

Isolation, imposture and the impact of the ›Taboo‹ in Stalinist society A diarist on the verge of loneliness¹

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3.7.1938

Bitter Lines

I go to the pub in the basement just around the corner ...

To reflect upon my grief and my depression ...

I ask for a jug of beer,

It doesn't matter, for me there is nothing to seek any more.

The beerhouse deeply buried into the ground,

Daylight oozes dimly through the windows,

As if it was from a grave, one can see the feet marching in close
rank,

Meaning somebody still has a path in life.²

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2 Extracted from K. A. Koshkin's diary, entry of 3.7.1938, conserved at the author's personal archive in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (in the following RGAE), f(ond) 154, op(is) 1, d(elo) 67, l(ist) 62.

Requiem

Feelings are worn out in my soul,
 Leaving just the bitterness of unvoiced suffering
 Lonely and decrepit like a little boy I am getting cold
 At the idea that my life cycle is about to close.

My thoughts will vanish from the world
 And the corpse on the fire turns into a white nil
 Like vessels in the world that pass by without leaving a trace
 Like the sun that dries up ^{and scorches} the feather-grass in the fields.³

* * *

These two poems were included in a Soviet diary kept by Konstantin Andreevich Koshkin (1888-1968), an old revolutionary and specialist in hydraulic engineering. The author scribbled them on two separate, loose sheets of paper.

Apparently both poems date from the years of the »Great Terror« and somehow reflect key experiences from this period. They are highly permeated with violence – not with clear and open violence, which would make it easy to distinguish between perpetrator and victim, but with a diffuse sentiment of depression [*pechal'-tosku*] that seems to result much more from the suffering person her/himself than from an exterior world that remains extremely vague and almost shapeless. The »action« or »non-action« takes place in the inner self of the narrator. No one but himself can be blamed for his profound gloominess – at least there is no one in sight. This gloominess and despair is due to the paramount feeling of loneliness that is forcefully conveyed through both poems, though in different degrees.

3 RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, l. 15. What I have transcribed as a superscript has been added above the line in the manuscript, underscoring is transcribed as underscoring; my emphases are in *italics*.

In *Bitter Lines* we can still identify the location of the narrator: the pub [*pivnaja*] in the basement. In principle it could be a public space, a place where people meet and communicate. But here it is not. On the contrary, it is depicted as a place of detachedness, where the lonely drinker surrenders to his bitter reflections. In connection with grief [*pechal'*], his yearning [*toska*] is deprived of any concrete external object. For him, detachedness does not mean that events in which he is ordinarily involved can now be coolly looked upon from a bird's eye view, thanks to an external point of view he has perfected over time. As there is no more involvement in earthly matters and as isolation is permanent, there are no more shifts of standpoint. Everything is paralysed. Two interconnected metaphoric elements elucidate the dilemma of isolation from the world: the location and the light. The pub is »deeply buried into the ground« and thus it is impossible to watch and follow what is happening outside. But it »doesn't matter«, as »for him« there is »nothing to look forward to« any more. Accordingly, the daylight comes in only dimly through the windows that are hardly above the ground. This combination of dim light in a basement creates a particular atmosphere of death and being confronted with a distant life, which is definitely beyond reach. Like »from a grave« one can see the row of marching feet. One cannot see faces, and not even bodies. It remains obscure what they are doing and what sense their actions have. These marching feet just indicate that »in life« (that is far away) there »is still someone who has a path«. Loneliness and ensuing inactivity are identified with death: not only a social, but a psychological death.

The *Requiem* goes a step further, as it deals with the consequences of death by referring to memory and the traces one leaves in the world. Again the narrator is extremely isolated: a decrepit little boy who is cold – a spiritual shiver rather than a physical one. Whereas in *Bitter Lines* the narrator is situated at least somewhere (albeit in the cellar-room of a dark and sinister pub), here there is no more question at all of a locus and of a standpoint. Everything has got in flux, and a concrete world is farther away than ever. The title of the poem is in contrast to (and thus emphasizes) the tenor of the verses: requiem should mean honor and the com-

memoration of the dead, but here there is nothing to commemorate, there is only a disappearance »without trace«. Everything that has been is about to vanish into thin air: feelings, ideas and memory. The feelings constitute the first category. They are particularly fragile and ephemeral by their very nature. So at first the feelings in his soul run dry. It is impossible to materialize them and they can only survive in quite an altered way by the perception and retelling of their exterior manifestations by others. Significantly, this disappearance leaves only the bitterness of *unexpressed* pain, i.e. pain and torment that have not been shared. His thoughts or ideas [*dumy*] belong to the second category. In contrast to the vague nature of feelings (i.e. intricate and confused movements of the heart), ideas can be materialized or realized: they can be clear and leave traces. It is the third category, the disappearance of the *memory* of one's ideas that evokes these three massive, hopeless comparisons that dominate the whole second stanza: first the corpse in the crematorium that burns to ashes, second the vessels in »the world« (a world with no focal points any more) that pass without any traces, and third the feather grass that is dry and – as the author adds above the line – scorched by the sun. A decisive moment is identified: the narrator's shivering is provoked by the recognition that the »life cycle« is quickly closing, narrowing or »locking up« [*zamknet'sja*]. In this context, the »life cycle« [*zhiznennyi krug*] has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it hints at the circular movement of physical life itself (»ashes to ashes, dust to dust«) and thus to the approaching of death, to the closing of the circle. On the other hand, it indicates the circle of fellow human beings with whom one communicates and shares one's experiences: only the presence and the interaction with these people endow actions with sense. Only they are able to commemorate and preserve the traces of a fellow-interactor, once he has physically vanished. It is the isolation from other people, the fading away of human interaction that is at the heart of the narrator's frightful experience, an experience that is extremely uncertain and wavering, as it is (just) an experience with himself, an (unexpressed) feeling.

In the following, the poems will serve as a starting point to reconsider Arendt's concept of solitude, inner dialogue and loneliness. This concept is differentiated and elaborated by the theory of ego-states as developed by psychologists on the basis of their insights into multiple personality disorder. By a next step I will exemplify how Koshkin's silencing of his former political allegiance, Menshevism, influenced his personal memory of the 1905 Revolution and made him an active participant in the regime's effort to launch a distorted narrative of these fundamental events. Then I will explore the traces of multivocality in Koshkin's diary, and we will see how constraints on interior dialogue hampered critical capacity. Although Koshkin never overtly mentioned his former Menshevism in his diary (until 1954), he occasionally found means of fictionalizing his complex apprehensions in at least fragments of self-reflective stories that will be regarded in some detail. Koshkin's individual experience of loneliness as reflected in his diary was not a random case. It was related to systematic strategies of the Stalin regime. This will lead me to open up a comparative perspective and to review some aspects of Bukharin's prison writings. Bukharin's case will be reinterpreted as a human experiment enacted by Stalin in order to study the impact of controlled solitude of an individual. This introduces a change of perspectives on the regime that will be further elucidated in the final part that deals with the complex interplay of reciprocal apprehensions and the accompanying dynamics of dissimulation imposture.

Solitude and loneliness: philosophy and psychology on multivocality

The impression conveyed by Koshkin's poems seems to be a perfect illustration of Hannah Arendt's notion of loneliness.⁴ Her fundamental distinction between »loneliness« and »solitude« implies that the former can only be understood by help of latter. Since solitude is normally a temporary condition and generally alternates with interaction, the entirely

4 She briefly presents this concept at the end of her classical study on totalitarianism, cf. Arendt 2004. The pluralist and dialogical self that she distinguishes from the one-dimensional one is fundamental to her later conceptualization of thinking, cf. Arendt 1978.

hopeless state of loneliness arises from a deep problem with what is experienced in solitude, when it becomes permanent (and only at this level does the centrality of the atomization thesis for her interpretation of totalitarianism become intelligible). Arendt defines solitude as a state in which one is alone with oneself, and this means that one becomes multiple and polyphone and engages in an interior dialogue that she calls *thinking*: speaking to oneself from different perspectives. This splitting of the personality into different subjects in the process of inner dialogue has to be seen in close interrelation and in constant alternation with the unequivocal identity/personality that people assume (and acquire) in their interactions with the outer world. Personal »identity« in the sense of uniqueness and unity thus results from a conjunction of two opposite, and at the same time, complementary movements: first being perceived by others as an individual with his/her own distinctive traits and opinions and, second, more or less in reciprocal interaction with this perception, the constant (narrative and moral) effort to be coherent with oneself in front of others.⁵ A permanent adjustment between self- and external perception regulates, more or less, the sense of the self and of one's place within the human environment. In a state of solitude and inner plurality, i.e. when we are thinking, this definite point in the world is (temporarily) effaced.

The theory of »ego-states« reflects this experience of thinking from a psychological perspective. What makes it interesting for social scientists and historians concerned with biography and self-construction is that it is not limited to explaining mental illness, but rather takes the diagnosis of multiple personality disorder as a starting point for a general model of the human personality. With any person we find a variety of ego-states, as contended by these psychologists, and not just the Freudian *id*, *ego* and *super-ego* with their relatively neat functional division of labor. All of us – or most of us – have multiple personalities, and the existence of a variety of egos is not at all a sign of illness. In fact there is no clear-cut division

5 Ricoeur 1990 examined this question of coherence with oneself and differentiates between narrative, ethical and poetical coherence.

line between normality and pathology. The multiple personality *disorder* is the result of a lack of coordination of and communication between the egos within one person: the illness is thus a disturbance of internal dialogue, i.e. of the very activity and capacity that Arendt calls »thinking«. The theory uses the metaphor of more or less permeable membranes or of thinner and thicker walls between separate rooms in a house that facilitate or impede dialogue and coordination. In cases of extreme disorder, the lack of inner communication between the different *egos* leads to their successive take-over of the control over an individual's actions. This is so bewildering for others who only perceive these shifts as complete changes of personality. Often the new ego that takes hold of the person does not even know what the former alter has done, this is the reason for memory and time loss (Watkins & Watkins 2007). Such dramatic cases of complete dissociation and inaccessibility of certain alters are generally the result of traumatic experiences in childhood.

