

**Beyond the Gates of Paradise**

Nikita V Chirkov

Trier, 2 March 1837

To my beloved son, Karl Marx:

*“...My heart often leaps at the thought of you and your future. Yet at times I cannot rid myself of sadder, more fearful ideas and intimations when I suddenly have the thought: does your heart correspond to your head, to your talents? Does it have room for the softer feelings of this world which provide such essential comfort for the man of feeling in this vale of woe? Your soul is obviously animated and ruled by a demon not given to all men; is this demon a heavenly or a Faustian one? Will you ever – and this is the doubt that causes me the most pain – be receptive to true human happiness – domestic happiness? Will you ever... be able to spread happiness to your immediate surroundings? ...*

*Your loving father*

*Marx”<sup>1</sup>*

\*\*\*

- Name please?
- Vitaliy.
- First and last, I don't have all day.
- Vitaliy Svobodnikov.
- Date and place of birth?
- November sixteenth, 1908, Leningrad.
- Occupation?
- University Professor.

The man who was asking questions paused. His hand continued writing on the piece of paper that laid flat on his cold metal table. The room was small and dark. The only source of light were the two lamps – one shining on the table, and another shining in Vitaliy's face.

Despite being slightly blinded by the light, Vitaliy managed to make out some of the features of the man sitting in front of him. This was an individual of a strong complexity and stature. He was

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Heinrich Marx, to his son Karl Marx, 1837. Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 10-11.

wearing a military police outfit, glasses, and a wool hat. Vitaliy also saw another man standing in the corner, but could not make out any details from the shady outline of his body.

- Professor Vitaliy Svabodnikov, why are you here?
- I do not know, comrade officer.
- Really? A man of your intelligence, a man of your education does not know? Surely you can connect the dots now, can't you?

The officer got up from the desk, and began walking around Vitaliy, taking long and audible steps. With each time his military boot would hit the concrete floor, the room would echo in an uncomfortable report that interrupted Vitaliy's heartbeat.

- Is this about my work?
- Very good, comrade Svabodnikov. Very, very, good.
- What do you have against me? Why are you holding me here?

The loud steps suddenly stopped right behind Vitaliy. This is when he quickly realized that if the officer were to strike him, he had no way of defending himself or even seeing it coming. His hands were tightly tied together behind the chair. Inability to even slightly turn one of his wrists confirmed the helplessness of the situation. Vitaliy slowly shrugged his body, lowered his head, and flexed every muscle to prepare for the incoming blow. Then – a loud bang! Vitaliy flinched but became instantly relieved when he realized that it was just another sound of the boot, and that the man has resumed walking.

- We have many things against you Vitaliy. In a letter to a friend last month, did you not write that you thought that the Communist Party was, and I quote, “a bunch of dehumanizing thieves?”
- I may have written something privately, yes.
- Privately? When we searched your filthy apartment, we found a book manuscript full of Anti Soviet garbage that you have written, professor. And besides that, you also had, in your possession, a number of books that are prohibited in our country.

It was true. Vitaly was writing a book about Karl Marx and the Soviet experiment. He was also illegally contacting some foreign publishers from whom he smuggled banned books into the Soviet Union. But the government had no way of confirming these interactions since Vitaliy had been extra careful to burn all the publisher's letters after reading them. He decided to deny the implied accusation...

- I used the books to teach my class the foul side of political literature; a side that is so misguided and ill-informed, that the government banned their work altogether. Students began to act with suspicion when they found out that some books were banned. I decided to quell that suspicion by actually teaching them *why* they were banned.
- What about your book? What about all that trash you wrote about the motherland!?

The officer slammed his fist onto the metal table as he shouted the question to Vitaliy. In his other hand was the marked up manuscript with underlined sentences and circled words.

- Forgive me, I do not know what you mean, I used them as lecture notes of someone who woul...
- Enough!! Shut your treasonous moth you foul rat, I will hear no more of your lies. You wrote that you "have imported a copy of a letter from Marx's father in which he openly questions Karl's ability to feel love toward fellow human beings" on page 27. You later also write that you suspected that Stalin ordered "mass genocide and murder" of millions of people and that communism "is nothing but a depressive regime that degrades humanity." This is your last chance to beg for mercy and admit your guilt, Mr. professor, your last and only chance!!!

Of course they read the whole manuscript; but in the back of Vitaliy's mind there was still a last shimmer of hope that the illegal possession of books would distract them from reading his work. That hope was now vanished – as was the hope of being freed. Vitaliy understood what was facing him now. It was either death, right there and then, in that small dark room with no windows by a bullet to a brain from a man he never met; or it was a trip to a place where all the

people like him have gone in years past – only to never return or be heard of again. Vitaliy closed his eyes. What would happen to his wife and daughter who also got taken for questioning? Surely they would let them go since they committed no crime, wouldn't they? But Vitaliy didn't get enough time to think of the answers. The back of a rifle struck him square on the side of the head, knocking him over together with the chair. Nothing but darkness quickly filled his consciousness...

\*\*\*

When talking about the nature of social reforms, I find it impossible to close the book of history and stare onward into the future without a foundation upon which I can firmly stand. Matter of fact, as a Russian immigrant, I find history to be my starting obligation since the truth of experience is my absolute goal. Beginning from the birth of civil societies and governments, there have been many social reforms and just as many social reformers. Some of these reformers saw a need to change their system. They were disgusted by pandemic despotism that has bestowed injustice upon members of their society. Thus, in an attempt to free the liberty from the dungeons of tyranny, they took to work, and often risked their lives in the dangerous process. However, there were others who looked at the suffering and death of many as appealing and desirable. They took to social reforms not because of their love toward fellow human beings, but because of a faulty ideology or a quest for power. These reformers manipulated the people into buying an idea of a grandeur paradise that was nothing but a wasteland dressed in colorful deceits and appetizing promises. For these reformers, the people who stand in the way must be removed and those who wait for change must be subverted – for there must never be a threat of non-compliance to the state. Isaiah Berlin made a similar observation when he discussed the nature of these social reformers: “But to manipulate men, to propel them towards goals which

you—the social reformer—see, but they may not, is to deny their human essence, to treat them as objects without wills of their own, and therefore to degrade them.”<sup>2</sup>

In the vast world of political literature, much has been said of the structural designs of oppressive regimes. Conversely, a fair minded historical observer cannot help but notice that the opposite is true of the works in which the inquiry concerned the *mind* of the state itself. By the mind of the state, I simply mean a way of ideological thinking that dominates the heads of totalitarian governments, and makes them justify their acts of degradation of humanity. There are several reasons why the latter theme is not too popular among academics: 1) it forces an establishment of an intricate connection between the ideology and the act. Matter of fact, most academics desire to avoid this connection at all costs in fear of putting too much blame on an ideology that they believe is still desirable. 2) It portrays most of what the founding “thinker” has done as fundamentally inaccurate, flawed, and immoral – thereby discrediting the reformer’s work with an intransigent argument of unalloyed repudiation.

