

FOREWORD*Paolo Fonda*²⁰

In 1990 in Belgrade, at one of the first East European Psychoanalytical seminars, I met Aurelia Ionescu, a colleague from Bucharest. During a lengthy discussion about the situation in Romania, she also told me how risky it was to perform psychotherapeutic sessions during the Ceausescu regime. At times, patients and psychotherapists even had to check for hidden microphones in the room. I asked her: «But was it worth risking so much for a psychotherapeutic session? » The answer was: “We should do it to feel alive, to do something different from what was ‘politically correct’ and imposed”. Perhaps this is one reason behind the tremendous interest in psychoanalysis that Westerners encountered in Eastern Europe immediately following 1989.

But I find that this also fits with one of the central themes of Tatjana Pushkarova’s paper: human beings – from birth to death – need *a living, authentic* contact with mental contents or ‘*movements*’ of other minds and groups. True culture, as well as psychoanalysis, could be an essential source of such mental nourishment. This is also implicit in the final quotation of Pavel Florenskij, which concludes her paper.

²⁰ Italian Psychoanalytic Society; fondapav@gmail.com

RUINED LIVES: REPRESSIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION

*Tatjana Pushkarova*²¹

«Victims of trauma are left to pick up the pieces of a blown apart self and reassemble them together into something similar to a former self.»

A. Cavalli

“Time had not faded my memories (as I had prayed to God it might), nor had it healed my wounds as it is said always to do. I began each day with the hope that the next day would be better, my recollections a little less pointed, but I would awake to the same pain, as if a black lamp were burning eternally inside me, radiating darkness.”

Orhan Pamuk (The Museum of Innocence)

Abstract: *Between 1917 and 1953 the population in Soviet Union suffered enormous traumas. Their transgenerational transmission is considered by the Author in her own life experience, in her patients and in the whole society. In a totalitarian regime underground culture or that of former times played an important role as witness of truth and human dimension and, working as a container – a second skin – which supported mental survival. Why is it later so difficult to face such traumas and disclose the legacy of terror?*

Keywords: totalitarian regime, transgenerational traumas, culture, skin, container, feminine.

²¹ *Tatjana Pushkarova, Training Analyst of the Ukrainian IPA Study Group, recently moved from Kiev to Trieste, but in July 2020 passed away tragically in a mountain accident. This paper is a slightly modified version of the one she presented at the 51st IPA Congress, The Feminine, London, 24th-27th July 2019.*

Introduction

I am aware that many traumatized people might identify themselves in Pamuk's saying. Intense psychic pain keeps memories vividly sharp and alive, and the melodies of trauma ring through in the stories of our patients, as well as in our own. However, it may take a long time to recognize them, even generations. In the traumatic moment, time stops. It provokes an impossibility to think, to take in unbearable, inhuman experiences. To return to the flow of time, i.e., to restore it, requires an effort to overcome a defensive wish not to know and not elaborate and integrate traumatic experiences. For many families, as well as for many nations, it remains an unfinished task.

In the Soviet Union, the harshest political repressions lasted from the October Revolution in 1917 until the end of Stalin's era in 1953. Motherhood and femininity were aggressively impaired by the consequences of the Great October Social Revolution. It was a modernistic project that cruelly and violently destroyed the old world to replace it with an idealistic illusion of a better world for everybody. It was an attempt to create a new society of social justice, equality, and fraternity in the vein of the French Revolution. The wish to create a new world with new human heroes, supermen and superwomen led to creating the monstrous, repressive, totalitarian Soviet Regime, similar to the one depicted in Orwell's "1984"²². In addition, the enormous trauma of the two World Wars would compound the situation.

²² *It started in 1917 with the merciless destruction of the «Old World» of the Christian Monarchic tradition, murdering the Tsar's family with all their children and close relations, the annihilation of the elite, the killing or expelling of famous personalities and minds ("The Philosophers' steamboat" deported, among many others, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Ivan Ilyin, Nikolai Lossky, Pitirim Sorokin, Fyodor Stepun), the best composers (S. Rachmaninov, I. Stravinsky) and writers (I. Bunin, V. Nabokov). The aim was to build a new, happier world where those who were "nothing became everything". According to different historical research between 1.4 to 5 million former citizens of the Russian empire left the country from 1917 to 1924. The allure of communist ideas led to political cleansing of all those*

I would like to point out that it would be challenging to research this matter in this moment in Ukraine. For the last five years, there has been an on-going war in Eastern Ukraine between two parts of the former USSR: the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The conflict has now partially halted, but it has not concluded. Of course, emotions are now extreme on both sides, and interpretations of the past are often used as a weapon against one another. Present traumas often overlap with past ones. Thus, I will present some thoughts and hypotheses that may be developed into systematic, structured, and in-depth research in the future.

