all, that she said: look, Peter, maybe this is the moment when it's your turn to give in. Although this toughness I'd learned from her. I've learned incredibly much from her. She was the one, for example, who'd told the doctor that she wanted to give birth at home, because we thought it was no illness that we had a baby. And when the doctor started to verbally attack her saying that you are an irresponsible mother, and you will die, and your child will die too, so he was practically putting a spell on her, then Bippan looked into his face with her blue eyes, and said, if this is what has to happen, then she doesn't want to die in an ugly hospital, but rather at home. So I learned such things from her, because she was continuously doing all these stuff. Much later, by the way, one of the reasons for the crisis of our relationship was that I couldn't bear that, as she became older, she started to be scared of things. Maybe her mom reincarnated inside her, who was a real coward.

Anyway, I told the doctor to get a taxi for me at once, because I want to go back to the clinic, and I want to die there. It's incredible what was going on there after this in verbal pressure. They called the chief doctor of the hospital, whose first try was to call me an idiot, and then he said that he'd talk to my anthroposophical doctor. He thought that they'd solve it just like that, the corporative way. I said okay, talk to him, but I want to be there too, nobody will chat behind my back, especially, when it's about my life or death, and I want to talk to him too. They made a scene pretending to call him from the other room, and they tried to put through that he as a doctor has to say that I should do what they propose. And Einar Berg was really grand, and he said, that he totally understands what they're saying, and it's completely logical in medical terms, however, there are exceptions, and I have to decide. They came back and told me that Einar Berg is also saying that they're right. And I said, you're lying. I don't believe he said that, and anyway, I told you that I also wanted to talk to him.

I made them call Einar Berg again, who told that yes, he said that they were right, but he added that I have to decide, and then he said he would support me in everything: whether I want to go back, or if I decide to stay. There's no predetermined scenario, both versions can have a logic, and whatever I decide, he's with me. I said okay, I'll be in the clinic in half an hour. And then they still shouted at me for a while, and called me everything, and I told them, excuse me, but I think that as a doctor, it's not ethical to scream at a patient who's close to dying, so please call me a taxi now! Then they insisted that I sign a paper telling that it was my own decision to leave. I said of course, I fully understand that they don't want to expose themselves to being sued by my family in case I die. But could you please do it in five minutes? Because I truly want to get away from here finally! And they wrote the paper, and I signed it. And I was fuckin' humanistic with them, because after two months, when it was obvious that I was recovering, I wrote them a letter so they don't worry, in case they were still thinking of me, saying that I'm that crazy brute, who didn't accept their proposal, and let nothing bother their conscience, 'cause I'm all right.

So I went back to the clinic, where they were already waiting for me with the wool blanket and my small hot water bottles; these were my small teddy bears. And then we started the rounds of garlic, garlic and garlic. My enormous respect for garlic developed at that time, plus they used all kinds of stuff, homeopathic medicine, mineral medicine, and who knows what. We were doing this garlic thing so hard, that my room was so smelly, that even the nurses came in holding their nose. There is no better antibiotic than garlic, and I'd been using that before, as that was the first alternative medicine I was curing myself with in the very beginning of eighty-four. I got to learn then, what it means when garlic is evaporating even through your pores. This was the first time in my life, that when I sat into a taxi, the poor Swedish taxi

driver told me fully ashamed, dear sir, I'm really sorry, I've never before asked nobody to leave my cab, but I'm allergic to garlic.

The point is that I started to recover. The ear inflammation ceased, but it lasted at least for three weeks, with high fever, but they never let the fever go above forty degrees. They always lowered it so much that I didn't have cramps. In the meantime I was doing their arts therapy, too. First they had to carry me there and put me on the chair. We were dealing with painting and such things. They let me go home for half a day at Christmas Eve, and I could go home finally somewhere in the middle of January, because I was obviously getting better. And then they suggested me to move to some warmer place, because that would do good to my thermoregulation. And then Bippan came with the idea of moving to Spain, because she suddenly realised that it is possible to live in a place with the climate of California in Europe as well. That's how we got to Spain.

Besides conscious stress management, that I was using all through, I took with me to Spain the medicine named Iscador, which I gave myself in huge, concentrated injections. This is mistletoe extract, one of the great inventions of Steiner, which I was using almost for ten years more. Sometimes I injected it daily, sometimes more than one time a day, often into the lump itself too. I learned to give myself the injection from the back side. Along with this, I was using Interferon too, which can be regarded as a conventional medicine in a certain respect, as it was modern genetic technology that enabled the making of first animal and later human interferon. It has the same logic as the alternative approach that I was using, as it's not bombarding the symptom, but it's strengthening the immune defence. Interferon is a substance which is produced by the body, and it plays an important role in immune defence. It was first discovered in connection with Hepatitis C and similar illnesses involving inflammation or infection that the body very simply stops producing interferon. At that time nobody used it for cancer, or it was only allowed in an experimental phase. They were experimenting with it in Karolinska too. Einar Berg had the crazy idea to try it, because he was reading about what interferon was. When I started, there was still no human interferon; it appeared exactly in the same year. And then he arranged a special permission, that we can use it in my case, even if the whatever medical committee thought then that it couldn't be used for cancer. And for me it worked like a charm. So both medicines were strengthening the immune defence. But with terrible side effects really. They caused enormous fever waves, the whole thing was like having the wildest flu, with muscle fever. Moreover, in the case of hepatitis, Interferon is normally used for one year, and I was using it for six or eight years.