In the parent state that preceded my home country of Russia, there were many reformers and heads of state that applied their own policies to the union of the socialist republics. The history of the Communist Party alone will demonstrate constant tensions and divisions that systematically occurred between its two opposing wings. Therefore, I could in theory discuss each and every one of these reformers individually, providing an extensive catalogue of differentiating policies and their effects on the oppressed society. However, an exercise of this magnitude alone would be an effort much deserving of a voluminous output that would still miss the core of the question at hand.

---

<sup>2</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. *Two Concepts of Liberty*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1958. Print.

In my view, the past 200 years of history have brought us only one intrinsic social reformer and only one substrative mind which had an unparalleled effect on the world as we know it today – Karl Marx. Indeed, without the work of Marx and its rampant expansion, it would be difficult to imagine the Soviet Union in the first place; let alone some minor reformers who disagreed on the manners in which Marxist theory was to be implemented. Therefore, this work will focus on three general areas of analysis: first, it will look at the mind of the reformer Karl Marx as an individual; second, it will explain the essence of the communist reforms by explaining Marx’s foundational arguments; and last, it will examine how that ideology effected a society upon which it was wholly based. Furthermore, I find it a paramount duty to structure my inquiry based on the history of my own people, since even the Framers of the Constitution in a nation filled with liberty and freedom on the other side of the world, wrote that “experience is the oracle of truth” – Federalist 20.<sup>3</sup> It is unfortunate that at a time when these words were written Russians weren’t influenced by thinkers of this caliber, for much could have been avoided, and much could have been different...

### Part 1 – The Mind

... Oh what a bright world it was. The Bolsheviks, on the stage in front of a galvanized crowd: the cheering, the applause, the laughter! The enthrallment of the people living their daily life inside the communist dream was nearly unparalleled. The young pioneers, with their little red scarfs, running around the neighborhood and planting trees, repairing playgrounds, and singing patriotic songs of the motherland... the free transportation, hospitals, and services provided by

---

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, John Jay, Clinton Rossiter, and Charles R. Kesler. *The Federalist Papers*. New York, NY: Signet Classic, 2003. Print.

the people to the people! The happy elderly couple, walking together on a lovely Saturday evening and watching the sunset reflect on the Neva River with their fellow comrades. All of this put in one package, with a waving red flag and the Soviet national anthem playing in the background – such was the image presented to all the inhabitants of the red Marxist paradise...

Vitaliy woke up on a floor of a small cell with no windows, desks or beds. His head was still swollen – and he could feel the dried up blood that formed behind his ear and by his upper neck. A closer examination of the room revealed two mattresses: one, nearly untouched with a set of prisoner clothing folded on the side; and the other, on the opposite side of the room, quite dirty and rattled, with a man sitting on top and expressing a look of playful curiosity.

- Welcome. I thought you would never wake up. Just when they have my first cellmate killed, they bring another one barely breathing! Thought this to be a joke of some sort – but no! Saw you were clean and shaved, decided it was for real.
- Where am I?
- You my dear comrade, are in the shining city upon the hill! The best of what our motherland has to offer! Here, just look at me for instance, aren't I just a shining jewel?!

Though Vitaliy clearly understood the ironically sarcastic tone of the cellmate, he could not but follow his instruction. The gentlemen across the room had a long spotty beard, untrimmed messy hair, ripped clothing, and smelled of a dog that rolled in rotten fish. A shining jewel indeed.

- Please, just tell me where I am.
- Not much of a jokester I see eh? Shame. You won't survive here long. The way I look at it is simple: since you are here you might as well joke freely, eh comrade? Just have a go at it, the best they can do is kill you quickly with shot in a head – and that already is a

blessing! I didn't used to joke much, you know? Before here. Before here I was serious – wore a suit and tie, had a job, a wife, a family. And then I made a joke, you see, a funny joke about Joe, the man upstairs in the Kremlin. They came and took me away the same night. The shortest comedian career in history! That was 15 years ago, now I am here. So joke up comrade, they can't send you further than Siberia.<sup>4</sup>

It was as Vitaliy feared. The prison labor camps were now his destination. Many rumors have been going around back home about these places in Siberia – how they were supposedly the burial sites of thousands of people who were taken there with no trial.<sup>5</sup> Vitaliy knew that they existed, and that a slightest of mistakes in public expression back home could land ones future here. However, what he did not know is just how bad these camps were. After processing the reality of his situation, Vitaliy finally decided to introduce himself to the stranger by his side.

- Well, I suppose I will start. My name is Vitaliy Svabonikov, I was a university professor of politics back home. Now... well now I am here.
- What a funny and useless name to have at times like these. "Svaboda" means freedom – and you are anything but free inside these walls. At any rate, my name is Egor, and I am pleased to make your acquaintance.

For the next few days – two to be exact – Vitaliy was learning about the Gulag in which he was staying from Egor. The fortune of the situation has presented the prisoners with days of an unforgiving blizzards in which even the guards could not see beyond 3 meters of their towers.

Therefore, the external work was suspended, and the prisoners were only made to attend to

---

<sup>4</sup> Common joke in the Soviet Union among the politically oppressed; existed and recalled in many variants: "Relax, they can't send you further than Siberia", "You are in Siberia, what more can they do?" etc.

<sup>5</sup> The strict legal structure by which the Soviet Union "convicted" the accused population often had no trial by jury. Many personal and scholarly accounts confirm this fact: Ivanova, Galina. *History of the Gulag; (Istoriya Gulaga*[Russian]) Chapter 2: Normative base of political repressions.

internal maintenance duties. Egor called it “the sweetest of all introductions to the Gulag” while claiming that this is the first time this sort of thing occurred in over ten years.

Vitaliy could not stop thinking about his wife and daughter. For some reason unknown even to him, the thought of them being alive back home waiting for his return seemed the most probable one. There were very few children in the camp, and after asking around the other prisoners, Vitaliy learned that he was the only individual brought in that day. This gave him some comfort. He also met a few notably bright individuals including Ivan Kozlov, a former professor of history, and Stepan Smolnikov, a poet and a writer. All of these individuals have been imprisoned for years; and if it were not for their bright intellectual wit that instantly struck Vitaliy through conversation, their battered appearance would have made them indistinguishable from ordinary drunken bums that he so often saw on the streets of Leningrad.