My personal experience

I belong to the third generation of those who were severely traumatized during the period of repressions. I would like to dedicate this modest but sincere contribution to such an important and difficult topic to my parents and grandparents.

I kept questions about my family story in the recesses of my mind for many years. I still think about why, even in the privacy of our own home, important facts and events from our history were not discussed. My father did not tell me that his father, a hussar officer in the tsar's army, was accused of being a foreign spy in 1929, jailed, and sent to a Siberian gulag from which he never returned. He was executed in 1938

considered or condemned as "the enemies", and this was carried out with the enthusiastic sentiment of fulfilling an obligation. With the collapse of the old world, the nation was plunged into the darkness of the "wish not to know", ultimately leading to hatred for the light of knowledge and truth.

Many Soviet generations gave in to this darkness, and many embraced Soviet mythology with Bolshevik slogans because it kept away the pain and depression of guilt and responsibility. But this led society toward a compulsive repetition of tragedies (cruelty, abusive and inhumane treatment) through vicious circles of projections and introjections and sado-masochistic interplays.

Soviet dissidents were persecuted and sent into internal or external exile (I. Brodsky, M. Rostropovitch, G. Vishnevskaya etc.).

and rehabilitated only in 1994. His youngest daughter never met him. My father, only 13-years old, became responsible for the entire family, working to support his three siblings, mother, grandmother, and aunt. **Until the fall of the Soviet Union, I did not know that my grandfather's parents were from a noble, land-owning family. My father kept this secret even from his wife. Only in the 1980s, during their trip to Leningrad, did he dare show her a beautiful house that had once belonged to his parents. He revealed that his father and mother were from noble families to me only at the end of the 1980s.** These secrets were his attempt to protect himself from the pains of the past and the fear and real danger of persecution for himself and his family members. It also means that he had lived all his life dreading further social and political persecution as the '*son of the peoples' enemy*'. Nevertheless, he became an important functionary of the Communist Party (the party that had destroyed his pre-revolution life and killed his father), in charge of building electrical power stations and other essential structures all over the USSR. He devoted his life to this work for the community and led a modest personal life. One can only imagine the degree of splitting to which he had been compelled! That being said, it made the elaboration of his traumas impossible for him, as well as for those who had been affected by them (family members, relatives). More recent psychoanalytic explorations have shown how the next generations are vulnerable to the transgenerational transmission of traumas.

It is symbolic that I was born in Kazakhstan, where my father was sent to work as an engineer on the construction of the Karagandinskaya hydroelectrical power station. This station is near one of the largest Gulags: Karlag – Karagandinskyj camp, where there were many political prisoners. After Stalin's death, many were released, but not all were allowed to leave Kazakhstan.

My parents were close friends with four families of former political prisoners, and they kept this friendship for the rest of their lives. In this way, I grew up in an atmosphere of friendly relationships with well educated, pleasant people, brilliant professionals, and artists.

My mother's father was also unjustly imprisoned in Siberia in 1937. My mother was only nine years old when it happened, and he had to leave his wife and eight children behind. They survived only thanks to the single cow they had and to their relentless hard work. Their ninth daughter had died during the 1932 famine (she could not tolerate eating grass as others did to survive). Fortunately, this grandfather was released and rehabilitated in 1939.

For decades later, in my family, as in many others, fears and secrets lay just under the surface of an apparently normal, peaceful life. But fear for one's life and fear of menacing sensations are traumatic in and of themselves. They require a constant state of control and heightened attention to the 'landmines' that could be underfoot at any step. Imagine the power of those mechanisms that would make children, who are often so insistently curious and questioning, understand there are issues that must not be broached.

What helped those families survive, what sustained their resilience? In both families, great-grandmothers and grandmothers – guardians of family and cultural traditions and values – set the tone in the households. Both families were raised on Christian values, respect for others, and hard work. Due to their influence in their families, mutual affection, warm relations, mutual support, and cooperation were provided. In both families, everyone shared a love for reading, which was the main leisure activity.

The theme of repression traumas in my clinical practice

Paolo Fonda, former Director of the Han Groen Prakken Psychoanalytic Institute for Eastern Europe, stated that over his 25-year involvement in training East Europeans, interviewing candidates, and supervising their patients, he was given an in-depth look into almost 200 life stories. He was astonished to find how many of these interviewees (especially from the former USSR) had repressed traumas related to parents or relatives (killed, deported or persecuted). Similar observations were also reported by Gary Goldsmith, another teacher of the Institute.