The question of inner communication is pivotal, not only for one's psychological balance, but also – if we follow Arendt's famous argument on the Eichmann trial and the »banality of evil« – for the quest for meaning and, in the longer run, for political judgment and moral responsibility. Eichmann's repeated clichés and ready-made phrases that betrayed not the least sense of responsibility hinted at a peculiar absence of internal dialogue which is the very precondition for self-criticism, the latter only being possible when a person is able to take at least two standpoints simultaneously. Self-criticism is at the same time one of the external traces of the multiple personality. But it is mitigated for the environment, for the different egos are temporalized and their simultaneousness is blurred: one criticizes a *past* self or *past* conduct and behavior.

The sudden plurality of the person as experienced by the internal dialogue of »thinking« reproduces the external plurality of perspectives and opinions.⁶ This does not mean that the different interior voices exactly

6 Walzer 1996: 111-135 defends the correspondence between outward and inward pluralism, although his conception of the »divided self« is some-

mirror the positions of the individuals one communicates with in outer social life; the adaptation necessarily includes a certain degree of personal transformation. But essentially the inner selves are generated by mimetic processes: the constituent parts of the interior world of (dialogical) thinking are inspired by parts (persons/opinions/points of view) in the outer world. This corresponds to what Kant calls »enlarged thinking« (*erweiterte Denkungsart*), i.e. the capacity to imagine somebody else's situation, to think from his/her standpoint by transcending one's own subjective conditions of judgment. In Kant's view this is the very condition for judgments of *good taste*, which is the domain par excellence of the *sensus communis* that concerns questions of inter-subjectivity. This is clearly differentiated from objective insights of both pure and practical reason that can be attained *a priori*, without recourse to experience, like the categorical imperative, for instance. *Good taste*, however, does not result from the imitation of somebody else's standpoints and aesthetical judgments; it is not a question of reproduction. It has a strong poetic dimension, produced by the dialogue of a multitude of standpoints explored in the interplay of pluralist external communication and of the internal processes of (enlarged) thinking. This poetic dimension as a consequence of inter-subjective plurality and the interaction of different standpoints is analogically claimed for political judgment by Hannah Arendt, who thus strictly separates the domain of politics from morals and reconciles it with the sphere of aesthetics.

Normally the division of the person into a set of distinct selves by interior dialogue is no problem. On the contrary, although thinking does not produce concrete results and rather permanently reiterates and (re-) weighs questions of sense and meaning from infinite points of view, it has an impact on the capacity of judgment, even if this capacity is only attained and developed by an interplay with external interaction, where the person manifests a definite identity, also for him/herself. But if this interplay and alternation of interior and exterior dialogue is disturbed

what different from mine. He also emphasizes the necessity of a person's division in operations of self-criticism.

and solitude seems to be endlessly perpetuated (cf. Arendt 1978; 1998; 2004), the split of the self can become an unbearable burden. Then the eternal flux of thinking is apprehended as a pathological state of mind, as a sort of schizophrenia. This is the state of loneliness, where the person loses her/his centre and the assurance of an ability to return to a backbone of core identity that is maintained (or only gradually adjusted and modified) in the course of human interaction and communication. Then inner multiplicity is felt like a loss of one's own position in the world. This is reflected in the *Requiem* when the narrator deplores the closure of his communicational (life) circle and literally speaks from nowhere.

The fear of losing or having lost one's footing in a perpetuated state of solitude makes a person receptive to totalitarian propaganda and prone to what Arendt calls *totalitarian thinking*, in radical opposition to *thinking* as an interior dialogue. To escape pathological multiplicity, people desperately search for new certainties. And apparently they sometimes find a hold in totalitarian thinking, i.e. in purely logical operations, the Cartesian deductive reasoning of mathematics, where B can be deduced from A, C from B, and so forth. As deductive logic does not discuss the premisses of its mental operations, it provides a particular form of security and stability. It is reduced to the use of instrumental reasoning (*Verstand* in Kantian terms or *instrumentelle Vernunft* in the terms of critical theory), whose conclusions can be divided into right and wrong-categories. The domain of reason (*Vernunft*) is excluded, since it asks for sense and meaning and questions premisses, and is thus always on the shaky ground of (dialogical) *thinking*. If you have deduced correctly, you are right, and that's the way it is. There remains nothing relative like an opinion, which can always newly be put into question. And this security makes totalitarian ideology so attractive for the isolated person who has lost an inner center and self-assurance as a result of the permanent flux of the indeterminate dispute of inner voices.

It is *loneliness* – and not solitude – that pushes a person to desperately seek for an anchor in deductive reasoning, because the rightness produced by logic endows one with a substitute for lost (interactive) identity and uniqueness. Totalitarian propaganda delivers the corresponding

premisses one can (and has to) deduce from, premisses that are not to be put into question and have to be accepted by everybody. If it is the form of the right-wrong dichotomy, independently of the content of ideology, that in fact leads to a depersonalization of those who build their self-assurance on using this form of reasoning, it is the content of totalitarian ideology, i.e. the binding premisses it delivers, that creates the uniformity of those depersonalized. Of course, the resulting *totalitarian individual* is an ideal-type that is never fully attained in reality, but this does not qualify the heuristic potential of the concept.

But however convincing such a conceptualization of personality might be, what can we do with it? How can we approach these inner domains and forms of reasoning for a given period (Stalinism) and on the basis of material evidence? Is not such an attempt prone to lead to mere speculation? – It is true that the very process of dialogical thinking is virtually inaccessible for a historian, and probably generally for other social scientists and even psychologists who tend to immediately take hold of the person as their object of inquiry. Literature probably comes closest to interior dialogue, and that's why literary works, like Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, Orwell's *1984* and others, have not lost their suggestive potential for explaining the internal mechanisms in human personalities under a totalitarian system. But this is not the principle path I would like to tread here, even though I have started with the interpretation of two poems and although literary treatment plays an important role for my argument. Indeed, the main focus is on K. A. Koshkin's very diary, in which we can find these poems and several other literary attempts, but also entries of a completely different nature. This diary is particularly appropriate to explore and illustrate the liminal states of the author that have immediately to do with the categories elaborated above. Koshkin's diary itself is a liminal document. It consists of about a dozen notebooks and many loose sheets of paper, with several thousands of pages altogether. His first notes date from the 1905 Revolution and the latest ones from the

1960s, some time before his death.⁷ The diary oscillates between very different functions and genres: apart from more or less introspective personal entries, recollections, pieces of autobiographical narration, collected folklore from travels etc., we can find reminders and notes related to work, phone numbers, but also drawings, sketches, caricatures, etc.⁸ The most sketchy notes are often simply not understandable for an external reader, and the general composition of the diary is rather fortuitous: the diarist apparently wrote intuitively on what he had at hand, so that the notebooks are chronologically overlapping.

**A Menshevik past:
the impact of dissimulation on the memory of Revolution**

Rather than in generic liminality, I am interested in the introspective one, in the traces and the limits of an interior dialogue on the verge of loneliness. As early as in 1927 Koshkin explained his diary-writing by the desire for »leaving a trace« and in a breath he asked: »For what? Who needs this trace? Is it worthwhile to think about that?« And his affirmative answer points to the affinity of his writing to inner dialogue:

It is enough for me to find consolation in the fact that I speak to myself in a tête-à-tête. Have I tried it previously? Yes, I have, but sinful and lazy as I am, I have given up on these attempts, have lost what I had written down and have forgotten that one has to reiterate one's conversations with oneself. That means first of all

7 Cf. RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 65-86, op. 2, d. 3-4. As there are also numerous non-dated entries, I cannot exactly determine the time of his latest writings.

8 Caricatures and drawings were quite a popular genre, and many diarists tried their hands at portrayals. This inclination can also be found among political leaders, who often sketched each other even during *politburo* and Central-Committee-sessions. On the one hand, this artistic occupation seems to be due to the idea of a polyvalent »New Man«, on the other hand the sessions were well known for long (and probably often boring) speeches. Such drawings of leading Bolsheviks have recently been published, cf. Vatlin et al. 2006.

that I have to confess to my sins and through penitence gain enough energy for correction. Thus I write and write.⁹

Of course, even where the diary is addressed to nobody else and is thus definitely not part of external communication, diary writing cannot be taken for a direct expression or even a transcription of dialogical thinking. Not only can the flow of dialogical thinking never be entirely verbalized and needs to be interrupted in order to be committed to paper; the materialization itself would transform the very essence of this immaterial flow. In fact, hardly anyone ever feels the need to commit to paper these endless movements of the spirit and mind. The very effort of taking notes and writing down impressions rather aims at overcoming this constant flow, at collecting one's thoughts in order to come to a point, or to a standpoint. In this sense, diary-keeping can be a means of escaping the vicissitudes of loneliness: a liminal occupation that has to be situated between multivocal thinking and an attempt to come to a univocal position.

