

April 28, 2003

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Hon. Edward F. Reilly, Jr.
Chairman, United States Parole Commission
5550 Friendship Boulevard, Suite 420
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7286

Dear Mr. Reilly:

As you know, I am represented by attorney Marc Blackman in my pending parole application. He will be selecting the documentation and presenting the legal reasons for granting this application. The purpose of this statement is to try to give you, the parole examiner, and the Commission a sense of who I am today.

It would be easy for me to tell you that to my core I am a man of peace, not violence, that my crime was the result of a unique set of circumstances that will never reoccur, that I have foresworn violence as a means to any end, no matter how noble, and that if granted release I would pose no threat to society. But those would just be my words. And while they would be true, there is no reason why you should accept them. It is for that reason that Mr. Blackman will be submitting letters and materials from others who know this to be the case. He and I believe that they will convey this information more reliably and objectively than I can.

What is not so easy for me to tell you is that I have come to understand that reckless arrogance was the cause of this terrible crime. Just about everyone who knows the facts - for example, both Judge Bartels and Judge Goettel - found that I had no intention to hurt anyone and that I honestly believed that my plan eliminated any risk that anyone would be hurt, let alone killed. For years, I took great comfort in those conclusions, for they said to me: "Taik [this is the nickname I have had since childhood], you are not a bad man, you are a good man who had a bad thing happen while trying to do a good thing."

I no longer take comfort in those conclusions. For as I aged, I realized that they identified a deep flaw in me. The flaw they identified - and that for years I could not see and for years more I did not want to acknowledge - was that I really believed that I was too smart and too caring to put into action a plan that would really put another person at risk. And that since I really believed that, I could not and did not really accept

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responsibility for Officer Murray's death. Rather, that I continued to believe that I was so smart and my plan was so good that his death could only be explained as an unforeseeable accident.

It is probably easier for everyone to see their limitations when they are in their 50's than when they are in their 20's. And in my case, I have also had more time than most to think about these things. In any case, it has taken many years, but I finally understand that I am not that smart and that Officer Murray's death really was my fault. Believe me, I resisted this recognition. First, because it required me to see myself for the egotist I was [am]. Second [and far more difficult] because it required me to stop thinking about Officer Murray as an abstraction and start thinking about him as a person, a person who is dead because of me. I thought I had mourned his death before. The grief I felt when his life became real to me was immeasurably greater.

For the last ten years, I have not sought a parole hearing. After my last hearing, I felt there was nothing more that could be said, that if the record presented during that proceeding did not result in my parole, there was no reason to believe the Commission would ever grant me parole. So my family devoted its energy to other options. With the establishment of the Republic of Croatia, they seriously explored a transfer to a prison in Croatia under the Prisoner's Exchange Treaty. And they prompted an on-going dialog on the diplomatic level [every Croatian government has sought my release, or at least transfer to a Croatian prison]. Those options have not been exhausted. But in the last year I have come to realize that the Commission's rejection of my last application for parole might not have been a result of its failure to appreciate the merits in my case, but my failure to appreciate the reality of my crime. And so I decided to apply again, for I believe I now have that appreciation.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Zvonko Busic