After I became more aware of my own family's traumatic story and its consequences, I developed a growing interest to truly understand the phenomenon of repression traumas in the Soviet Regime and their transgenerational transmission.

I also felt an increasing interest in the life stories of famous persecuted figures: scientists, artists, poets and writers. I was drawn to their attempts to elaborate and integrate their traumatic experience in a subjective and coherent form into their self and their life narratives. They represent what is called '*bearing witness*'.

While "diving" into the deep, dark sea of repressions and massive traumas, I began to discover traumatic events in many stories of my patients as well.

Clinical vignettes ***The "Dead princess"***

A young, successful woman was in analysis for seven years. She represents the fourth traumatized generation. She came because of her anxiety, the fear of running out of money, fear of breakdown, suicidal

thoughts, feeling not fully alive, partly dead, like a “dead princess”, fear of loneliness, feelings of emptiness, incapable of love, miserable, and “nothingness”. She felt as if she had not lived her own life. She had difficulty separating from her mother and constantly sought maternal objects in her friendships and romantic partners.

Little by little, the puzzle pieces of her story began to come together. A narrative took shape where there was also a transgenerational transmission of old traumas.

The first generation of traumas by repressions

My patient’s great-grandfather, who was repressed as a ‘kulak’, lost all his property and was deported to Siberia. His wife, who was almost entirely deaf from youth and suffered through severe famine during 1932-33, remained alone and depressed after her husband’s deportation. She raised her new-born daughter in an emotionally closed and cold atmosphere.

The second generation

This daughter, my patient’s grandmother, was successful in her profession. She had had multiple abortions. When my patient’s mother was born, her father, hoping for a boy, did not want to take his wife home from the hospital with their new-born girl.

The third generation

This baby, my patient’s mother, barely survived a severe case of pneumonia as an infant. At the age of 10 months, she was sent to her grandparents in a village. She lived there till she was three-and-a-half years old and remembered neither her mother nor her father at that point.

Despite this, she became a successful university professor. However, she was very anxious, fearful, insecure, and paranoically preoccupied with becoming poor. She also often expressed extreme anger and filled her family members with negative feelings. She, too, had several abortions. At the beginning of her pregnancy with my patient, she also wondered whether to keep her or terminate the pregnancy.

Beginning with the severe famine in 1932-1933 and continuing with the various threats to their lives during the times of repressions, the family was pervaded with intense fears of poverty, starvation, misery, and helplessness. These feelings, mainly acted, had been transmitted through generations: my patient's mother still panics if she does not have large amounts of food in her home, and she overeats obsessively.

Insufficient experiences of motherhood were passed down through three generations. This led my patient to have great difficulties in separation and individuation. For many years, she stood by her mother in a symbiotic relationship, although it was full of hate and rage. Only very gradually during analysis did she separate from her and develop her own business. Now she is structuring an autonomous relationship with her mother.

The patient had a dream that illustrates the fate of these generations: *a river flows downward and appears pleasant. However, there are areas where it disappears, and there are spaces of dry ground. The river then reappears and then disappears, revealing more dry land.* The patient compares this with a hairless head that she connects to lifelessness. She associates this to periods when she felt not alive-partly dead, and her associations turn to her family traumas produced by the repressions, when *“life stopped”*, *“children were not born”*, when the flow of the river of life was drained, halted.

The “Scared boy”

Over ten years of psychoanalysis, a male patient in his early 40s showed similar difficulties separating from his mother. He complained of being incapable of having relations with women, of being very anxious, vulnerable, and hypersensitive to the slightest lack of interest toward him.

He lived all his life with his mother, until he was 40. His mother was traumatized by her mother’s untimely death, followed by her father’s disappearance in a Gulag. Later, her elder brother was killed by the Nazis, their house burnt down, and she was separated from her elder sister. She then spent part of her childhood in an orphanage. My patient experienced his mother as unwarm and unloving, cold, rigid, distant, demanding, unreachable and always busy with her work. At the same time, they shared the same large bed until he was 12. In this symbiotic relationship, an omnipotent unit predominated in his unconscious fantasies: he clung to his mother, which made him incapable of any serious relationship. Only after four years of analysis did he find his first sexual partner, who he also married.

The damage caused by the parents’ traumas on their children (second generation) could also be understood through the fundamental violation of trust and the transmission of fear, insecurity, emptiness and despair. There are constant enactments linked to maternal deprivation and the traumatized, depressed mother’s incapacity to contain and respond adequately to the infant’s emotional needs. Thus, children of traumatized mothers grow up with an emotionally ‘dead mother’ and end up living in a ‘deadly deserted universe’ (A. Green, 1983). Such children feel abandoned by their mothers and this makes their separation-individuation difficult to reach. In such cases, I observe in my patients a lack of a sense of time, a sort of symbiotic timelessness,

an incapacity to order and process experiences, and an inability to use the symbolic function sufficiently. The introjection of such models of object relations by the child creates determinants for further transmission of trauma in subsequent generations.