Why should this be so in Koshkin's case, who was spared by the »Great Terror« and whose professional career even remained undisturbed? After having worked at the beginning of the 1920s as a water supply specialist and a member of the administration of the Shatura site (near Moscow) for the extraction of peat, he worked for the *Chief Administration of the Gold and Platinum Industry (Glavzoloto)* and taught at the *Water Supply and Canal Building Department of the Municipal Construction Engineers Institute in Moscow* (from 1941 as the Dean). He later became director of the *Correspondence Institute of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic for Silicate Industries*, and in 1948 the Dean of the correspondence division of the *All-Union Polytechnic Institute*. During this time he seemed to have had a rather harmonic family life, with his wife A. M. Cherniak, like himself a former militant fighter against tsarism, and his two children. He was perfectly integrated into the political, social and cultural domains: a member of the *Moscow Soviet* since 1927, he was also very active at the *Museum for*

9 Entry from 12.2.1927, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, no numbering.

the History of the Reconstruction of Moscow, for instance. As he did not fall victim to the »Great Terror«, he never experienced the total isolation that was the destiny of so many Soviet citizens who were affected personally or whose immediate family members had been arrested: the bitter feeling when former friends did not want to know you any more, when neighbours and colleagues turned their back on you, etc. (cf. numerous examples in Figes 2007). Even if people around Koshkin were arrested or just disappeared,¹⁰ an experience that everybody had to a certain extent during these years, his own core family remained untouched, and he was thus lucky in comparison to others.

Was he not part of the masses marching forward for a common goal? Was he not even part of the vanguard? Why this self-image of a lonely drinker in this dreary pub, and why the *Requiem* which almost unconsciously and in an obscure way reflects on the disappearance of fellow revolutionaries, including their memories? Why should he have been on the verge of loneliness? Indeed, the poems tellingly convey a feeling of deepest isolation, but could this not be a literary device? A literary scholar would admonish us, stating that one should not confuse the narrator with the author and indeed, if we separate them neatly, we could come to the conclusion that Koshkin demonstrated extreme lucidity in describing so many aspects that were later singled out as the defining criteria of »totalitarianism«.

But to present Koshkin as a harsh critic of the regime would be an undue over-interpretation of his poems. This can be clearly seen from the broader context of his diary, although – or rather because – we learn only very late (from an entry of late 1954) of a decisive biographical fact that he constantly withheld from his entourage (and even from his diary), but that apparently put a heavy strain on his life and to a significant de-

10 It is mainly in the post-war years that he starts to deplore the fact that hardly anybody was left from the old guard of revolutionary activists, but even in his diary he never even evokes the reason for the prematureness of these disappearances.

gree influenced his communicational behavior: he had been a Menshevik until 1919:

In 1955 the first Russian revolution, the revolution of 1905, will be 50 years of age.

1954-1904 = 50 y[ears]. From these: 1920-1954 member of the CPSU = 34 years, and 35 years in 1955. Consequently, from a total life span of 65 years: [there were] 30 years before my joining the CPSU. Of these 30 years, the early period from 1888 to 1904: education at primary school and college, i.e. 1904-1888 = 16 years. Consequently, at the age of 17 I was already a member of the RSDLP. The schism between b[olsheviks] and m[ensheviks] started in 1903 and I found myself with the mensh[eviks], nominally from 1905.

Consequently, from 1905 to 1919 I was a menshevik, if the period of [my] stay [cooperation?] with the bolshev[ik] [word missing] in the Urals in Zlatoust and then in Orenburg is not subtracted. So 1919-1905 = 15 years and then 35 years. And 0 notice, not even 0, but minus 0.¹¹

The very form of these strange calculations reminds us of Arendt's argument on deductive reasoning that tends to replace dialogical thinking, when the interior split of the personality in the state of solitude is no longer supported. Apart from the operators, the keyword of deduction here is »consequently« [*sledovatel'no*], but also words like »then« in the

11 RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, l. 72. His formulation is ambiguous here. He speaks of »0 vnimanie«, which may also mean »no consideration«, in the sense that rather his merits than his failures would have been disregarded. This would not refer to the 15 years of his Menshevism, but to his (successful) self-re-education effort and to the consecutive 35 years of affiliation with the Bolshevik party, that then he was not adequately credited for. Especially as Koshkin is facing difficulties at work at that time (see below), it is possible that we have to read the passage in this way. This would imply a considerable shift of perspective after the release of pressure related to Stalin's death. I thank Gleb Albert for this insight.

sense of »from this follows« [*togda*]. The »I« emerges only reluctantly, and Koshkin speaks of himself only in the passive voice. There seems to be not the least margin for personal decisions: »I found myself« [*ja popadaia*], »nominally«, etc. The »I« is not presented as an actor, but rather as an object driven by circumstances. It is the first time that Koshkin explicitly addresses his past political allegiance with Menshevism (although we will see that he has made attempts before in his diary). Neither can we suppose that he would have talked about this past to other people. But the information slumbered in his personal files and could be extracted at any time.¹² Not only was the Menshevik party already prohibited during the Civil War and those who did not renounce their non-Bolshevik political convictions prosecuted in Soviet Russia, but even ex-Mensheviks who had repudiated their past and converted to Bolshevism (as had Koshkin) were increasingly accused of conspiracy, with notable publicity in the Menshevik Trial of 1931.

I would argue that Koshkin vaguely felt and feared a split in his personality (vaguely because he apparently never verbalized it): although he probably did not actually lie about his past, the simple fact of hiding and silencing it made him feel like an *impostor*. Of course, his former Menshevism definitely made him vulnerable to all sorts of accusations under Stalin (and the quoted entry dates from more than a year after Stalin's death). This was the case for many Soviet citizens: kulaks, bourgeois, political actors, officers of the Tsarist army, etc., and generally also their children.¹³ Their social or political backgrounds had actually been criminalized, while at the same time (from the 1930s on) dissimulation about their past was persecuted as »double-dealing«. Koshkin's situation was thus far from being so much exceptional, and it has to be seen against the backdrop of a culture of ubiquitous autobiographical narrative: in

12 The concept of file selves as developed by Harré 1984 has been used by Fitzpatrick 2005: 14-18.

13 On these numerous »outcasts« see Alexopoulos 2003. In many cases these persons hid their past from their environment, cf. also the destinies related in Figes 2007.

spite of all teleology and future orientation in the official discourse it was not easy, and often simply impossible, not to speak of one's own past and to only live in the present. On numerous occasions one was asked to write and tell one's biography, which was submitted for inquiry and the questioning of the collective (Halfin 2000).

In Koshkin's case the situation was still more complicated. As an old revolutionary and an old party member (that he indeed was, although he had not originally adhered to the »good« faction) he was constantly invited to commemorative ceremonies dealing with revolutionary events, especially to celebrations of the 1905 Revolution, when he had been a member of the strike committee whose actions at the Putilov factory had sparked off the events. With this experience he was an authoritative voice for the memory of those times; and the more time passed and former participants died (naturally or not), the more he was asked to speak on such occasions. At the end of 1954, at the time of his diary entry with the strange calculations on his party membership, the preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1905 Revolution were underway. Koshkin was acutely involved in these commemorative endeavors: since 1953 he had practically stepped out of one meeting and into the next. Then, on 22nd January 1955, for the 50th anniversary of »Bloody Sunday«, he was interviewed on television for the first time ever and, judging by his diary, he was very excited about this. Certainly, by that time Stalin was dead and, even though the XXth Party-Congress had yet to take place, there were clear signs of détente. Even in this atmosphere it was absolutely impossible and unthinkable for Koshkin to out himself as an ex-Menshevik on such an occasion. During such public appearances he thus constantly related »personal recollections« of his political commitment in the 1905 Revolution without mentioning his political allegiance. Judging by the drafts of his speeches on these occasions in his diary, he never explicitly claimed to have been a Bolshevik, but he definitely talked his public (and maybe to a certain degree even himself) into thinking he had been one.

As in most Soviet autobiographies, a cornerstone of his narrative is his humble social origin: the wage earners in his family lived the life of poor

peasant-commuters between the village and the capital, which forced him to start working very early in order to top up the family's miserable income.¹⁴ Once at the Putilov factory, as he recalled in 1948, the contact with the »most class-conscious and progressive workers« could not but »open my young eyes for the reality of life, and I became a member of a clandestine social-democrat circle.«¹⁵ Naturally, he describes the *Bolsheviks* as the principal protagonists, as here in his narrative of 1955:

The most experienced figures of the revolutionary workers' movement Mikhail Iv. Kalinin, Nik. Poletaev, Vasilij Buyanov and others founded a Bolshevik party organization at the factory, which had huge influence among the workers, and the Putilovtsy always marched in the vanguard of the revolutionary workers of Petersburg.

Koshkin's description of the strike and of the events that led to »Bloody Sunday« sticks closely to the official representation in the *Short Course of the History of the CPSU*, especially as regards his evaluation of the agent-provocateur Gapon and the description of his *Assembly of Russian Factory Workers* as the incarnation of evil. The ambiguity of the clergyman is completely effaced, and he is presented as a one-dimensional traitor who had voluntarily led his sheep into misery. According to Koshkin, Gapon had not only founded his assembly on Okhrana money »to teach the workers obedience to the Tsar and to the authorities, to not listen to the social-democrats, to hope for the »dear father Tsar's mercy« [*na milost' tsaria batiushek*] instead of organizing strikes«, all that in order to divide the workers and to weaken the combative potential of the Putilov Factory. But even more so, by instigating the workers to go to the Winter Palace unarmed to submit a petition to the Tsar, Gapon would have consciously provoked the slaughter of »Bloody Sunday«.