At the conclusion of the second day, Vitaliy had a rather disturbing thought that would not leave his mind. It began haunting him after he had a quiet discussion about Marxism with professor Kozlov during bathroom maintenance earlier in the evening. It was all coming together – his work as a professor, his manuscript, and his theory about the totalitarianism of the Soviet state. However, the disturbing part was the fact that he was living the fusion of these ideas; in a way, they were forced upon him by life itself. Vitaliy thought it crucial that he document his emerging understanding. With paper he received by trading his new clothes with one of the prisoners, he began to diligently record his renewed comprehension of the nature of the Soviet state...

\*\*\*

Karl Marx, as has been previously stated, is a fascinating figure in the world of history and philosophy. Without him, it is difficult to imagine the iconic formation of societies with an internal engine of socialist engineering. I reiterate the latter only to reinforce the method of analysis chosen within this work; for it can be easily asserted, and often is, that the philosophy of Karl Marx is not to be held responsible for the errors of communist societies. In other words: leave Karl Marx alone; he was the philosopher – instead we should blame the reformer. This work rejects that cheap defense of a failed ideology on two major points: first, a social reformer does not have to be an individual who physically holds power. A monumental intellectual contribution to an ideological movement is a much more influential exercise of social reform than an implementation of a law by a reformer politician. To put it simply – positioning yourself as an intellectual philosopher does not exclude you from the authorship responsibility of the outcomes of your preachment. Even in his own early writings such as the Introduction to *‘Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Karl Marx underscored the importance of theory in reforms:

“Material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory also becomes a material force when it takes hold of the masses. Theory is capable of taking hold of the masses as soon as it makes its demonstrations *ad hominem*, and it makes its demonstrations *ad hominem* when it becomes radical... Just as philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy. Once the lightning of thought has struck deeply into this naïve popular soil, the emancipation of the German into a man will take place.”<sup>6</sup>

In the second place, it must be remembered that Karl Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto with a goal of providing an outline of the communist reform efforts worldwide. Therefore, communist

---

<sup>6</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 119-124.

social reform was in itself the goal of which Karl Marx was the visionary. Friedrich Engels accurately underscored the latter point in a speech about Marx, where he noted that:

“his real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its first position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival.”<sup>7</sup>

Having established the imperative role of Karl Marx as the monumental social reformer that led to the birth of communist revolutions, it is now time to begin the most crucial inquiry of the ideological teaching itself. For the purposes of this work, the latter implies an understanding of Karl Marx, the positions which he advocated, and the manipulations that became so effective in forcing the people to adopt an ideology that ran contrary to their own interests.

When Plato attempted to underscore the fundamental origin in differences between the existent types of regimes, his inquiry famously touched upon the analysis of the individual in power within the regime. A democratic man was said to be tantamount to a democratic society, a tyrannical man to a tyrannical society, an aristocrat to an aristocratic society, and so on. Keeping in mind this philosophical approach and its historical significance, it may serve our efforts well if we begin our inquiry of Marxism by looking at its primary individual – Karl Marx.

There are many historical nuances about Karl Marx that may catch the aloof contemporary reader by surprise. First, it has to be said that Marx was an atheist, and that he developed his atheism at a relatively early stage of his philosophical sophistication: “Religion is

---

<sup>7</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 70.

the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people” – Marx 1844<sup>8</sup>. Henceforth, it was not just the Soviet adaptation of Marxism that resulted in the bitter attitude of the Communist Party to the Russian Orthodox Church and other religions. The reason the Soviets chose the anti-religious position was undoubtedly because that was *the* Marxist position. Even Mihail Bakunin, an intellectual who would become the most ferocious critic of Marx in his later years, praised him for his advancement as a thinker and an atheist during his youth: “I knew nothing at that time of political economy, I still had not got rid of metaphysical abstractions, and my Socialism was only instinctive. He [Marx], although younger than I, was already an atheist, an instructed Materialist, and a conscious Socialist.”<sup>9</sup>

A thorough examination of Karl Marx’s life also exposes a number of questionable qualities of character and intention. Carl Schurz, writing about Marx in 1848, pointed out Marx’s intolerant, bitter attitude toward diverging opinions:

“Marx’s utterances were indeed full of meaning, logical and clear, but I have never seen a man whose bearing was so provoking and intolerable. To no opinion which differed from his own did he accord the honor of even condescending consideration. Everyone who contradicted him he treated with abject contempt; every argument that he did not like he answered either with biting scorn at the unfathomable ignorance that had prompted it, or with opprobrious aspersions upon the motives of him who had advanced it.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 115.

<sup>9</sup> Bakunin, 1871, on Marx in 1845. Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Obtained from: Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, New York, 1913, Vol 1, pp.138-39.

Carl Schurz was by far not the only acquaintance of Marx to take note of his questionable character. Much like the letter from Marx's father which was displayed in the beginning of this work, Gustav Techow seriously questions the soul and the intention of Karl's intellectualism in a private letter to a friend in 1850:

“The impression he made on me was that of someone possessing an unusual intellectual superiority, and he was obviously a man of outstanding personality. If his heart had matched his intellect, and if he had possessed as much love as hate, I would have gone through fire for him... In view of our aims, it is nevertheless a pity that this man with his fine intellect lacks all nobility of soul. I am convinced that a most dangerous personal ambition has eaten away all the good in him... The only people he respects are the aristocrats, the genuine ones, those who are well aware of their aristocracy. To prevent them from governing, he needs his own source of power, and he can find this only in the proletariat. Accordingly he has tailored his system to them. In spite of all his assurances to the contrary, and perhaps because of them, I took away with me the impression that the acquisition of personal power was the aim of all his endeavors.”<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly, the view that Karl Marx desired personal power or wealth is a view that is not that difficult to support. After all, long stretches of Marx's life were spent in poverty and heavy debt which he quite often cleverly evaded. However, unlike the praised poverty of Socrates which originated from a conscious philosophical position that rejected material wealth, Marx actually needed and wanted money.<sup>12</sup> Matter of fact, the historical records are full of letters and documented correspondences in which Marx, often with a use of guilt manipulation, asked for money from his friends and acquaintances. Henceforth, even if the latter conditions did not justify Karl Marx's entire philosophy, it is more than plausible that they amplified his individual

---

<sup>11</sup> Gustav Techow, to a friend in Switzerland, reproduced by Marx's detractor, Karl Vogt, in *Mein Prozess gegen die Allgemeine Zeitung*, Geneva 1859. Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 47, 52.

bias against the rich or the “bourgeois”. True or not, however, this observation alone is of little use in explaining the nature of Marxist reforms – for we first have to understand the essence of the Marxist philosophy...

