

## ON PETITIONS:

The only reason I ever sign a petition is to show solidarity with the people who ask for my signature.

Beware of expending too much energy on them. Any merit petitions have is indirect: a) they politicize individuals who give them exaggerated respect; b) they bring experience to the people who sign them; c) they help draw public attention to the issue in question. These are not trivial. Politicizing individuals and gaining public attention are important in any campaign. So too is drawing public attention to the issue in question.

In times of crisis all 'news' is controlled in the interests of the state and national authorities. The media work in respect of that, and will infer what is news and what is not news.

No petition is guaranteed to draw attention to an issue. It makes no difference how worthy the cause or how many names are gathered. All depends on how noteworthy the news media wish to make the particular issue.

The use of the petition is only one small part of a campaign. Any proper campaign makes itself newsworthy. It does not wait on the media, no more than it relies on the fundamental decency of the individuals to whom the petition is addressed. 99 times out of a 100 those same individuals are the very people who introduced these measures in the first place.

No authority under the sun takes a petition seriously. Petitions have no intrinsic value. They do not demand to be read.

Every single authority to whom a petition is made already knows the arguments. In something as crucial as this present crisis there are very few unforeseen factors. The authorities know all of the arguments and have rejected them in favour of the course of action they have decided to take. This course of action was discussed a while ago with the political, military and police authorities, acting on the word of their own specialists and experts.

They are acting on the advice and instructions of higher authorities. This last point is difficult for most people to take in.

People find it easy to accept that when it comes to major questions on foreign issues the government will act on the advice or instructions of

higher authorities. They find it less easy to accept it can also happen on domestic matters.

In a time like the present the state authorities will treat their own country as a war zone, and their own population as a potential enemy. The burden of proof is placed on their own population. The public has to prove itself worthy of the new state of affairs. The proof of this will be the extent to which they accept these new extraordinary and repressive measures.

The state authorities are prepared for an outcry by the public. They too understand that these measures are fascist. People are utterly wrong to think that the authorities are unaware of the reality. Even the liberals among them, and most probably are, will accept the risk. They will believe that 'reality' demands such measures.

Nevertheless the authorities are ready for the public outcry, whatever that might amount to. Within these repressive measures and extraordinary powers is the answer they are providing to any potential opposition. There is no argument. The state will do whatever it takes. If the public content themselves with 'voicing their opposition' then fine (petitions are part of giving 'voice'). But if the public takes their opposition any deeper than 'giving voice' then they must beware; they must take the consequences of their actions. The consequences are embedded in these measures.

A petition only succeeds when it helps along other actions and situations, things the authorities don't want to happen. These things are predictable. The authorities know they could happen. It is the risk they run in proposing extraordinary and repressive measures. If they see that widespread revulsion and opposition are inevitable then they may negotiate, they may climb down on one or two minor factors.

If asked I occasionally do include my name on petitions, especially on foreign issues. I have no faith there either, just about.