The Bolsheviks and the most conscious factory workers tried very hard to persuade the other workers not to go to the Tsar unarmed

14 Entry 3 December 1953, RGAE, f.154, op.1, d.67, l.73-79.

15 Entry from July 1948, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 69, l. 32.

and explained to them the criminal and provocative aim of Gapon's plan. But nobody listened to *us* and *we* had no other choice but to join the working masses, while constantly warning them of the approaching carnage. And that's exactly what happened.¹⁶

In reality, Gapon had by that time almost emancipated his organization from the clutches of the Okhrana. He was a fierce opponent of the procession that was finally pushed through by others against his will. However, he did not hesitate to take the lead of the demonstrating workers once he could not stop them anymore. That he survived the slaughter was pure chance. Furthermore, no mention was made in Koshkin's narrative of the fact that Gapon pronounced the Tsar's excommunication after the bloodshed.¹⁷

In principle Koshkin could have known better,¹⁸ but the exact inscription of his life-story into the official narrative (however distorted this was in relation to historical reality) seemed to provide him with a certain (albeit fallacious) security, not only externally but also internally, for he

16 See his script written for the 1955 anniversary of «Bloody Sunday», RGAE, f. 154, op. 2, d. 4, l. 446-449. The use of this «we» is not an open lie, as he speaks of the Bolsheviks and of «the most conscious workers». A reader who knows what the audience did not, namely that he was not a Bolshevik at the time, has to understand him in a way that he counted himself among the most conscious workers. But in Soviet understanding, could someone who had taken the erroneous path of Menshevism have been among the most conscious workers? In another autobiographical sketch from 1948 he inserts another ambiguous formulation. Writing about the beginning of his propaganda and agitation experience in the ranks of the Social-Democrat Party during his work at the Putilov plant he adds: «A really experienced and comparatively skilful lecturer I became only much later, when I developed my activity in the domain of my beloved party work, in the years of Soviet power», entry from July 1948, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 69, l. 32.

17 Cf. N. P. Petrov 1907: *Zapiski o Gapone*. *Vsemirnyj vestnik* 1907 (1).

18 Koshkin was an avid reader of Soviet writer Sergei Mstislavskii who still in 1928 had written an essay on Gapon's death, where he exposed the clergyman's ambiguity, Mstislavskii 1928.

was far from having accepted Menshevism *as his own past*. We know that the memory of facts and experiences is not something that is fixed in time but is constantly shaped and reshaped by communicational constellations (Welzer 2000; Markowitsch 2000). Through his personal recollections, Koshkin did not only participate in the implementation of historical fiction, but constant repetition even made him believe in his early Bolshevism, at least to a certain degree. This was all the more the case as he perceived his communicational interactions with his interlocutors and his audiences as a deep personal experience and repeatedly described his involvement in these commemorative events and expressed a certain pride in them in his diary.¹⁹ But apparently it was only a part of his egos that believed in this story of his earlier life, and his internal communication between these different positions seems to have been rather perturbed. This lack of mediation and the one-dimensional presentation of his personality towards the exterior contribute to the dull and distressing feeling of a personality split.

How constraints on interior dialogue hamper the capacity of judgment

Koshkin's commemorative spirit was not something that was externally imposed. Apart from his public duties, his recollections were often oriented at jubilees and anniversaries, even in the 1920s, when he was much younger. On 1st March 1927 he drew a parallel between his current election to the Moscow Soviet and his past experience of the 1905 Revolution:

1.5.1927. This day was a noteworthy day in my life. I was elected by the General Assembly of the Soviet workers and employees of

19 See especially the entry from 22.1.1955, after his appearance on TV. Koshkin is particularly proud that Levinson, the »best announcer of the USSR«, acted as a presenter of the broadcast. »Sinking into the grave, Derzhavin got his blessing from Pushkin. And for me it is the other way round. Even before I am lying in my grave, Levinson has given me his blessing ...«, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 70, l. 39.

the MS[N]Kh [Moscow Soviet of National Economy] to the Moscow Soviet. This day is memorable for me, because it is 22 years ago that I was for the first time elected into the Petersburg Soviet of workers' deputies by the steam-mechanics workshop of the Putilov Factory in 1905. I was 17 years old at that time. It was one thing at that time, and it is another thing now. How time flies. What progress has been achieved in the meantime? 17 years – Petersburg Soviet – the last plenum at Terijoki, where Trotsky and Parvus presided alternately. In my head: youthful thoughts, dreams and outbursts of vigor. 22 years have gone by and I am again a member of a Soviet, now the Moscow Soviet. But it's now another time, other songs. And the role is different one.²⁰

Here, at a time when the official narrative of the revolutionary past had not entirely taken shape (Corney 2004), we can see what has become emotionally more and more stunted in Koshkin's recollections. Although he is quite clear about the »progress« that has been achieved since the 1905 days, his melancholy and nostalgia are unmistakable, when he speaks of his dreams and »outbursts« [*porryv*] in these »other times«. He does not specify these impulses. This part of his personality is already to a certain degree marginalized here, even though his emotional involvement comes out clearly. He remains outwardly neutral, but one senses a certain regret, perhaps towards a lost grandeur related to outstanding leaders like Trotsky and Parvus, the latter having already died in emigration and the former being engaged in his last open oppositional combat with the United Opposition against the Stalin faction (Daniels 1960: 273-321). If we compare this piece of recollection with his puzzling calculations of 1954, what has remained of this part of his personality? Or has this ego been completely effaced in the heyday of Stalinism, so that inner tensions and the necessity for internal dialogue between these entities have really disappeared instead of having to be constantly repressed? Could this be an appropriate explanation of the strange detachment with

20 RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, no numbering.

which Koshkin registers his own past, as if he were a bureaucrat who had to constitute a personal file on someone else?

A few paradigmatic entries from the 1930s will show that then he was far from having come to terms with himself and that the inner split of his personality continued to trouble him. Koshkin constantly tried to verbalize this tension in his diary, without ever managing to address the matter openly. We will see that this dissimulation and the disturbance of his interior dialogue had a considerable impact on his capacity for judgment.

The following entry dates from a few months after the trial against the alleged *All-Union Bureau of the Menshevik Central Committee* in 1931 (Liebich 1997: 199-216). Koshkin was returning from a visit to the experimental station for the extraction of peat in Redkino, the successor to the Shatura site, where he had worked from 1918 to 1923. Since his work there, he had visited his former colleagues on several occasions and it is highly probable that they remembered the old days when Koshkin had still been a Menshevik (at least at the beginning of his work there). But his Menshevism was certainly not openly touched upon, due to tactfulness, discretion or fear, although at least part of his colleagues, notably his former boss, Ivan Radchenko, naturally knew about his political past:

Thinking aloud. September 9, 1931.

On the way back from the T.O.S. [Experimental Station for the Extraction of Peat] to Moscow by train, while sitting in the warm carriage, I was doing a great deal of thinking about these ideas.

There is a passage in Timiriazev where he deals with the fact that man changes his very essence. Today he is not what he was yesterday.

And his memory tells him, as he is constantly renewing himself: you remember – you were like that – you were there – you have achieved this. Memory – it is a photographic film where you can have a good and clear solution, and a bad and dim one.

Memory retains and captures anything, but sometimes the developer works badly ...

This is a direct attempt to deal with the experience of inner multiplicity: its temporalization (yesterday, today, tomorrow) by the famous biologist K. A. Timiriazev (1843-1920) refers to Koshkin's problem with his denied past. Koshkin links the idea that man constantly renews himself to the Bolshevik discourse on the ›New Man«. He implicitly applies it to the problem of his denied past and to his unvoiced hope that his renewal will be accepted. His considerations on the vicissitudes of memory also seem to be related to what has been addressed and withheld (by himself and by the others) in the conversations he had with his former colleagues. The passage that follows immediately makes clear (for the reader who knows about Koshkin's past), what exactly was at stake:

Revolution – revolution – my whole life is intertwined with the revolution. And even though I have made mistakes, even though I have been foolish – I have grown up together with the growth of the revolution! I have been borne by her breathing ...

And in essence humanity has gone through only the very very beginning of the dawn of [its] blossoming. The night is behind – it is going away, but its nightmares are still weighing heavily; they are still swaying and grimacing and raging in the mist before dawn.

One has to think of this! The man of Europe – and the man of the isle of Borneo. Civilization and savageness. The savages – the Negroes – have been civilized. That means that savageness is the yesterday of mankind. And today it [mankind] appears in bygone collars. Imagine the empoisoned years. Great people – erudite scholars – they are not buffoons!

One great, one giant of thought and action, by whom a narrow chink has been made for the future. Lenin! A little beam of light shines already through this chink!

But the shadows, although tiny, are still all around – [word illegible] and the owls are still flying.

»Social-democracy.«²¹

These lines seem to be implicit and abstract justifications with the aid of the »From-Darkness-to-Light«-metaphor. According to one pattern of Soviet discourse, erring and being foolish (i.e. once adhering to the Menshevik faction) was supposed to be excusable if it had been due to a lack of consciousness (Halfin 2000). Claiming to have grown with the Revolution and to have overcome this confused state of mind, Koshkin concluded his entry by glorifying Lenin. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of collectivization he seems not to manage to muster up a similar admiration for Stalin; otherwise he would also have referred to the Secretary General in this context of sketching historical development.