It is particularly difficult to talk about trauma, primarily because it is an entirely specific mental phenomenon devoid of structure and meaning. In referring to mental trauma, several authors point to its “extraterritorial” nature, metaphorically describing it as a “mental hole” (Reemtsma, 1996). What is meant is that the traumatic experience goes beyond the subject’s capacity to process the experience because of its pain and intensity. The essence of processing is the attribution of meanings to what has happened or is happening. As a result, the injury falls outside the system of values, i.e. somewhere in a place where values no longer exist or never existed. Thus, trauma implies a loss of meaning and a loss of symbolizing.

As E. Kalmykova (2010) pointed out: “The task of psychoanalysis is the restoration and healing of the traumatic experience, i.e., giving it meaning by symbolization. To transform injury, i.e. the step-by-step building of its intrapsychic representation, takes place by constructing and reconstructing the psychic reality in the course of analysis”.

A comparative study on the prevalence of Post-Partum Depression (PPD)

In the longitudinal research on PPD in the Kiev Institute of Pediatrics, Obstetrics, and Gynecology of the Ukrainian Academy of Medical Sciences, we replicated research by the Marienhospital and Institute of Psychotherapy in Stuttgart (Germany) on the prevalence of

PPD. We did this to be able to compare the results. The Edinburgh PPD Scale was used.

The results of the comparative longitudinal study are presented in the following table.

The total number of respondents (women in 3-6 month periods after deliveries)	Kiev Institute	Stuttgart Marienhospital
	153	772
Scores higher than 9 according to the Edinburgh PPD Scale	56 (36.6 %)	132 (17 %)
PPD	29 (18.95 %)	28 (3.6 %)

The results show a significantly higher (5.26 times more) prevalence of PPD among women in Kiev than Stuttgart.

Social and psychological traumatic risk factors were widely represented in the Kiev sample. Psychodynamic investigations revealed the prevalence of early separation and loss in 57% of respondents with PPD compared to 10% in a comparison group of healthy women in Kiev. Consequently, conflicts of separation-individuation were found in 59% of women with PPD. However, in a few single cases of women who suffered from PPD and could be more deeply studied were there present transgenerational transmissions of massive cumulative traumas: loss of relatives in the periods of famine (1932 - 1933), Stalin's repressions, the Second World War, losses in the 1990s (poverty, job loss by parents, instability, early separations etc.).

It would be interesting to enhance the methods of research further to focus on the role of the transgenerational component of traumatization.

Why is it so difficult to face such traumas?

It took such a long time for me to discover – to move beyond gathering information to actually become emotionally involved – to what extent Soviet people, including myself, my colleagues and patients, were traumatized by the 70 years of suffering during the Soviet regime. Why is it so difficult to face traumas of massive persecutions that happened within the society you are living in? Like most others, my position was too insecure and weak to open the door concealing endless sufferings, the “moaning and gnashing of teeth”, fear and despair. The collusion of silence was necessary to protect individuals and families/groups against overwhelming anxiety and unbearable pain. There were no objects available to help contain and elaborate such contents. Though I read my first book about Gulags – A. Solzhenitsyn’s “*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*” – when I was 10, I still do not dare to read Varlam Shalamov’s books – a former prisoner and brilliant writer, whom my mother read several times, as he describes the dreadful violence against innocent victims in the Gulags in an especially realistic way.

There are conditions where splittings are indispensable for survival and for protecting a certain split space where it may still be possible to love, give birth, raise children, and trust in a better future. However, it comes with a heavy cost in terms of other parts of the self disconnected by the split.

What other solution could be possible when total powerlessness is felt in the face of an omnipotent, omnipresent and ruthless state power, which penetrates deep into the minds, often successful in weakening and paralyzing them. (A dream of the second patient mentioned earlier – *“I feel defeated in a battle with somebody, I am on the ground, in the mud, dirty and helpless. A large shepherd dog*

approaches me and starts to rub my crotch, bringing me to orgasm. I feel disgusted and hurt by this dream". He stressed a dreadful fear in his associations – he could not move and could not get rid of that dog; he felt paralyzed by fear. He associated the shepherd dog with German Shepherds, the dogs which Soviet jailers and Nazis used to set on prisoners.)

