

# EMPEROR RO REPORT OF A COUP IN OUR REGIONS

## THE COUP

12 December 1990: powerful jammers force all radio and TV stations off the air. Radio masts and some broadcasting stations are blown up. The population is left in silence until, after half an hour, some light is thrown on the situation. A message is broadcast on all radio and TV stations to the effect that the country is now under the authority of new rulers. Democracy is immediately suspended. The legislative, executive and judiciary as well as the military are in the hands of the newly crowned Emperor Ro. The population becomes terribly confused as to the veracity of this coup and initially undertakes nothing, but it soon appears that the new emperor is in earnest. Innocent people are chased out of their homes and shot dead or deported to an unknown destination. Others are picked up, questioned and tortured at length so as to extract absurd confessions. Eminent, universally respected politicians do not escape a similar fate. Airports and motorways are blocked and a series of absurd economic measures, such as declaring the national currency worthless, plunge the country into unprecedented chaos. But the new regime is not only characterised by negative and destructive policies. Other nationals are elevated for obscure or non-existent reasons into the nobility, while cripples and lunatics are appointed to high-ranking positions and animals are freed from meadows and parks. The reckless way in which Emperor Ro sets to work generates anarchy among the population. Pockets of resistance surface here and there, but the collapse of communication channels and the tremendous confusion that reigns mean they do not stand a chance. No one knows exactly who to resist since the imperial army is indistinguishable from the ordinary population. It is clear that international leaders see the global order begin to suffer after a few days. The speed and brutality with which Emperor Ro seized power characterise his downfall too. Tanks and aeroplanes of an international armed force take less than an hour to terminate the rule of Emperor Ro. The putschists see their end approach. Some break down and die. Emperor Ro and his last supporters retreat to a villa in the country. Heavy artillery fire forces them to surrender. A few days later, when peace has returned to the country, they are tried by a national court of law in Ledeberg. What remains are documents and pictures that can give us a vague idea of Emperor Ro's ideology and what the consequences would have been if the coup had succeeded.

# A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE NEW EMPEROR

Very little is known about Emperor Ro's background. He grew up in Marilles, outside Jodoinge, where his father had a small farming business. His love of the animal kingdom was evident at a very early age, and manifested itself in an obsession with cataloguing everything associated with it. The young Ro had piles of books and prints, and built up an impressive collection of dried insects. When he was 13, his father and brother were killed in a fire that destroyed the entire farm and all of Ro's collections. His mother went mad and died a few years later in an institution. For Ro, who was 16 at the time, it was the beginning of long years of wanderings around the whole world. He worked on ships as a seaman, and survived a shipwreck that left him and his mates stranded in West Africa. Here, once again in his own way, he studied the local flora and fauna and the behaviour of the people. He experimented with homemade bombs and new forms of authority, which he applied amongst small groups of nomads. When he was around 24, he returned to Europe, where he joined a sect of anarchists in the Scottish highlands, comprised of retired professors and generals. It was here that the foundation was laid for the coup that he would carry out a few years later in our own region.

# ABOUT EMPEROR RO'S NEW STATE CHANNELS

ROTV1 was the war channel where viewers could closely follow all military actions of the regime. The battles of Leuven and Ronse were discussed extensively, as well as reports on the notorious 'Sector 4', which were mainly intended to instil fear. Interesting to note is also the report on the arrest and execution of state comedian Guido De Belder, who fell from grace after telling a bad joke on his show 'Guido's Evening', which aired daily on ROTV3, the humour channel. ROTV3 was, in fact, Emperor Ro's favourite channel. In the presence of a few loyalists, Emperor Ro would then – despite the urgency of other matters – be glued to the screen for hours and often could not stop laughing.

Whereas Emperor Ro primarily used ROTV1 to toy with the feelings of the people, ROTV2 had a business-like, informal character. This fitted perfectly into Emperor Ro's vision of the mass mobilisation of his population. Twenty-four hours a day, the people were informed of what awaited them, by way of interminable lists of names. The lists of names on blue backgrounds indicated those who had to report immediately to Emperor Ro's army. On the lists with green backgrounds, people could read where they had to report. If anyone saw their name on the red-coloured screen, they knew they were to be executed. It was therefore essential that everyone who was part of the new empire regularly checked this network. Any resistance – or indeed simple ignorance – was inevitably punished by the bullet.

# ABOUT SECTOR 4

At the time of Emperor's Ro reign, the basement of a hospital in Aalst was converted into an interrogation and torture centre, better known as Sector 4. Those who were brought there knew that it would be their end. The procedure was always the same: an hour-long brutal interrogation by Maggy Kap, a gymnastics teacher from Nieuwerkerke, who was only too happy to unleash her sadistic fantasies on her victims. She was soon nicknamed 'The Machete'.

This was always followed by a short visit to Dr. Kipler, a German psychopathic dentist, who had offered his services to Emperor Ro in the early hours of the coup, "to address the root of the problems", which he did rather literally because he loved nothing more than pulling teeth. It was even claimed that he bit some of his victims to death.

Displayed in the vitrine are some 'tools' that were found in Sector 4.