In order to persuade himself of the success and rightfulness of the Soviet *mission civilisatrice* (Baberowski 2003) (and he desperately wants to persuade himself) he is looking for convincing illustrations of the historical-evolutionary progress of mankind that lead him away from the achievements of the Soviet Union and towards world historical clichés of civilization and barbarism. Thus, instead of trying logically to prove the historical progress *achieved by the Russian Revolution* by juxtaposing the Russian *muzhik* before the Revolution and the kolkhoz-peasant after collectivization, or the Soviet men in the centre and the peoples of the periphery that are still to be civilized, he intuitively chooses a more reliable opposition that seems more likely to illustrate the progress-paradigm, the contrast between European man and the Borneo native. Certainly this choice is a manifestation of his unacknowledged doubt about the efficiency of the Soviet civilizing mission. And accordingly, the gloomy night metaphors remain omnipresent throughout the whole passage: although he expresses certainty in the approaching end of the night, the actual signs even in his metaphors remain weak, and they rather reveal the fear that his longing for sunrise and a consecutive release from the terrifying nightmares might be unfounded.

21 RGAE, f. 154, op. 2, d. 3, l. 59.

Apart from these rather abstract sentiments, Koshkin also points out more concrete contradictions between propaganda and reality, but then he always shrinks back from such insights and attributes them to his own incapacity to recognize the real essence of things. With Koshkin a tiny glimpse of criticism is sufficient to provoke an immediate turn into self-criticism, following a quite widespread pattern in Soviet diaries which perpetuated the Soviet practice of public self-criticism and transported it into the intimate realm (Hellbeck 2006). This is the case in an entry that was written when the great famine was devastating the country. These traumatic events, costing the lives of millions of people, were a consequence of forced collectivization, and mentioning them was systematically made a taboo in official discourse. We do not know what Koshkin »knew« about the famine, he probably only heard rumors anyway. However, he most likely sensed the spreading atmosphere of taboo and silencing, even if he would certainly not have acknowledged it. The starting point of a 1932 entry is again his revolutionary past:

4 October 1932. Let us devote a few lines to this day that has come to a remarkable end. In the evening I was at Com. S.s place – I went there in order to seek confirmation of what happened in 1905, i.e. a confirmation of my participation in the fighting squads of the Putilov plant.²²

This situation was nothing special in the early Soviet Union, which derived its legitimacy from the heritage of the fight against the Ancien Régime. As there are only few written documents about that struggle, the revolutionaries had to mutually attest to their participation in this or that event. For many, that seemed in principle a mere formality. But in reality this was the way the historical narrative of the revolutionary movement was constructed, at least at the beginning.²³ And for Koshkin it was an

22 RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, l. 87.

23 See Corney 2004 for the constitution of a historical narrative of October. The most important collection of biographies and autobiographies of the protagonists of revolutionary movement that had been composed in the middle of the 1920s is *Deyateli SSSR* 1989.

extremely delicate issue, always with an element of imposture: Comrade S. should confirm Koshkin's participation in the strikes, but he should not specify his factional affiliation. For Koshkin the outcome of such »formalities« was far from self-evident. That is why this day »has come to a remarkable end«, once he has received his confirmation.

The rest of the diary entry directly concerns his perception of the discrepancy between appearance and reality in Soviet life, and this provokes serious problems of inner multivocality. A critical voice within him was almost instinctively intervening when Koshkin considered S.s comparatively luxurious apartment: »They live well, some of the builders of socialism. One can say for certain – they live like under socialism. And the masses?« But suddenly another voice interrupted. We can observe *in nuce* how inner dialogue was stifled and a real discussion of different standpoints was prevented. Instead of a response, the critical question itself is attacked – and the questioner discredited: »Horror. What an insidious [*kovarnyi*] question, as it seems?« The »as it seems« still left a glimpse of doubt, but immediately a more radical voice intervened that did not allow even a remnant of ambiguity: »In fact, this is a philistine [*obyvatel'skii*] question, primitive like an axe.« The adjectives employed correspond to the kind of vocabulary also used to discredit a political adversary, i.e. Mensheviks more specifically. Once the critical remark was attributed to the Menshevik ego within him, it could be effectively silenced.

It has always been like that, but there will come a time when this will be no more. Individual people take the lead and harvest either hundredfold grief and misfortune or boon and joy. The masses will catch up later. Let's imagine that S. did not work here in our country, but over there, in the capitalist world. Would he live materially in a similar way or not? Maybe he would live even better. But there he would build one thing, here he builds something else.

Then the individual case was explicitly transcended:

At the same time the given reasoning is not necessarily subjective, but in its conclusion it is generalizing. The moral: everybody should be a fighter and a worker; and everybody [reaps] according

to his merit. There must not be any obliteration of personal responsibility. This means that one does not get anything from laughing or weeping, but one has to understand and to work ...

At first, this moral echoes Marx's formula of the logics of distribution in a socialist society that has not yet attained the abundance necessary to assure the distribution of goods to anyone according to his needs: »Everybody (works) according to his capacities, and everybody (receives) according to his merits«. Marx emphasized the significance of unalienated labour for self-realization. Lenin, who took up the formula in his *State and revolution* (1917), rather aimed at refusing to provide for the »exploiters«: »He who does not work, neither shall he eat.« According to Lenin, the state must remain strong in this phase, but it has to be taken into the hands of the proletariat that is supposed to exert its dictatorship in order to expropriate the expropriators, i.e. to force them to earn their living by work (chapter 5, section 3).

But in contrast to Koshkin's 1931 reasoning on the Borneo native and the European man that did not go further than admiring Lenin's genius, here the dominant voice in Koshkin's interior dialogue actually subscribes to the cult of Stalin and echoes the latest political turn towards »one-man command« [*edinolichie*] that has just been launched and justified by the Secretary General for the Five-Years Plan economy. In his speech on »The New Situation and the New Tasks of Economic Construction«, delivered on 23rd June 1931 in front of leading administrators of the Supreme Council of the National Economy and the People's Commissariat of Supply, Stalin defined two evils of the hitherto dominating principle of collective command: *uravnilovka* and *obezlichka* (*Pravda* (183) 5.7.1931). *Uravnilovka* is a pejorative term for egalitarianism: an obsession with leveling. Whereas wage-leveling was an ideal in the years after the Revolution, Stalin stipulated that it did not take into account the enormous difference between qualified and non-qualified workers, which leads to enormous fluctuations among the workforce. In the phase of reconstruction after the Civil War this flux was not such a big problem, as only a small number of specialized workers were needed. But this had completely changed with the drive towards industrialization that produced a

desperate need for highly qualified workforce. Even though Koshkin did not use the term *uravnilovka*, he clearly used these arguments in order to justify Comrade S.'s prosperity which contrasted so glaringly to the misery of the great majority of the Soviet population. And in this context he also quoted Stalin's condemnation of *obezlichka*, the obliteration of personal responsibility, which alluded more specifically to the level of command and included the sanction and punishment of irresponsible management.²⁴ Koshkin followed this argumentative line when he weighed the risks against the benefits of the responsibility that was assumed by Comrade S. and similar individuals [*odinochki*] of the vanguard («either hundredfold grief and misfortune or boon and joy»). He concluded by turning to educational responsibility: »not laughing or weeping«, but understanding and working and mainly »learning and teaching – first of all our children. They shall be equipped for life, intellectually developed and strong in terms of knowledge. May my own bitter line be a warning for them.« For himself he thus only saw a negative role: presenting a scary example. One might think that he would now move on to self-criticism, more concretely to a flagellation of his past »errors«. It would be logical to specify *how* he wanted to warn the new generation against taking a path similar to his own. Did he want to write about his own experience in order to present it as an anti-model? And how? – But the inner taboo continued impeding him, and even the shrill voice that has accused the philistine with his »primitive« question does not frontally address Koshkin's former Menshevism. Instead, Koshkin pedaled back into shallow waters, and what follows on behalf of his »bitter line« are well-trying clichés of the childhood-narrative that can be found in most Soviet memoirs: »My father was illiterate – may his grand-children be rich in knowledge.« With this toast he turned to his own children and to the rather innocuous question of their future professional qualifications: »Valentin wants to become a production engineer, that's good. I will support him to the end. Zoya as well. Then, on to new battles in life! To new know-

24 It is this logic of »responsibility« that is deployed in the Show Trials against bourgeois specialists, including the ex-Mensheviks – they are made responsible for the malfunctions of industrialization.

ledge, to fighting, and – Goddamnit – to less sentimentality, and to more sang-froid and exact calculation, and mainly to knowledge, to knowledge!»²⁵

The specter of exposure: literalizing a latent threat

About four years later, in 1936, well before the first show trial against Zinov'ev, Kamenev and other former oppositionists within the Party,²⁶ Koshkin seems to pick up the thread of his »bitter line« (though the »Bitter Lines«-poem was still to follow a year later): this time he came closer to his Menshevik past, and he even devoted much space to the experience of living with the blemish of Menshevism – but without saying that it was his own experience. He started with allusions to the famous last verses of Nekrasov's *Knight for an hour* (1860-1862), a fierce criticism of the *superfluous man*, the literary and real-life type of person who is at odds with the social order but does not know how to use his talents and capacities to put his convictions into action. This type of person was typical 19th century Russian intelligentsia, for which Goncharov's *Oblomov* has become a sort of ideal-type, as he spends practically his entire life on a sofa. Koshkin starts with Nekrasov: »Destiny has given us good impulses ...« But he does not accept Nekrasov's sarcastic conclusion (»but it is not given to us that we act«) and rises in protest against this verdict:

But no! That cannot be! It is indispensable to take action. One only has to want to do so. One must force oneself. Is it possible that I am doomed to make do only with impulses? Is my life nothing but a constant change between impulses and unbodied dreaming? Is it not because of my efforts to build illusory edifices that

25 RGAE, f. 154, d. 67, l. 87.

26 The first trial was of 16 members of the »Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre«, held in August 1936. The chief defendants were Zinov'ev and Kamenev, former leaders of the »New Opposition« (1925-1926) and of the »United Opposition« (1926-1927), this time with Trotsky. All were sentenced to death and executed.

the reality of my destiny is now chasing me and drives me from one dead-end to the next? It drives me like a football, finally in order to score the last goal into the gates of death.²⁷

Did his protest fizzle out that fast? Was it only resignation that remained? As we know about his destiny, we can guess what he meant by his »efforts to build illusory edifices«. Again it was his past, which seemed to ruin all his plans for the future. But at this point Koshkin shifts abruptly to the third person and recounts one day in the life of »Comrade Koshin«, apparently a literary pseudonym for himself. This allows him to fictionalize his own anguish, the emotional experience that he is not able (not even in his diary) to articulate as his own: notably everything that is related to the »misfortune that I covered myself with the shame of Menshevism for my whole life«. Comrade Koshin works as an engineer like Koshkin himself. He too is a propagandist and teaches Leninism. The story relates the thoughts of the protagonist who has come home late in the evening, was sitting alone and reviewing his experiences of the day, a fatal day for him, as his former Menshevik past has attracted the attention of the party organization. He called himself »lucky as a drowning man«.

After a working day that had started as usual, Comrade Koshin had to present himself before the district committee »in order to get his status confirmed as a propagandist and teacher of Leninism«.

Patiently he waited for his turn in the queue for the propagandists of his organization and then, when at 6:00 it was finally his turn, he was raked over the coals within 3 minutes.

Comrade Lissabon read out his card ...

Party member since 1920. Came from the Mensheviks, where he had been from 1904 to 1917 ... Comrade Lissabon could not read further; she was interrupted by the presiding Comrade Shikbali who tabled the question of his [i.e. Koshin's] role as a propagandist.

27 This and the following quotations are from the entry of 28.2.1936, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 67, l. 3-5 ob(otot).

dist to the secretary of the party organization. »And how does he lead his circle?« »He leads it well, the audience is satisfied and is well prepared for the lessons,« was the answer and then suddenly everything happened so quickly that he could not even bat an eye. And then this terrible verdict, a low blow to his spirit and heart ... [И затем этот ужасный приговор – словно глухой удар рванул и мысли и сердце ...] »Impossible to confirm, [the case] has to be further examined ...«

This was the external situation. We do not learn more about the events and the consequences of this examination for the protagonist. The rest of the story deals with Comrade Koshin's reflections, his inner dialogue:

He sat there, his thoughts boiling and clenching his fists [...] he whispered to himself: this damned Menshevism haunts me like an eternal shame and misfortune. But why weep? You cry like a woman. That doesn't help. 16 years of preventive measures and treatment. 16 years of persistent work on myself – 16 years of work in the party, in addition to the two years I have lost with feverish re-examinations to weed out of my head and out of my heart all the trash and the rottenness of the withering opportunist illness.

And still, the opprobrium of Menshevism had broken his life, in spite of the working masses, it had put its stamp on him »and it serves me right – may people look at me with suspicion and watchfulness – I was a Menshevik (you cannot throw off a word from a song)«, thought Comrade Koshin as he was sitting there on that day.

The metaphor describing an erroneous political allegiance as an »illness« that can be healed by persistent work on oneself echoes the discourse of the early 1920s towards the opposition (Halfin 2007: 32). The »2 years of feverish examinations« refer to the time before Kosh(k)in actually joined the Bolshevik party: this period of wavering, as presented here by the literary protagonist, seems to be the reason why Koshkin mentioned different years for his resignation from the Mensheviks. The work of re-education consisted of »weeding out« »trash« and »rottenness«, but it is

important to note what the author repeatedly emphasized: it is a question of weeding it »out of my *head* and out of my *heart*«. Head and heart, spirit and soul: remaking oneself involves both disciplining one's intellect and emotions. But this »sentimental education« (or »hermeneutic of the soul« as some historians put it, Halfin 2007), even though Kosh(k)in claims to have practiced it for 16 or even 18 years, was of no help, despite the »opportunistic illness« having withered and seemingly been overcome. This shattering conclusion built on the intimidating experience of the implicit and quasi-systemic combination of taboo on the one hand, and criminalization of dissimulative practices on the other, a combination that was very typical for the 1930s and owed its repressive potential in great part to the circumstance that the inherent contradiction was not named. And Kosh(k)in did not point to it either. There seemed to be no escape from his stigma. He accepted his own guilt, saying that he deserved nothing but suspicion.

His reasoning reflects a tendency that can also be found in other autobiographical documents of this period, especially of authors who deplore their isolation and are particularly prone to loneliness: Koshkin does not want to surrender to the feeling of offence and humiliation [*obida*]. Such feelings were considered petty, philistine and consequently illegitimate, as they abandoned the standpoint of the societal whole in favor of an individualistic perspective centered on one's own person.²⁸ Despite his constant efforts, the »opprobrium« of Menshevism had »broken« Kosh(k)in's life: wouldn't it be natural to complain about his fate? And isn't

28 In his diary the murderer of Kirov, L. Nikolaev, voiced his feeling of humiliation after having been excluded from the Party. This gradually led him to plans of revenge. His sentiments were not tempered by a bird's eye-perspective. But the document, confiscated by the NKVD after his assassination, was never published in the Soviet Union. It could thus not serve as an appalling example of the evil consequences of these feelings. For other communist diaries that voice the illegitimacy and philistine essence of such emotions of humiliation see Dahlke 2010: 420-430; on Jaroslavskii, Hellbeck 2006; on Podlubnyj *ibid*: 165-221; on Denis'evskaia *ibid*: 115-164; and others.

there an attempt at protest when he inserted »in spite of the working masses«? The sense of this sub-clause is not entirely clear, we can only guess that he wanted to hint either at his working-class-origin or, which seems grammatically more likely, at his close contact (for instance as a member of the Moscow Soviet) with the »working masses« who were far from regarding him suspiciously because of his stamp of Menshevism. But instead of developing this idea, we can again see how the authoritative voice interrupts and cuts short the argument. What it boils down to is self-condemnation: »and it serves me right«, as it is his »damned Menshevism« that »haunts« him.

But what can he do with this verdict, in fact (already) his own verdict about his actions? Does not his hopeless situation throw him back to the passivity of Nekrasov's superfluous man, to whom it is »not given to act«? What else remains for him to do but wait for »impulses« from the exterior, or rather, as his stigma turns out to be ineradicable, wait for nothing at all anymore, as he will soon express it in the two poems on the Terror referred to at the beginning of this article? But Kosh(k)in does not (yet?) accept this fate of death, decay and oblivion. For the following he took up the idea that first came up in his 1932 entry – writing for others, especially for the younger generation (to give a deterrent example):

But I must act ... I must write my book. Let this book become my honest and sincere confession – and the confession of a proletarian soul. I am 48 years old. The earth turns round faster and faster under my feet. There remains only little and then everything will be finished.

Here again he was at the point of surrender: »The flame of the universe swallows up my perishable corpse.« But: »Faugh, to the devil, it seems as if I have turned sour ... and sniveled, at the end I will start writing poems. The flame of the universe – perishable corpse ... Stuff and nonsense. We will still fight, to hell with it!« And then, for the second time, he specified the aim of the book he intended to write:

I have to act, I have to write my book and may it help, at least a little bit, the true sons of the proletariat, those who are still rambling in the nausea of Menshevism, conciliationism and opportunism, may it help them to get out there as quickly as possible, and to embark on the difficult path of the proletarian revolutions, a difficult path, yes, but the only true Marxist, Leninist and Stalinist path of October.

Yes, in the past I had the misfortune of covering myself with the opprobrium of Menshevism for my whole life. Yes, I am a former old Menshevik [sic! *byvshii staryi men'shevik*] – from 1904 to 1918 – for 13 long years.

But look here, I am a young Soviet engineer. I graduated from the Moscow Institute for Engineering and Construction in 1932 and was a student there for 4 years. And still younger [sic!], I am a candidate of technical sciences and have only this month defended my thesis.

While it sounds strange and stylistically awkward here, the apparent play on words like »old«, »former« and »young« is not fortuitous at all. Kosh(k)in radically changed perspective: If he felt old, outlived, a man of the past²⁹ with his 48 years, now he seemed to rejuvenate: he was a »young« engineer and an even »younger« candidate of technical sciences. Here he employs the word »young« in the sense of »recent«, but this is consistent with Stalin's discourses, as he increasingly tried to perpetuate (his) revolutionary legacy, a legacy built on what he determined as the »new« and the »young«. The cult of youth was accompanied by sorting out and rejecting the »old« and »useless«. Deference for old age should be abandoned; former exploits (even – or especially – in the Revolution) were to count for less if they were not followed up by merits in the present.

29 The term he employs is *byvshii* (former), used for former members of the exploiting classes, but also for people of non-Bolshevik political allegiance. On Stalinist »gerontology« as experienced by E Yaroslavskii see Dahlke 2010: 347-361. Garros-Castaing 2009 describes this experience as expressed in another diary of an old Bolshevik in the 1930s. She did not obtain the authorization to name the author from his descendants.