## Part two – The Principles of Paradise

...Cold, it was very, very cold; negative 50 degrees Celsius, to be exact. The prison cabins inside the camp did not help much either. The walls themselves felt like ice, and the only possible way to stay warm was to roll in a tight ball on your bed, and cover yourself with the thin dirty prison blanket. It's been a year since Vitaliy first set foot inside the camp. In the beginning, the time seemed to stand still as the shocking conditions provided an inexhaustible list of surprises nearly every day. However, after about a week the life picked up some pace, and the time no longer mourned the streets and alleys of home.

By far the worst activity in the camp was its most important one – deforestation. From five thirty in the morning, until six thirty at night: the workers were forced outside into the wild to cut down trees and vegetation. The work was done in geographical squares, with small guard towers at each corner. However, to plan an escape in these conditions would be to choose a more painful, merciless death. The weather conditions themselves created the Gulag's most efficient guard and its most powerful weapon.

On the other hand, the seemingly insuperable nature did not stop those who still retained a shimmer of indomitable hope. But who could blame them for trying? About three weeks into Vitaliy's imprisonment, the poet Stepan Smolnikov whom he befriended upon arrival, could no longer handle the Gulag. After coming back from an administrative punishment for not fulfilling

his daily work quota, he went to his bed and began to quietly gather his belongings. Frankly, the fact that Stepan could even stand was in itself a miracle – for the prior week he was suffering from severe fever and cough, possibly early stages of tuberculosis. Vitaliy still remembered their last conversation at breakfast before his attempted escape:

- Stepan, think about this, it is not the time to escape. You will freeze to death, do you hear me? At least wait until it warms up again.
- No Vitaliy, I have two advantages that will increase my chances by catching them all by surprise.
- What do you mean?
- Well first, this is the perfect time to escape. Think about it, they are not expecting anyone to make a run for it in these conditions. Plus they know that if the prisoner does get out then he is as good as dead.
- Stepan that is madness; they know you will die because you will in fact die! No one survives this weather.
- Ah, but this is when my second advantage comes in, look at these...

Stepan lifted the bottom of his pants up to his upper ankle. Underneath were what looked like brown leather boots reinforced with soft wool. On the side, barely visible, were the Latin letters “NS”. Vitaliy also noticed additional layers of warm clothing underneath his pants and jacket. And just for that brief moment, maybe no more than half a second, he actually thought that Stepan could have a chance at making it a few kilometers. The problem, of course, was the fact that the nearest village was over one hundred kilometers away.

- How do you like them ah? They are American made, I traded half of my books for them. The other half of my things went to getting extra clothing.

- Stepan, my dear friend, please understand... escape is suicide.
- Suicide? No, escape is liberty to have a choice in how you die. We don't get that luxury here.

That was it. That was their last conversation. Following the breakfast, the workers were sent back outside to the forest. The conditions were miserable. A vicious blizzard burned every patch of skin to which it was exposed, while the high snow swallowed up the workers legs up to their knees. Stepan headed for the center of the West side of the square; and then, just as both guards in the towers were distracted by a worker who collapsed from hypothermia, Stepan ran...

Ten seconds was the time that was enough for the blizzard to swallow the bleak image of a feeble poet prisoner from Perm. Vitaliy could not believe what he just saw; the escape was not only successful, but the guards did not even notice Stepan's absence! From that moment, another idea lay foundation in his mind – an idea of a possible escape. Oh, how Vitaliy hated its presence. For the next hour of work he muttered, grinded his teeth, and cursed the thought that had so insolently feasted upon his boundless imagination. "Escape is madness" – he kept telling himself over and over again, as if repeatedly injecting a serum of rationality into the mind infected with a deceptive phantasm.

Four hours passed before the guards finally noticed the disappearance of Stepan. As the workers were sent back inside, they were all counted by the head labor officer assigned to supervise the area. The rage that overtook him soon after is beyond words or explanation. He ordered one of the four tower guards to strip down of all of his clothes and take the place of the prisoner. The young boy tried to object, but it was of no use. "If he escapes, you take his place" was a rule that was not uncommon in the Gulag. Search teams were organized in an instant, and

sent out in all four directions. A group of dogs soon followed; and Vitaliy couldn't help but listen to their slowly fainting barks that slightly echoed through prison hallways.

Vitaliy spent all of his evening entertaining the possibility of escape. What if he pulled it off? What if he found a way to make it back to Leningrad to find his wife and daughter? They could then run away together, to some remote town on the opposite side of the Soviet Union, or even to some neighboring republics! Hope began to build its unbreakable fortress in his heart, and there was no stopping it. But just as he contemplated his beautiful idea, he stumbled across an obstacle he did not expect to find. Running away was not enough. It is then that he realized that the Gulag was only a microcosm for the Soviet Union. An escape was not an escape at all – it was simply an expansion of prison borders. Every child, every parent, every teacher, doctor, and lawyer – everyone was a prisoner of the state. But to come to this absolute conclusion, Vitaliy needed another inquiry. He quickly gather all the books that he kept stashed in his mattress, and began to review the founding philosophy of the USSR – the principles of Marxism...

\*\*\*

Perhaps the easiest, yet ironically the most paramount field of understanding that concerns the purpose of this work is an outline of the general principles of Marxism. Indeed, the philosophy of Karl Marx is not subject to much debate. It is as easy as opening the Communist Manifesto and reading it from start to finish. Finding patterns that demonstrate a deterioration of the theoretical into the tyrannical, on the other hand, is where the real challenge begins. However, just as a building cannot be built without a foundation, the bitter outcomes of Marxist reforms cannot be graded without a firm understanding of their principle purpose.

Karl Marx has written a large number of philosophical works that promote the advancement of the eighteenth century socialism. However, not a single topic of discussion was covered with as much attention, punctuality, and deliberation as was his position on *private property*. Matter of fact, the further we extend the inquiry into the matter, the more it appears that Karl Marx bluntly detests this method of ownership to a level of pure hatred:

“Private property has made us so stupid and one sided, that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., in short, utilized in some way. But private property itself only conceives these various forms of possession as means of life, and the life for which they serve as means is the life of private property – labor and creation of capital.”<sup>13</sup>

For Karl Marx, the problem that private property posed to society is that it alienated and detached the human being from reality. It made individuals focus on the physical existence that concerned the world that was exclusively theirs through objects of physical possession: “Thus all the physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple alienation of all these senses, the sense of *having*.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the core of Marxist philosophy centered on addressing this “problem”. In one of his early works in 1844, *Private Property and Communism*, Marx stated that: “communism is the positive expression of the abolition of private property, and in the first place of universal private property.”<sup>15</sup> He then later reiterated his position in Chapter 2 of the *Communist Manifesto*, famously declaring that “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 151.

<sup>15</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 147

<sup>16</sup> *Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 2. Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 219.