In such a situation, how concrete may the phantoms of *Rodina* become? In Russian, this word means Homeland, but it is a feminine word connected with giving birth; the *Mother's* infanticides, like in Dionysian orgies, where women in ecstasy "tore their children apart and devoured the bleeding pieces. This was the sacramental *Omophagy*". The *Father's* motivation for infanticide was "unwillingness to give up their absolute superiority for the benefit of their growing children" (Wellisch, E. 2001). *The Revolution that devours its sons!*

Fairbairn (1943, p. 67) expressed the terrible truth that: "The infant persists in his love of bad objects because **bad objects are better than no objects at all**" (*my underlining*). And again Fairbairn, (1944, p. 113): "But if the infant persists too long in attempting to wring love from the unloving mother, he will suffer disintegration and [...] imminent psychical death".

How to disclose the legacy of terror?

There was and still is a legacy of enormous traumas, horrific crimes, perpetrators' guilt, and the guilt of those who collaborated or remained silent and preferred not to know.

In analytic therapy, we are generally cautious to assess the right timing for interpretations-disclosure of painful contents. Sometimes we wait years **until the self's cohesion is strong enough** to bear some almost annihilating, painful truths. We pay great attention to what can

be disclosed-interpreted and when to promote elaboration and reparation – what progression means, instead of provoking annihilation or destructive acting –, and what regression means. A similar dynamic seems necessary for groups.

In a certain way, secrets may also be understood as a need to hide or freeze. They are unbearable for the moment or whose elaboration must be delayed until the conditions allow it, and when the self is strong enough.

Attributing guilt to a handful of criminal leaders is also a defense: they can be individuated and condemned, but this is only a partial truth. To call accomplice a large part of the population, or the whole community, albeit with varying degrees of responsibility, is also rather tricky, though it may better correspond to the truth. Therefore, it often appears to be a defense, a paranoid elaboration of mourning: “*They* – just a split part of our society – are guilty, while *we* are innocent.”

Ever conscious of this easy way out, **Marguerite Duras** (1985) wrote: “If the Nazi horror is considered a German destiny, not a collective destiny, the man from Belsen will be reduced to be the victim of a local conflict. Only one answer for such a crime: turning it into everyone’s crime. Sharing it. Like we share the idea of equality, of fraternity”.

Similarly, **Erich Fromm** taught his students to keep Terentius’s words in mind: “*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*” (*I am a human, I cannot consider alien to me anything human*), to understand how some repulsive, terrifying aspects in others may raise rejection in us, and we could be prone to deny having such dark sides inside ourselves.

Like nations, large groups must wait for the right time to disclose terrible horrors of their history. After decades, almost all European nations are ‘discovering’ what their citizens, their armies, their

governments committed during the World Wars, colonial wars, or others. Decades must pass, waiting for the right moment to disclose such secrets, or better, to integrate into the group's representation what was already more or less known, but had remained emotionally split.

Groups at first need to foster their cohesion to become strong enough to face their transgressions. If there is an unbalance with excessive negativity on a weak self, the group could react with a dangerously strong paranoid defense against the risk of disintegration. (Schizophrenic patients who recover after a delusional crisis are often at risk of suicide, as their narcissism is so damaged that they cannot bear to live on.)

Lev Tolstoy may help us better understand why responsibility and guilt should be expanded to all. In 1869, he wrote (with Napoleon in mind):

- "There are two sides of the life of every person, his individual life, which is the more free the more abstract its interests, and his elemental hive life in which he inevitably obeys laws laid down for him. Man lives consciously for himself, but is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of the historic, universal, aims of humanity. [...] The higher a man stands on the social ladder, the more people he is connected with and the more power he has over others, the more evident is the predestination and inevitability of his every action. [...] A king is history's slave. History, that is, the unconscious, general, hive life of mankind, uses every moment of the life of kings as a tool for its own purposes." (Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book 9, Ch.1)

- "While the sea of history remains calm the ruler-administrator in his frail bark, holding on with a boat hook to the ship of the people and himself moving, naturally imagines that his efforts move the ship he is holding on to. But as soon as a storm arises and the sea begins to heave and the ship to move, such a delusion is no longer

possible. The ship moves independently with its own enormous motion, the boat hook no longer reaches the moving vessel, and suddenly the administrator, instead of appearing a ruler and a source of power, becomes an insignificant, useless, feeble man.” (Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book 11, Ch. 25)

Sixty years after Tolstoy, **Sigmund Freud** wrote about this in “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1921, p. 123): “We must conclude that the psychology of groups is the oldest human psychology; what we have isolated as individual psychology, by *neglecting all traces of the group*, has only since come into prominence out of the old group psychology, by a gradual process *which may still, perhaps, be described as incomplete.*” (*my underlining*)

The Role of Culture – The Second Skin of Culture

“The word dies last”

A. Tarkovsky

Individuals need other individuals and groups in order to be contained and helped to elaborate what is too heavy for their minds. But groups also need bright geniuses – like poets and scientists – to take in and ‘interpret’ what is hidden in the darkness. On a large group level, the level of nations, we may suppose that culture plays a maternal/psychoanalytic role: holding and containing, sometimes seeking to realize a paternal superegoic role to re-establish laws of truth and ethics.