We knew that the whole thing worked, because I started to be symptomless, so to say. But it still took some years during which, whenever I went to Karolinska for control, the trace of lymphoma was still present in my cells. And then they always told me, ugh, you still have cancer! And I thought, gosh, these people are nuts! They don't understand that if I have the same thing after ten years, and my lymphoma was the kind with the strongest tendency to cause metastasis in bone marrow, liver, or whatever, so if I have the same diagnosis I had in eighty-four, then this is a huge success! But they still didn't realise this, and never thought of congratulating me. So I let go of going to controls. By the time we moved to Spain, I stopped going completely. I went regularly back to Sweden, but there I always went to Einar Berg. Our relation was then so close that he asked me how I was, and how I'm doing with the medicine, and he told me straight, look, after so many years, and especially the way you're doing it, you know much more about your disease than I do.

I left Karolinska also because the whole thing was really ridiculous. Let's say they made a blood test. I knew exactly that by the time traces of my non-Hodgkin-

lymphoma appear in the blood test, I'm done with long ago. So the whole thing wasn't worth a shit! Or let's say they measured the lump. I was already cross when the chief doctor came, because in the meantime, all doctors refused to deal with me, so I was put to the chief doctor, see if he is able to regulate me. So I was a real black sheep there. This chief doctor looked like a really unhealthy man: his looks awfully neglected, smoking continuously, his hands were stinking of tobacco. I think he was alcoholic, too, because his skin was altered in the way you can see it in alcoholics. And then this person comes, and with his shaking hand, because even his hands were shaking, he measures my lump with a device used for fine measurement. And I told him, sorry, but this whole thing makes no sense! Maybe, if I'd be coming here every day, it would, but this lump changes its form and size six times a day. And I can tell you beforehand that when air pressure is high, and I slept only four hours, and I-don't-know-what happened the previous day, then this lump will have probably a different colour the next day, and it'll be a bit tenser. What I didn't want to tell him was, that it's awfully unpleasant when he touches me with his hands stinking of tobacco. But when I will feel in my body that the lump has been tense for days, as if something's started, or when I can feel that there's something in my body, and, because I was really paying attention to my body from the very start, I realize that the crisis I had before was also starting like this, well then there could be something to a blood test.

The ugly lump behind my left ear was still there until the end of the '90s, but then it disappeared. This is a very interesting thing again. When I reached the point where I said okay, this will be there in my life for good, and how cool, that you can even live together with cancer, and if god gives me that up to the age of I-don't-know-what, every time I come for a blood test, they'll find a cancer cell in me, which is still of low malignity, then, and I knock on wood, this is excellent! Some people have a wart, and I have a potato behind my ear. So what! And when I accepted that I will live with this, then it started to go away. And my intuition in Mexico, that there's something totally wrong if a lump as big as this one disappears in two hours, turned out to be completely justified. Now it took at least one and a half year until it slowly disappeared. At first we didn't even notice, but one day Bippan, or someone else told me, hey, isn't this lump smaller now?

And then we started to observe it, and indeed, regularly, gradually, by millimetres it went back, exactly in the speed I had imagined. But even long after it went, I continued with Iscador and interferon, and I only stopped them when I noticed from several signs that my body started to produce interferon. It was detectable in the fact that I was always getting into some inflamed condition, and from that I realised that what I'm adding to the body as interferon only causes side effects now. And then I took a big breath and started to decrease the amount. I was playing with it, missing one day, two days, missing a whole week, and I observed like a hawk whether anything was coming back. By then I had learned what the best body position was to check it, in order to feel even the deepest lymph swelling immediately. I was looking at what the doctors were doing when they're examining it.

By then we also succeeded to pay back the debts we accumulated in order to pay all the alternative treatments I have been recurring to. Fortunately the interferon was financed by the national health system, and my stay at the Swedish anthroposophical clinic, which would have been the biggest of all the expenses, was covered almost entirely by the patient's fond of the same clinic.

Since the lump has diminished slowly, I had nothing to do with doctors. Since then I went to no control, and if anyone asks me, wow, so you're healed from cancer, I

tell that I've had no symptoms for this and this long. Because I know it well that if my immune system has once let it through, then this means that I have a tendency for it.

My Buddhist master has taught me several things, but I regard two of them as the most important. One is that it's not the seeking of the truth, but truth itself, which liberates. The other one is that loving kindness can be conciliated with the rage that the continuous limitation of the right to self-determination triggers in a person. My favourite anecdote regarding this is what my master has told me himself. The story goes that he was once travelling to India with a group of meditation teachers to visit their master. When they arrived in Bombay in the middle of the rainy season, someone wanted to tear the umbrella out of the hands of a woman who was with the group. So, at the first discussion with the master, she asked: you've been teaching us for decades, telling how to relate to everything and everybody in the world with loving kindness. Still, what can you do when someone wants to steal your umbrella in Bombay, in the middle of the rainy season? Then the master answered: "You know, my child, in this situation you grab your umbrella strong, and with all the loving kindness in your heart you hit hard the thief on the head with it!"

Well, this is it, the story of my cancer.

*Budapest, 2005–2006.*

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