Karl Marx's atheism is the second important element that closely follows the first. Just like private property, Marx argued that religion alienated the believer internally, and that the communist ideal was the solution to all such alienations:

“The positive supersession of private property, as the appropriation of human life, is, therefore, the positive supersession of all alienation, and the return of man from religion, the family, the state, etc. to his human i.e. social life. Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of real life and its supersession, therefore, affects both aspects.”<sup>17</sup>

Another noticeable pillar of Marxism is undoubtedly his theory of class division and class warfare. In some ways, this principle precedes the abolition of private property to which it becomes a conditional necessity. Without the premise that the societies are divided into social classes, it is difficult to advocate the abolition of private property in the first place. Only when we buy an idea that history is a series of class struggles that breed unjust inequality, can we then look for possible solutions to the inequality itself. It is, therefore, not a surprise that before addressing anything else, Karl Marx opens his argument in the Communist Manifesto with this famous passage:

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Private Property and Communism*. Obtained from: Marx, Karl, and Eugene Kamenka. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1983. Print. Pg. 150.

<sup>18</sup> Obtained from: Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*, I Bourgeois and the Proletarians.

After convincing the reader that this is the preferred interpretation of history, Marx sets out to fulfill his mission as a reformer by suggesting the cure to the disease. Many names can be assigned to this cure; however, perhaps the best single word that captures the energy and vigor of Marxism is *equality*.

Indeed, for Marx the solution was rather simple – rebuild the unequal societies with the tool of equality. Redistribute from those who have a lot, and give it to those who have little. However, this approach has another untold implication: if a society is to exercise redistribution, there must be a redistributor. In other words, the people have to submit themselves to a powerful governing entity that will be in charge of this monumental societal equalization; after all, the construction of a grandeur paradise always requires an effort of grandiose power. For Marx, of course, this meant a direct empowerment of the proletariat: “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>19</sup>

### Part 3 – Underneath the Veil of Illusions

...Six more years have passed in the Gulag. Six miserable, cold, agonizing, vehement, tortuous years that scarred all those who lived them from within a prison cell. Every weak, someone whom Vitaliy knew died. He had desperately tried to record the time and date of their passing, so that he can commemorate them for paying the ultimate price they did not deserve to pay. This was Vitaliy’s last attempt at retaining any semblance of humanity which was so

---

<sup>19</sup> Obtained from: "Communist Party USA." *Excerpts from the Classics: The Socialist and Communist Stage of Social Development* » Cpusa. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.cpusa.org/excerpts-from-the-classics-the-socialist-and-communist-stage-of-social-development/>>.

vigorously uprooted from his soul with every passing moment. “You are all dogs; you are worse than a herd of cattle; you are foul treasonous animals; you are enemies of the state” etc., such were the common phrases that the prisoners heard upon every single hour of their daily routines.

Despite the feeling of total helplessness, Vitaliy continued to secretly write his thoughts about Karl Marx and the Soviet Union. However, no matter how long and how diligently he worked, he could not bypass the ever growing sense of irony that overtook him. “Where is it?” he kept asking himself, “where is the paradise of the proletariat? Where is this wonderful equality promised by Marx? Where is the return of the individual from his self-alienation?” Vitaliy felt ashamed and sorry for the Russian people. He did not understand how the utopian idea was sold to them with ease. Surely, there has to be an explanation as to how the people were manipulated into desiring their own oppression; after all, all they ever wanted was liberty from the Tsar.

Most of all, Vitaliy missed his family. His daughter would turn 18 in a month and a half... assuming that she was still alive. The fate of his wife, on the other hand, seemed unquestionably bleak. The more he thought about her, the more he realized that she would not have ever sold him out to the soviet police who took her in for questioning. This, of course, meant imprisonment or death.

With every memory of the past that surfaced, Vitaliy developed a new ever growing desire to be left alone. Every night before falling asleep he wanted to go back in time, take his family, and just run away. It could be as simple as living in a hut in the middle of a Siberian forest – as long as the government could not reach him there. Part of the latter dream came from Vitaliy’s reading of the American founding. He did not have many books, as he feared being compromised for possession of illegal material; but he did have one American book in particular.

This was a thick, old translated collection of essays titled *The Federalist Papers*. Vitaliy was moved every time he read the works of Madison, Hamilton, and Jay. To nearly each and every founding pillar of Marxism, the Framers of the American Constitution provided a diverging approach. Where Marx sought to abolish property, the Framers fought to protect it. Vitaliy even memorized the passage from the document:

“The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results...”<sup>20</sup>

Even in matters such as equality of thought and condition – two elements crucial to the Marxist experiment in the USSR – the Americans took a different view. When writing Federalist 10 some 61 years prior to the publication of the Communist Manifesto, the Framers considered equality as a possible solution to injustice caused by natural human division. Needless to say, they found this approach incompatible with human nature:

“There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests... The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed.”<sup>21</sup>

The more Vitaliy read, the more he detested his motherland, his government, and the Gulag that would not give him peace. Despotism was not universal after all, and there were

---

<sup>20</sup> Obtained from: Madison, James. "The Federalist No. 10." *The Federalist #10*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2013. <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Madison, James. "The Federalist No. 10." *The Federalist #10*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2013. <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

places to which he could run if he successfully escaped his Siberian prison camp of torture and repression. It was time. Vitaliy could no longer stand being caged and treated like an animal.

For the next 4 months he began to diligently work on the plan of escape. As the camp pushed its area of deforestation further and further to the East, Vitaliy noticed that they are coming closer to the small river Sistra, which ran directly to the neighboring village. Reaching the river would be impossible and useless in the winter; therefore, Vitaliy thought he had a chance if he waited until spring weather warmed up the ice cold water. As he waited for the perfect time of escape, he dreamed of the time when he would walk back to Leningrad, find his daughter, and flee to the United States. This was his only beam of hope within the darkness of despair.

However, there was something else Vitaliy needed to finish. His manuscript was missing one final chapter – the chapter that explained how the innocent reforms transformed to intolerable repressions. Over the years, many have told him that the Soviet Union was successful in implementing the goals of Marx. They praised the experiment as the most advanced step of human political and social development of the entire century. It was difficult to argue back – one for the fear of being reported, and two for the lack of direct non philosophical evidence that would prove to the contrary. Now Vitaliy has finally met truth face to face. Indeed it was true – the Soviet Union was successful in implementing the goals of Marx. However, the Soviet Union was not successful in implementing the goals of the people.

Vitaliy opened the first page of his manuscript, and straightened it lightly with the damp palm of his right hand. Underneath the title, he wrote “dedicated to my wife and daughter, my only world, and my only universe.” He then proceeded to the blank pages of the last chapter, and with a deep sigh of sorrow for his fellow friends, began writing for the last time...