As culture plays a dual role of healing and giving meaning to traumatic experiences by symbolization, in Soviet life – full of

traumatic experiences – culture played an important role as a second skin on both an individual and group/social levels.

As **Ester Bick** (1968) pointed out: “The need for a containing object would seem, in the infantile not integrated state, to produce a frantic search for an object – a light, a voice, a smell, or other sensual object – which can hold the attention and thereby be experienced, momentarily at least, as holding the parts of the personality together. The optimal object is the nipple in the mouth, together with the holding and talking and familiar smelling mother. [...] this containing object is experienced concretely as a skin.” This strikes us as particularly appropriate if we consider the regression induced by persistent massive traumatization.

It is one of the tasks of culture to investigate and research the truth that, at the outset, very few are keen or strong enough to know. But then a moment must come in which a larger part of the population becomes able and willing to know, elaborate, and try to repair.

Dissidents wrote about repressions as they happened or shortly after, but these accounts were only published abroad and only much later in Russia. In the post-Soviet space, this phenomenon moves slowly on a large group level, although numerous documentaries, movies, books and plays depict these events.²³

What allowed women in Gulags and women whose fathers, husbands, or sons were in Gulags to survive? Sometimes, their resilience seems to have been based on certain essential characteristics, like a powerful connection to culture, namely literature and poetry, which had remained vivid and alive, deeply rooted in family traditions and relations.

²³ *There is a volunteer movement and organization who investigates archives and makes information on victims available on websites. There is a group on Facebook - “Immortal Barak” – with numerous stories on victims and also persecutors. There is a precedent where a grandson of a persecutor apologized to grandchildren of the victims. Now several brilliant books about that period are in school programs on literature in Russia, but, as elsewhere, there is also a strong, passive resistance to knowing more.*

Femininity and motherhood suffered numerous attacks by the totalitarian regime. Still, they survived due to the preservation and transgenerational transmission of good enough maternal objects inside the individuals' psyche and in the common culture. Culture and family traditions were also kept and transmitted by grandfathers. Still, it was mainly grandmothers, who were born and raised before the revolution, who contributed to preserving families by maintaining continuity and consistency. All this has established a nurturing foundation for new generations of artists and intellectuals and a large number of culture beneficiaries. Arts and culture have provided containment, creative symbolization, and an enriching effect that allowed individuals and culture to survive and thrive. Indeed, maybe it is for this function that culture was placed under such strict control. Despite their persecution, non-conformist arts and culture succeeded in preserving a certain potential space for individuation and personification.

The fine arts offer connectedness, a feeling of being in contact with good objects; so to say, a *separation in the presence of others*.

In those times, this happened despite the general predominance of an intense paranoid-schizoid position, which was sometimes close to a psychotic group functioning. This was fostered by the fact that, in totalitarian regimes, people belong to a larger group that shares the same destiny and feels equal in the face of a shared future. This increases feelings of fusion.

Art, theater, music, literature have a critical holding function and a way of providing individuation in times of solitude, loss, humiliation and repression. Connectedness to great Russian poetry and literature symbolically meant revitalizing relations with an introjected good maternal object.

It was a nourishing, reanimating experience to read the poetry of beloved poets – A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, N. Nekrasov, A. Block, J. Mandelshtam, B. Pasternak, A. Akhmatova, M. Tsvetaeva.

Joseph Brodsky believed that *Homo sapiens* should naturally evolve into *Homo Poeticus*: “Poetry is a tremendous accelerator of consciousness, both for the writer and the reader. You discover connections or dependencies, given in language, speech, that you didn’t suspect. This is a unique tool of knowledge”. Poetry has become that magic crystal through which a contemporary individual could distinguish his or her own features.

Our intimate experiences, doubts and forebodings, our spiritual drama, “upbringing the ear”, and the upbringing of feelings were embodied in poetry with piercing depth. The poetic picture of the world is mysteriously connected with the moral world. No wonder Dostoevsky pointed to Pushkin as our historical justification and purpose. If this is not the case, the “species target” is postponed indefinitely. As the modern philosopher and writer, Gleb Smirnov, pointed out: “The invariable quality of Russian literature is its famous confession (that is, it reproduces the sacrament of repentance), as well as its accusation, that is, it also inherits the mission of the Old Testament prophets to correct the ways of men”.