What counted as merits and what not was generally defined by the party leaders and mainly by Stalin. In 1935 the two principal associations of old revolutionaries were closed: this was a step towards the extermination of their clientele as »enemies of the people« in the »Great Terror« (Vajskopf 2002: 327-332). Only at the idea of youth Kosh(k)in takes fresh heart. His hope is related to the rejuvenating effect of the new prospects for him to be useful to society, not only as an engineer (symbol of the new technological intelligentsia), but also and mainly politically, for his writing plans to make a showcase (or rather a *show trial*) out of his biography as an anti-model destined to educate the readers.

So why shouldn't I live? Is it possible that for the rest of my days I cannot be useful for the party of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, for the great party of the working class, can't I be useful for the fatherland of labourers, for socialism, can't I be useful for my family that has been formed and is developing under Soviet power?³⁰

Only his present utility was at stake. We do not know if he still hoped for personal rehabilitation through his writing. It also remains unclear whether the self-accusatory plot of his book was supposed to culminate in an inner renewal and in a new life, according to the socialist-realist pattern of the protagonist's development from darkness to light (Clark 1985) – or if his story should have a gloomier ending – more deterrent for the reader, who would learn that a heresy such as Menshevism was absolutely irredeemable. Caring for his own future appeared illegitimate to Koshkin: would it not be a manifestation of narrow-minded self-interest to hanker after his personal fate (again)? The feeling of elation that

30 Similar to the 1932 entry, he concluded his reasoning by turning to his family and notably to his children, the most immediate targets of his educative efforts who already »blossom as komsomol'tsy« at present, and who will »become good engineers« and »builders of socialism in a period when its evolution moves from the transitional stage between socialism and communism, to the stage of classless society.« But judging from his writing I rather have the impression that he did not speak to his wife of his suffering due to his Menshevik past, although she had fought tsarism like himself and certainly knew about his former political affiliation.

he has attained here in the process of his reasoning is essentially a readiness to sacrifice himself for the Party, to assume the »opprobrium« with all its consequences, whatever they might be.

The old communists' assistance in their destruction and denigration

This is similar to many old communists who were to accuse themselves of all possible crimes in the show trials of the following years. The question of how they could come to such confessions have troubled contemporaries as well as historians to this day. But mainly for Soviet communists, notably Old Bolsheviks, who knew the convicts personally from their common revolutionary commitment, these confessions represented an existential blow to their own self-esteem. And was there a revolutionary who did *not* have to do with the one or other of the victims of the Great Terror? If they believed in the veracity of these crimes, this meant that they in fact had not been dealing with courageous and trustworthy comrades acting in profound solidarity, but with traitors who had only feigned commitment for the common cause. This undermined both the revolutionary common cause (in its *commonness*) and the reciprocity of interactions from which the actors derived their very feelings of authenticity and identity. Instead of conscious, self-assured revolutionaries fighting together for a common cause, an image they built their personal identity on, they would turn out to have been fools. And if they did not believe in the veracity of the crimes, they were in fact not that much better off. Had these revolutionaries not been absolutely hardened, relentless heroes in their uncompromising struggle for a better world of equality and truth, people who not even under torture had betrayed the common cause? If they signed false confessions and told lies in court, how could that be compatible with their revolutionary image?³¹

Such reasoning might seem crude in view of the NKVD's (Народный комиссариат внутренних дел, *Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del*, Peo-

31 For a reinterpretation of the show-trials in this light see Griesse 2009: 119-123.

ples commissariat for Internal Affairs) perfidious methods to force people to confess and prepare them for show trials, but even an NKVD-official, who was relatively familiar with the organs' work including the applications of torture, argued in this way. Mikhail Shreider, who started working with the Cheka during the Civil War and by 1938 had climbed up the ladder to the position of vice-minister of the Kazakhstan NKVD (a position he held at the time he was arrested on Ezhov's initiative), survived prison and Siberian camps and later even managed to write his memoirs. The survival of such high-ranking NKVD officials, once they had fallen out of favor, was in itself extremely rare, but the existence of a written record by such a survivor is almost a unique case. Shreider was relatively close to S. F. Redens (Stalin's brother-in-law), whose deputy he had become in Kazakhstan. He recalls a conversation with Redens, during which both interlocutors, who found themselves under enormous pressure at the sight of the frightening events, gradually and hesitantly started to voice their hitherto almost unacknowledged doubts, among which the old revolutionaries' confessions figure prominently. Whereas Shreider (according to his account) was still hoping for Stalin's intervention to stop the slaughter of the »Great Terror«, Redens shattered his illusions and asserted that all this did not and could not happen without Stalin's knowledge, that Ezhov was successful in »imbuing him with suspicion about all sorts of attempts and subversive activity« and that he, Redens himself, had been transferred from Moscow to Kazakhstan on his brother-in-law's initiative as he had tried to oppose the dynamics of terror by remarking that his subordinates »were beginning to falsify one case after the other«. ³² Only in response to this extreme confidentiality that could have cost Redens his head (two years later, in 1940, he lost it anyway), Shreider in turn confided what troubled him most:

»I am not as much surprised by the arrests as by the confessions of former staunch old Bolsheviks' admitting to having committed the

32 Of course, in such a narrative one can never rule out an attempt by the author to whitewash himself or his friends, but I will not engage in these discussions as they do not really affect my general argument here.

most terrible crimes against the party. After all, *many of these old revolutionaries jeopardized their lives in tsarist Russia and they accepted certain death in the name of truth without flinching*. Why don't they endure the beatings now and why do they confess to crimes they have never committed? Or maybe I am not right and they indeed have committed these crimes?

›What a crank you are! – answered Redens. ›This is exactly it: before the revolution we struggled against tsarist autocracy and now, to start battling against Ezhov and people higher up means striking a blow in the party's back.

However, at that time I was not yet able to comprehend all that. I could not understand what power could force these old Bolsheviks, who *had been tempered in tsarist prisons and in the underground struggle*, to confess in an open trial (or during investigation) to crimes that they had not committed.

(Much later I learnt through my own bitter experience and from the accounts of several fellow-prisoners that it was a significant part of the ›investigations‹ at that time to provide the false assurance that *by subscribing to the slander of themselves and their colleagues and comrades the prisoner would actually ›help‹ the party*. And even though he was not guilty himself, but had fallen into an organization where ›enemies of the people‹ and terrorists operated, he should perjure himself *in the interests of the party and of comrade Stalin personally, in order to help the country get rid of the ›enemies who hampered the building of socialism and communism*. [...] Of course, it is not inconceivable that the attempt to escape torture played a significant, if not decisive role. Nevertheless, I am personally sure that in cases when the interrogations were led by experienced workers, who had the talent for persuasion, this method could have an enormous impact. But I have never and nowhere read anything to this effect in instructions and orders. Apparently it was an invention that was conveyed orally from one investigator to the other, as a measure of ›raising the level of one's skill.‹) (Shreider: 112-114)

Helping the party by giving false testimony was not a random idea. In Bukharin's last prison-letter to Stalin (December 10th, 1937) we can observe a similar reasoning, the difference being that the correspondent was concerned with the immediate situation and did not write retrospectively.³³ Bukharin assured Stalin that he would not only put up with his death, but also with the loss of his dignity and honor as a devoted Bolshevik, where something as »great and bold« as the »political idea of a general purge« was concerned:

I know too well that great plans, great ideas, and great interests take precedence over everything, and I know that it would be *petty* for me to place the question of my own person on a par with the universal-historical tasks resting first and foremost on your shoulders (Getty & Naumov 2002: 557).

Death is not the main sacrifice for Bukharin, but discrediting himself in the show trial was:

It would be a thousand times easier for me to die than to go through the coming trial: I simply don't know how I'll be able to control myself [...]. I'll do all within my power, but under such circumstances [...] heavy emotions rise up in my soul. I'd get on my knees, forgetting shame and pride, and plead with you not to make me go through with it. [...] I'd ask you, if it were possible, to let me die before the trial. Of course, I know how harshly you look upon such matters (Getty & Naumov 2002: 559).

This seems to confirm Shreider's retrospective assessment, though it remains unclear to what extent the idea of sacrificing himself for the Party

33 In 1928, N. I. Bukharin (1888-1938) was the leader of the so-called Right deviation that opposed forced collectivization. He was arrested in February 1937 and condemned to death at the last big political show-trial of March 1938, at which he was the most prominent defendant and played the most visible role. During the first three months of his imprisonment he refused to confess the crimes he was charged with. He had already been »collaborating« for a while when he wrote this letter in December 1937.

by giving a false testimony had been *explicitly* proposed to Bukharin or had rather been made up by himself on the basis of what the interrogator(s) *implicitly* suggested to him. The question of whether the »deal« was explicit or not³⁴ (the latter seems much more likely) is important, as it reflects the degree of solitude/loneliness felt by Bukharin. Isolation was the »only« torture applied to him, and he seems to have been a sort of guinea pig used to explore what could be done to a human being who had been exposed to almost total solitude. As an outstanding Old Bolshevik and talented writer, Bukharin was an ideal candidate for such experiments. For these reasons, he was placed in a cell and given paper and a typewriter, which enabled or, given his nature, practically forced him to commit his thoughts to paper.