\*\*\*

The tyrannical outcome of the Marxist reforms can be explained in two ways. One, it can be said that the oppression came from the Soviets themselves, and that Marxism has simply been misinterpreted by the early Soviet leaders; or two, that the oppression of the Soviet Union was an inevitable consequence of the ideology itself. The first view, as has already been mentioned, is a view that is deeply rooted in attempts of evading responsibility for the ideological belief in hopes of saving it in the eyes of the public. There is no reason whatsoever to declare that the Soviet Union was not implementing the words of Marx. All of the core Marxist principles were executed to extreme perfection: religion was banned, and many churches were burnt in an attempt to eradicate the man's spiritual freedom; private property was abolished, and the means of individual wealth accumulation limited; equality was instituted, and the salaries of all workers barely differentiated between skilled and unskilled labor; and lastly, the proletariat was put in power, and the very activists who organized the communist revolution became heads of state. There is no better way by which a society could execute the instructions of its founding father. A Russian labor camp expert, Galina Ivanova, supports the latter view in her book *History of the Gulag*: "Surely, the more unstable was the position of Bolsheviks, the more unforgiving they became to their enemies. However, the situation depended not only on the unfavorable political or military developments; the revolutionary terror had a strong social theoretical base. 'When we are accused of cruelty, – said Lenin, addressing the defectors – we become bewildered at how people can forget the most elementary Marxism.'"<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Translated from: Ivanova, Galina. *History of the Gulag*; Chapter 2: Normative base of political repressions. P 67.

Consequently, the second expedient has to be the one that answers to the dilemma of lies and illusions created by a Marxist state; and it comes from Karl Marx's most fierce rival Mikhail Bakunin. As if desperately ringing the bells of caution for the future Russians, Bakunin wrote: "If you took the most ardent revolutionary, vested him in absolute power, within a year he would be worse than the Tsar himself."<sup>23</sup> Bakunin's theory criticized Marxism for its empowerment of the working class. In his view, such a position would only manage to establish an authoritarian working class state: "If there is a State, then there is domination, and in turn, there is slavery."<sup>24</sup> The amazing accuracy of this prophecy cannot be underemphasized. Bakunin established these observations some five decades before the coming to power of Lenin and Stalin, thereby disqualifying the position that places the extent of responsibility exclusively on the latter leaders.

Therefore, Karl Marx's proposed reforms were a mirage that hid the bitter truth of their implications. From beneath the veil of equality, full employment, workers' paradise, and freedom from alienation, came the ideology that equalized every citizen, took away his private property, the fruits of his labor, and placed within him an innate desire to surrender to the power of the state in exchange for social programming. This was the perfect breeding place for a totalitarian regime. Indeed, there are no better conditions for a tyrant than a population already eager to submit to the will of the state – for such was the power of the utopian image of paradise engraved by the Marxist ideology. A tyrant must simply be mad to resist the unveiling temptation.

To put it simply, totalitarian despotism was the next most logical consequence of the Marxist reforms; a consequence that Marx was well aware of, but decided to avoid for it was not

---

<sup>23</sup> Bakunin's famous criticism of Marxism. Obtained from: "Quotes About Marxist." N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/marxist>>.

<sup>24</sup> Bakunin's criticism of statism. From *BrainyQuote*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mikhailbak130410.html>>.

in his immediate interest. I do not doubt for a single second that Karl Marx believed in the goals of his reforms. Neither do I think, nor imply, that Marx wrote his work as a sham. However, I do believe that most of those who bought the idea did not venerate the same goals, and undoubtedly not their immoral implications. Part of this can be explained by Karl Marx's personal factors. His rather unique character traits must have had at least some effect on his ideology; after all, it is more than feasible to see how Marx's prolonged debt and poverty may have altered his personal bias against the rich. Furthermore, upon reviewing his biography, it becomes strongly evident that Marx wrote his work by consolidating only himself and ignoring the diverse cultural and social circumstances of everyone else. It is, therefore, no wonder that he was often labeled as "intolerable". Not everyone detested profit and lived in poverty; not everyone placed social and communal life above alienation; not everyone saw the evil in religion; and not everyone hated the rich and found it hard to feel true love to their fellow human beings. However, everyone was open to an idea of a paradise, everyone was willing to try utopia. And so Marx gave it to them, without the slightest of considerations of the effect it would have on societies. There was no free will or intellectual honesty; for the image was designed to be so powerful and addictive, that it suppressed the rational thought to a mere impulse of compulsory love – the basis of a master slave relationship. The rest, as it is often said, is history...

\*\*\*

Don't stop – that was the only thought that dominated the focused mind of Vitaliy as he sprinted through the forest towards the river. Never stop. Vitaliy has been running for over twenty minutes, and his legs were beginning to get numb. Branches slapped his face, and loudly cracked underneath his feet as they were mercilessly pounded into the turbid mud of springtime marshes. But he was almost there. Vitaliy only carried a small bag that he threw over his

shoulder. His manuscript was securely rapped in animal skin under his coat. Luckily, he was not immediately detected by the guards which provided him with about a ten minute advantage.

At last, the river was in sight. As if mimicking Vitaliy's pace, it hurried in the direction of safety with a slight roar that nearly harmonized the sound of leaves being moved by the mighty Siberian winds. As soon as he got to the shore, Vitaliy quickly assessed his situation. The water was still too cold for prolonged exposure, and thus swimming was not a preferred course of action. However, there were a few tree logs floating close to the shoreline. Afraid to waste more than another second, he picked up several large tree branches that lay nearby, and dove into the water. He managed to catch one of the logs right away as he resurfaced, but the others were floating further out. Holding the trunk with his left arm, and paddling with his right, he was finally able to reach another log, and push the two together. This allowed him to climb on top and escape the bone chilling river. Lastly, Vitaliy quickly threw the tree branches on top of himself to add some protective camouflage – though in truth, the dirty appearance of his clothes were more than enough to conceal his starved body in the surrounding elements. Completely soaked, with water running down his hair, Vitaliy desperately listened for the sound of the perusing dogs. After hearing nothing but the Taiga, his exhausted face convulsed with a painful grimace of soundless laughter. These were the tears of a free man.

Two more days in the wilderness were all that separated Vitaliy from potential freedom. The small village on the shorelines of the Sistra River was located only a few miles from the nearest railroad station. From there, Vitaliy planned to head straight to Leningrad and reunite with his family. However, all of this first required an effort of extensive preparation. Most of all, there were two objects that were absolutely crucial to the execution of the plan – clothes and money. No railroad station would be willing to let a dirty smelling persona on a train without

first checking his documents – documents that Vitaliy did not have. Second, money was needed to cover the basic price of a ticket, and if necessary, buy off the train guards. Both of these things Vitaliy was determined to obtain in the village. As the last night of the river journey approached, the Taiga stood still and watched the lonely man float onward onto the sunset. Not many men have been in these parts of the forest over the years. It belonged to the wolves, the bears, the winds, and the snow. Having a person pay a visit was a bit of an anomaly.