Soviet and Russian literature continues to work out the difficult and painful events and experiences of the Soviet past: A. Akhmatova, B. Pasternak, A. Solzhenitsyn, V. Grossman, E. Ginzburg, V. Shalamov, and others in the 20th century, followed by the modern L. Ulitskaya, E. Vodolazkin, Z. Prilepin, G. Yahina.

Psychoanalysis is also poetry, and it must have its own poetics. Indeed, Freud received the Goethe Prize in appreciation of his literary gift.

Thomas Ogden (1997, p. 233), comparing the language of analysis with the language of literature, writes: “Poetry is a great exercise for analytic listening”. Good analysis, like good literature, should be interesting. He discusses the literary writings of Robert Frost, Jorge Luis Borges, Shane Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Franz Kafka. Ogden considers this interest a linguistic effect, a talented work that comes from a *sincere* experience. He connects this with the concept that “at least two people are necessary to think”.

Pavel Florensky, a brilliant universal scientist and philosopher, executed in 1937, wrote: “The word, the product of our whole being in its integrity, is really a reflection of a person. [...] In a word, the genes of my personality come from me, the genes of that personal genealogy to which I belong. And therefore, by entering into another person with my word, I conceive a new personal process in it”.

AS APPENDIX

There is a long list of outstanding personalities, especially women, who survived that nightmarish period and left us examples of courage, resilience, dignity, and honesty. They had internalized capacities to deal with traumas, to heal their injuries, and to help others.

*I would like to put as an example the life and work of the great Russian poet **Anna Akhmatova**, whose *Requiem* is a heartbreaking poem about years of Stalin’s repressions:*

«My husband is in a grave,

My son is imprisoned,

Pray for me, please».

Her husband, the father of her son, the famous Russian poet Nikolay Gumilev was shot by Bolsheviks in 1921. Her son, Leo Gumilev, was imprisoned in 1935 and released thanks to his mother’s

personal letter to Stalin. In 1938, he was imprisoned again and sent to a Gulag for five years. He then fought for two years against the Nazis in the Red Army, but was imprisoned again from 1945 until 1956. To avoid persecution by Stalin, Anna Akhmatova burnt her writings. To preserve some of her poems, a circle of friends learned her poem "Requiem" by heart.

This Requiem was published abroad when she was still alive, but not in her home country. The poem continued to circulate underground and was only published in 1989 when Mikhail Gorbachev officially rehabilitated Akhmatova.

In reading her Requiem now, anyone would be deeply impressed by its powerful images, by the voice that registers the effects of terror in everyday life, by the bits of overheard conversation arranged in individual vignettes that create a powerful effect of despair and resilience. Anna Akhmatova, Nikolay, and Leo Gumilev are now among the most beloved authors of many Soviet and post-Soviet people.

*Another amazing story is that of **Eugenia Ginzburg**. She was a happy, young, well-educated, professional journalist and university teacher. She was also a Communist party adherent, wife of a Soviet leader in Kazan, and mother of two boys of 12 and 4. She was expelled from the Communist party in 1934, jailed in 1937, when she was 30, and spent 18 years in prisons and Gulags.*

After she was released in 1955, her book of memories on those years "Journey into the Whirlwind" was first published in 1967 in Milan, at the same time as Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago". It is a highly impressive document of great literary value. Her brilliant memory of poetry and literature and her own poetry allowed her to survive and to write a great book. She had learned all of Pushkin's and Blok's works by heart. She created her own poems and learned them by heart, as did Akhmatova's son – Leo Gumilev.

“My judges were in such a hurry that they did not answer any of my questions and declarations.” In one of the most revealing chapters of her autobiography, Ginzburg expressed great *relief* upon hearing the verdict, because she had feared up to that very moment that she would be condemned to death:

“To live! Without property, but what was that to me? Let them confiscate it – they were brigands anyway, confiscating was their business. They wouldn’t get much good out of mine, a few books and clothes – why, we didn’t even have a radio. My husband was a loyal Communist of the old stamp, not the kind who had to have a Buick or a Mercedes... Ten years!... Do you [the judges], with your codfish faces, really think you can go on robbing and murdering for another ten years, that there aren’t people in the Party who will stop you sooner or later? I knew there were – and in order to see that day, I must live. In prison, if needs be, but I must at all costs live!... I looked at the guards, whose hands were still clasped behind my back. Every nerve in my body was quivering with the joy of being alive. What nice faces the guards had! Peasant boys from **Ryazan** or **Kursk**, most likely. They couldn’t help being warders – no doubt they were conscripts. And they had joined hands to save me from falling. But they needn’t have – I wasn’t going to fall. I shook back my hair curled so carefully before facing the court, so as not to disgrace the memory of **Charlotte Corday**. Then I gave the guards a friendly smile. They looked at me in astonishment.”