The village was a bit smaller than Vitaliy expected; though it is was not as small at it could have been. Several wooden cabins, a burned down church, and a large fence were all that the settlement consisted of. Still, something was better than nothing. Vitaliy cleaned off the dirt from his face and clothes, brushed his hair with his hand, and bravely proceeded to the village.

He was shortly greeted by a young peasant woman:

- Welcome traveler, what brings you to our humble village?
- I am...I was assaulted by the train station. I was simply heading to Leningrad on Party business, when I got out to get some air. They took all of my money and clothing, and left me with these old rags. I presume they were prisoners, or escaped convicts. I have heard there was a Gulag nearby. Please help me as I need to be on my way by tonight!
- Oh my! Let me get you home to my mother, she will clean you up and feed you soup, you poor soul!
- I am forever in your debt! Thank you so much.
- What is your name, comrade?
- Vitaliy
- And I am Sasha... here come on in.

Inside the house Vitaliy was greeted by an older woman who too believed the story of a railway station assault. She then proceeded to feed him, give him some clothing, and even offered bathing in the banya house outside. Vitaliy happily agreed. By the end of the day, he was well fed, well groomed, and well dressed. However, there was still one thing he needed – money. After his bathing, Vitaliy headed back to the house to ask for a possible loan or a quick job he could do around the village. Sasha's mother was excited to see him again:

- Well look at you! You look like a new man. Now you can go back to Leningrad a proud Communist!
- Yes, indeed. I have a question to ask you though: where can I get some money? You see, the prisoners, they took my wallet, and you know...
- Don't you even worry about it. I have already talked to my husband and he is on his way here with his friends and the dogs to help you find the escaped prisoners! Each one of their heads is compensated by a hefty sum, so you should be good to go. So far, our village has caught every single prisoner who tried to escape! They all head in this direction because they think they can seek shelter, but they never get out alive.
- Oh that's...that's quite...wonderful. I will be proud to report your outstanding service to the party convention when I get there. Now, who were these prisoners you killed again?
- Oh, dear comrade, many prisoners. All of them disgusting enemies of the state. We even had one who was wearing American shoes! Look here, the prison guards let us keep them in reward.

Vitaliy recognized the familiar design of his friend's shoes. Coldness filled his heart and soul. It was more unbearable than any of the frigid days he spent freezing in the Gulag. In contrast to

Siberia, this coldness was consuming him from the inside out. Barely able to speak, Vitaliy managed to squeeze out one more sentence:

- I am, if you will, a person of a soft heart and cannot handle hunting ducks, let alone convicts. So it won't be necessary for your husband to get here, I will be going momentarily. Now this particular prisoner... traitor... how did he die?
- This one was a tough one to get! We shot him first. He started bleeding out, but didn't slow down. The dogs were sent in after him. When we finally caught up, the dogs tore him up in a several pieces. He died a long and painful death – as he deserved!

As soon as the woman turned around, Vitaliy grabbed the bag of money that was sitting by the front door, and rushed outside. He ran fast, even faster than when he broke out of the Gulag. This was no longer just a village of peasants – it was a settlement of barbarians.

### Conclusion

There are a number of ways in which I could analyze the following phrase: “But to manipulate men, to propel them towards goals which you—the social reformer—see, but they may not, is to deny their human essence, to treat them as objects without wills of their own, and therefore to degrade them.” I could write a long research paper on this topic, analyze many different reformers, and contrast their goals with those of the people. I could approach it categorically, providing dates and hardline facts to support each of my premises. However, when we choose to speak of denying men their essence, treating them without wills of their own, and degrading them, are we talking about dry facts and figures? Can human experience of such a monumental atrocity, misery, and pain be explained through quotes and numbers? And what

about true suffering – the suffering one feels tearing away at his soul when his life is reduced to nothing more than an inconvenient nuisance, unbefitting even for a dog? And when the battered human soul can take no more abuse and dies to leave the body living – there’s no statistic in the world that would explain the magnitude of coldness in one’s heart. Experience is, therefore, the only pedagogue of truth that can refill the boundless boundaries of such acts; for when the official death toll of oppression stops with a last body, the true impact on the souls of millions more endures for eternity.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the most powerful works depicting the horrors of pure dehumanization by the Soviet state do not come from scholars – they come from writers and survivors. Varlam Shalamov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn are the prime examples of the latter truth. Keeping this crucial factor in mind, I found no possible way to fulfil my responsibilities as a researcher of this intricate topic without attempting to retell the untold tale of millions; even if it was only exposed through the eyes of a single character – a former professor of politics at a Leningrad university.

In truth, the only thing required to validate the quote by Isaiah Berlin is a short word consisting of five letters: Gulag. The Gulag dehumanized, degraded, and treated men as if they had no wills of their own; but more importantly, it was specifically designed to carry out that purpose. It was simply a part of a package that came along with a brutal ideology of a deprived ideologue; or “elementary Marxism” as Lenin accurately labeled it. There is no question in my mind, however, that those who read the iconic promises of Marx did not envision themselves within a world’s largest prison. After all, an ideology that manipulates men by intensifying their utopian desires leaves little room for rational thought and logical reasoning.

The worst, however, is what happens after the ideology has been successfully implanted in a society. The more the misled population begins to realize that the promises don't equate the results, the more it must be silenced and repressed by the state. Furthermore, new illusions must be created to blind the new generations, and control the manners in which they behave and think. A former Soviet KGB propaganda expert and defector, Yuri Bezmenov, who abandoned USSR in the 1980s, explained the latter process of "ideological subversion":

"Ideological subversion is a process which is legitimate, overt, and open. You can see it with your own eyes... In reality, the main emphasis of the KGB is not in the area of intelligence at all. According to my opinion, and opinion of many defectors of my caliber, only about 15% of time, money, and man power is spent on espionage as such. The other 85% is a slow process which we call either ideological subversion, or active measures – 'aktivniye miropriyatia' – in the language of the KGB, or psychological warfare. What it basically means is to change the perception of reality... to such an extent that despite the abundance of information no one is able to come to sensible conclusions in the interests of defending themselves, their families, their community, and their country."<sup>25</sup>

\*\*\*

... Vitaliy felt like he was on the longest train ride of his life. He could not shake the image of his friend being torn apart by dogs. For Vitaliy, Stepan was an idol – a symbol that galvanized his idea of escape for all these years. It was now gone, in a mere instant, in a blink of an eye, in a gust of Siberian wind. Was escape even possible after all? Does the boundary of the Gulag end at the tall fence of barbwire? Most of all, Vitaliy was scared. The overwhelming feeling of liberating freedom that greeted him so kindly in the wilderness was long gone, leaving

---

<sup>25</sup> "Former KGB Agent Yuri Bezmenov Explains How to Brainwash a Nation (Full Length)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 28 Dec. 2012. Web. 1 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lt1zarINv0>>.

behind no trail of jubilation or exultation. Anxiety, restlessness, and an amalgam of numerous other complex feelings were brewing within him, making an eight hour ride to Leningrad feel like days of intensive labor in the camps. However, Vitaliy was not distracted. His goal of reuniting with his family and escaping to America was as bright and as real as ever; he could even feel the warm hug of his little girl and the soft loving lips of his beautiful wife. He was so, so close.