She never saw her eldest son, who died from starvation in Leningrad in 1942. When she met her youngest son, 12 years after her imprisonment, they spent the whole night reciting by heart their beloved poetry. Her son Vasilyj Aksenov was one of the famous writers of the generations of the 1960s.

*The last example is the poet **Marina Tsvetaeva** – another great Russian poet and writer, daughter of Prof. Ivan Tsvetaev, founder and*

creator of the Russian Fine Arts Museum in Moscow, named after A. Pushkin. Her husband Serge Efron was shot by the KGB, her young daughter died from starvation in 1922 and her eldest daughter Ariadna was imprisoned in a Gulag from 1939 till 1955. Marina's sister Anastasia, also a writer, was imprisoned in 1937, then sent to a Gulag, and then exiled until 1959. Marina Tsvetaeva committed suicide in August 1941, while her son Mur died during the Second World War.

This shared treasure of a mutual love of poetry connected the members of many Soviet families. My parents loved it and knew many poems by heart from the beloved poets and books that accompanied them until their final days.

REFERENCES

- AKHMATOVA, A.S. (1963). *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*. Zephyr Press, Chicago, 2000.
- BICK, E. (1968). The experience of the skin in early object relations. *Int J Psychoanal* 49: 484486.
- BRODSKY, I. (1980). *Conversations*. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson (Mississippi).
- Cavalli, A. (2012). Transgenerational Transmission of Indigestible Facts: From Trauma, Deadly Ghosts and Mental Voids to Meaning Making Interpretations. *J Analytic Psych*, 57(5):597614.
- CORSA, R. (2020). Dopo il disgelo: vulnerabilità e resilienza nella psicoanalisi dell'Est Europeo. [After the Thawing: Vulnerability and Resilience in the Psychoanalysis of the East Europe.] *Psiche*, 2020/1, p. 268.
- DURAS, M. (1985). *The War: a Memoir*. (original title: La Douleur). The New Press, New York, 1994.

- FAIRBAIRN, W.R. (1943). The repression and the return of bad objects (with special reference to the “war neurosis”). *Psychoanal St Personality*, Tavistock P.L., London, 1952, pp. 5981.
- FAIRBAIRN, W.R. (1944). Endopsychic structure considered in terms of object relationships. *Psychoanal St Personality*, Tavistock P.L., London, 1952, pp. 82136.
- FLORENSKIJ, P. (1922). *Attualità della parola. La lingua tra scienza e mito*, Guerini, Milano, 1989.
- FREUD, S. (1921). *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. *SE XVIII*. p. 123.
- GINZBURG, E. (1967). *Journey into the Whirlwind*. Harcourt, New York, 1967.
- GREEN, A. (1983). *Narcissisme de vie, narcissisme de mort*. Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris.
- GREEN, A. (1986). *The dead mother*. In: A. Green, *On Private Madness*. Hogarth, London. pp. 142173.
- KALMYKOVA, E.C. (2003). Reconstruction of the psychic trauma: reestablishing connections among times and events. [Реконструкция психической травмы: восстановление связи времен и событий.] *Journal of Practical Psychology and Psychoanalysis* [Журнал Практической Психологии и Психоанализа]. 2003, **3**.
- OGDEN, T.H. (1997). *Rêverie and interpretation. Sensing something human*. Jason Aronson, Lanham.
- ORWELL, G. (1949). *Nineteen EightyFour*, Secker&Warburg, London.
- PAMUK, O. (2008). *The Museum of Innocence* [original title: *Masumiyet Müzesi*]. Alfred A. KNOPF, New York, 2009.
- REEMSTMA, J.P. (1996). *State Terror*, in: M. Oehmichen (ed.): *Maltreatment and Torture*, Schmidt Römhild, Lübeck, 1998.

- SHALAMOV, V.T. (1973). *Kolyma Stories*. New York Review Books Classics, New York, 2018. SOLZHENICYN, A.I. (1962). *One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich.*: Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York, 1991
- SMIRNOV, G. (2019). *Artodoxia*. Ripol Klassik, Moscow.
- TOLSTOY, L. (1869). War and Peace, Global Grey, globalgreybooks.com, 2018.
- TSVETAeva, M. (1967). The Essential Poetry. Glagoslav Publications B.V. London, 2015.
- WELLISCH, E. (1954). Isaac and Oedipus: A Study in Biblical Psychology of the Sacrifice of Isaac, Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York, 1999.