At last, the train stopped at the Leningrad railway station. Vitaliy flew out of the train, pushing passengers and pedestrians aside, disregarding their quiet muttering in his direction. There was not much left in the journey now: a ten minute bus ride and a walk to his apartment complex. Vitaliy's heart raced faster than his mind. He burst into the main entrance of the complex, and ran up, swallowing six flights of stairs in a matter of seconds. Then the doorbell. The familiar buzz on the other side of the door produced no result. Vitaliy pressed the button again. Soon he heard steps, and a loud rattling of the metal lock "I'm coming, I'm coming" – came the voice from the other side. It was his communal neighbor Elena. "Y...you? Oh how did? Oh my..." - Overtaken by utter amazement, Elena dropped her key. A wide smile appeared on her face as she began to cry and hug Vitaliy.

- Did they let you go early? Oh my dear Vitaliy, how have you been? We thought you were dead!
- Yes, I will explain later. Where are they? Where are my girls?
- Vitaliy... Vitaliy, your wife didn't make it. I'm sorry.

In the back of his mind, Vitaliy already conceded to the fact that his wife may be dead. She knew too much, and freedom of thought and knowledge did not guarantee a long life in the state. That said, a part of Vitaliy's heart still died upon the confirmation of his fear. He did not bother to ask

or listen to how she passed – for him that wasn't relevant. In that moment, he tried to remember her, laughing as they danced together in a ball room. This was his most precious memory.

- Tell me about my daughter, where is she? Please say that she's alive.
- She is, Vitaliy, she is. Matter of fact she came back last year when she turned 18. Soon after your wife died, she was sent to a city orphanage; but she was already 12, no one wanted to adopt her. So after she turned 18, she was released to go back home. She lives here now, by herself.
- Is she here? Why don't I see her?
- Well she just stepped outside to buy some food for dinner, she should be back any moment! Would you like to come in and have some tea?

Vitaliy wanted nothing else to do with the neighbor. He quickly rejected her offer and went straight to the apartment room, shutting the door behind him. Much was the same as how he remembered things seven years ago. Matter of fact, the striking lack of change in the room over all this time made Vitaliy slightly uncomfortable. He could not wait to finally reunite with his daughter. “Oh no, how do I look? Will she recognize me?” – thought Vitaliy to himself as he ran into the bathroom to clean up. He washed the dirt off his face, brushed his hair, and straightened his outfit. Now all he had to do is wait.

After ten or fifteen minutes, Vitaliy heard soft footsteps outside the door. These were not the heavy rigid footsteps of Elena, and he could tell that they belonged to a teenage girl. The door opened. In front of him stood an eleven year old girl, with a beautiful bow in her hair, a red dress, and unforgettable pink cheeks full of joy and laughter. It was his little girl.

- My dear sweetheart, my dear, dear sweetheart! Oh how I missed you my little girl! Do you remember me? I escaped! I escaped! - Vitaliy was choking on his tears as he desperately tried to explain everything to his daughter – Oh how I missed you! I am sorry about mother. I truly, truly am. I should have escaped earlier. I felt this would happen. Please forgive me my sweetheart! Please forgive. We must run away together, you hear me? We can go to America, and be free from this place! Seven years...I can't believe it. You have grown up to be so beautiful!

It was then that Vitaliy realized that his daughter was not hugging him back. Overtaken by emotions and unable to utter anything else he asked again if she remembered who he was. He wiped his face, and looked into her eyes – they were as cold and distant as the Taiga.

- Yes, I remember my father. My father was a professor of politics who practiced espionage against our motherland, and my mother helped him along. That's why he was sent to a labor camp and she was executed. They were both enemies of the state. YOU are an enemy of the state, and an enemy of comrade Stalin...

Vitaliy stood silently as he listened to his daughter. The mind drew a blank, the heart became numb, and the soul began to crumble. For the first time in seven years, there was nothing on the inside capable of fighting back.

- ...And now you escape? You run away from your duties and your rightful punishment to betray the motherland yet again? I am ashamed to be your daughter, but I will do what's right once and for all. The Party would be proud of me, and I am proud to call them my true parents.

The daughter picked up the phone and started calling the police; but for Vitaliy, much of that was now of minimal relevance. He sat in a gaze, and in utter disbelief. “It can’t be done” – he whispered to himself – “there is no escape”.

A few minutes passed before the police showed up. Vitaliy was taken away. He did not resist arrest. In two hours, following his confession of a planned escape, and future plans of fleeing to the United States of America, Vitaliy was executed by a firing squad. Only one thing remained – his manuscript. It was still rapped in leather, and lay flat on the table by his daughters’ bed.

“Hmm what’s this...? ‘Dedicated to my wife and daughter, my only world, and my only universe’... when did this get here?” Vitaliy’s daughter opened the manuscript to the first chapter and started reading. After about twenty minutes, she got up and walked to the communal hallway. She opened the metal shield of the fireplace, and tossed the work into the flames. “What a pile of junk. It’s dangerous to keep these things at the apartment” – she thought to herself as she watched the pages slowly dissipate in the glare of a radiant sunset.

\*\*\*

I was never a fan of ideological genocide – the type that does not only focus on external or ethnic characteristics, but also goes way beyond, straight into one’s mind and soul, thereby constraining the boundless freedom of thought and emotion. You see, an individual does not live, feel, learn, understand, and love by the color of his skin, the history of his ethnic population or the traditional ways of his culture. No, by far the more important medium of life experience and self-identity is hidden only in the mind: an entity that cannot be subject to any particular categorization. The freedom, therefore, of this entity becomes the most sacred right and the most

prized relic of any human being to have walked this planet. To have a school of thought that acts on a contrary – that builds a foundation for imprisonment, torture, death, and mutilation of the individual as punishment for thought crime – is a school of thought that exercises evil in its pure form. But even then, when the body has finally given up, when the cold has paralyzed the senses, and repeated blows no longer sting the battered flesh... the mind is free; for it becomes a part of heaven, and the universe.

Dedicated to all the victims of Soviet repression whose story was never told.