His writings allowed Stalin to study in detail the psychological effects of isolation and to retrace the agonies of solitude and inner dialogue at the abyss of loneliness. And as was to be expected, Bukharin made use of this »privilege« that could provide him a degree of relief: among his prison papers there are philosophical writings, mainly his *Philosophical Arabesques* (where he struggled with dialectics and thus tried to come to terms with his »split consciousness«), poems, a novel and letters, the most important ones directly addressed to Stalin, the only »comrade« to whom his letters would be delivered.³⁵ Here we can see how the prisoner at the mercy of his own loneliness desperately tried to establish a communicational link with his addressee in order to overcome what he painfully sensed as a split in his personality (and what had been diligently induced by a combination of isolation and the construction of a distorted bio-

34 In *Darkness at Noon* (1940), his novel on the Bukharin trial, Athur Koestler suggests that it was an explicit deal.

35 Bukharin's prison documents were treated as top secret, and nobody was allowed to read them without Stalin's permission. The documents were preserved at Stalin's personal archive (now at the Presidential archive) and some of them, including the poems, remain inaccessible to this day. Here I cannot quote the whole literature that exists on these questions. For a bibliography both of Bukharin's prison-writings and their controversial interpretations in historiography see Hellbeck 2009.

graphy during the interrogations with the investigators). And he principally searches for complicity *in his innocence*, in the knowledge that the crimes he confessed to were only made up and that he had not really committed them. In short, he searched for complicity in the very reality, in *his* reality that he risked losing. In this sense he wrote to Stalin on behalf of the imminent show trial:

In order to avoid any misunderstandings, I will say to you from the outset that [...] I have no intention of recanting anything I've written down [confessed] [...]. But I am writing to you for your personal information. I cannot leave this life without writing to you these last lines because I am in the grip of torments which you should know about.

1) Standing on the edge of a precipice from which there is no return, I tell you on my word of honor, as I'm awaiting my death, that I am innocent of those crimes which I admitted to during the investigation.

[...]

5) If I were absolutely sure that your thoughts ran precisely along this path [of a revolutionary necessity to stage a great purge that demanded Bukharin's personal sacrifice], then I would feel so much more at peace with myself. Well, so what! If it must be so, then so be it! But believe me, my heart boils over when I think that you yourself think that I am really guilty of all of these horrors. In that case, what would it mean? Would it turn out that I have been helping to deprive [the party] of many people (beginning with myself!) – that is, that I am wittingly committing an evil?! In that case such action could never be justified. My head is giddy with confusion [...]. I feel like pounding my head against the wall: for in that case I have become a cause for the death of others. What am I to do? What am I to do? (Getty & Naumov 2002: 556, 558)

If not even Stalin believed in his innocence, then nobody would, maybe he would even stop believing in it himself – this was one of Bukharin's main fears, a fear that became particularly clear when he pleaded for a meeting with his wife before the trial: »If my family sees what I have

confessed to, they might commit suicide from sheer unexpectedness. I must somehow prepare them for it. It seems to me that this is in the interests of the case and its official interpretation« (Getty & Naumov 2002: 559). However, it was not in the interest of the ongoing human experiment: there would be no meeting, and his wife would not receive his letter until 1992, so that he was fobbed off with the illusion of a one-way-communication.³⁶ Similarly, it would have disturbed the human experiment if Stalin had responded to Bukharin's letters, in which the lonely correspondent tried over and over to dig into the depths of his own consciousness and subconsciousness in search of real sins and increasingly cultivates his affection for his silent confessor (who became the incarnation of the *Grand Autre* in Lacan's and Žižek's terms) (Žižek 1989). So he writes to Stalin:

[M]ore than anything else I am oppressed by one fact, which you have perhaps forgotten: Once, most likely during the summer of 1928, I was at your place, and you said to me: ›Do you know why I consider you my friend? After all, you are not capable of intrigues, are you?‹ And I said: ›No, I am not.‹ At that time, I was hanging around with Kamenev (first encounter). Believe it or not, but it is this fact that stands out in my mind as original sin does for a Jew. Oh, God, what a child I was! What a fool! And now I'm paying for this with my honor and with my life. For this forgive me, Koba. I weep as I write. I no longer need anything, and you yourself know that I am probably making my situation worse by allowing myself to write all this. But I just can't, I simply can't keep silent. I must give you my final ›farewell. [...] I ask you for forgiveness, though I have already been punished to such an extent that everything has grown dim around me, and darkness has descended upon me (Getty & Naumov 2002: 558).

The darkness that obscures even what has formerly been crystal-clear is about to engulf him, and reality becomes blurred. Here his experience of

36 The letter to his wife was published with her comments from the 1990s, see Bukharin 2008: 12-19.

loneliness challenges his renunciation of solipsism, and the concomitant statement on »facts« and »the reality of the outer world« that »exist regardless of whether they are in anybody's mind«, a reply that he will give to the general procurator Vyshinskii at the said trial that will seal his fate (Bukharin 1938).

Isolation, imposture and the fragile dynamics of fear

Of course, in his diary Koshkin did not confess to actual crimes that he had not committed, and in contrast to Bukharin he was never summoned to do so. But we can observe how under the impact of loneliness, due to silence and taboo, his former Menshevism in combination with the self-accusation of double-dealing and hypocrisy assumed tremendous dimensions and took the shape of an enormous, irredeemable sin, even more so than his 1928 »intrigues« (i.e. his negotiations with Kamenev and the leaders of the defeated »United Opposition«) were for Bukharin. And even without being accused by an investigator or somebody else (as he would note in 1954, »zero notice« has been taken of his past) and only by means of his incapacity to communicate his grief does Koshkin come to the point – at least at times in his diary – that what he feels as his deep »moral guilt« is about to overwhelm him. His specific loneliness lasted for decades; it was not as clearly imposed from the »exterior« as in Bukharin's case, which to a certain extent made it even harder to deal with it psychologically.

Koshkin's self-accusatory project aimed at overcoming his loneliness and his uselessness – and in this sense it was both similar to and different from what the interrogator demanded of Bukharin. Both acted in favor of their own condemnation, but where Bukharin decided to distort his biography in court, Koshkin planned to set the records straight and make up for his »dissimulation«. It has to be emphasized: Koshkin *was* well integrated and far from being separated from the collective. His isolation was a *moral* one. The very fact that he silenced his past made his *inclusion* the main problem, to such an extent that through his self-accusatory plan he actually aimed at *excluding* himself from the collective. What made him lonely was the conviction that the others had a false

image of him, an image provoked by his own behavior; this made him feel like an impostor. He could talk to the others as much as he wanted, but as long as he did not reveal his moral and political »stain«, his interactions increasingly alienated him from his interlocutors, even though his main intention was to get closer to them. This »false« external perception inspired in him a deep uncertainty about his very identity, an uncertainty that could never be mended by the multivocality of inner dialogue. On the contrary, precisely under the auspices of self-perceptual uncertainty, the inner multivocality became a burden, as the feeling of the inner split(s) only confirmed and exacerbated the loss of identity. External voices continued to resonate inside him – and the most authoritative and threatening voices resonated most powerfully. But his inner dialogue was disturbed; the different voices had found it difficult to communicate with each other and, as a result, they could not change and evolve creatively. They remained more or less unaltered, i.e. mimetic images of external positions.

Such a situation of more or less self-imposed communicational restraint is the most fertile ground for an authoritative voice to establish an (interior) »totalitarian« rule. In Koshkin's case, as in the case of many other communists (like Piatnitskaia, Podlubnyi, Afinogenov, Yaroslavskii and others)³⁷ who were forced by the atmosphere of taboo and dissimulation to develop a similar feeling of moral vulnerability and guilt due to a past »political error« or a non-proletarian social origin, etc., this dominant voice was self-accusatory, as in the atmosphere of Stalinist practices and discourse accusation and self-accusation, in official parlance »criticism and self-criticism«, were omnipresent (Erren 2007). In psychology one speaks of »traumatic bonding«, most prominent in the famous case of the Stockholm hostage-taking in the 1970s, when the victims, long after they had been released, expressed their sympathy and eventually love for

37 I have dealt with the cases of Podlubnyi and Piatnitskaia in Griesse 2011: 154-159, 232-239, 270-277. For Afinogenov see Hellbeck 2006: 285-345, Revolution, who proposes a different interpretation (also for Podlubnyi) that does not pay attention to the aspect of isolation; for Yaroslavskii see Dahlke 2010.

their tormentors and even defended them in court. This is explained by »identification«, a process during which the introject of the perpetrator, to whom one finds oneself in complete subjection (I would say the mimetic image of his voice within one's inner polyphony), is cathected (invested with mental and emotional energy) and transformed from an object (introject) into an image-ego (or »introfact«), i.e. into a subject that leads to the internalization of the perpetrator's perspective (Watkins & Watkins 2007: 14-20). An »introfact« does not necessarily become the absolute ruler of the internal dialogue and will not always manage to oppress all other voices: for that to occur a person has to know that he/she is at a perpetrator's mercy – and (I would add) the omnipotent other has to abuse his/her power by manipulating and alienating his/her victim's self-perception, thereby having a weakening and disturbing effect on the inner dialogue. And as we can see from the Bukharin experiment, the Stalin regime perfectly mastered this manipulation.

Nevertheless, the conditions of imprisonment were specific (though, of course, not that rare in those repressive times). Prisoners were absolutely helpless in the face of the investigations that could completely control their means of external communication and by the same token deliberately exert pressure on their interior state of mind. The NKVD-investigators were the perpetrators facing the convicts, even if they also have to be placed within a (more or less hierarchical) chain of dependency that made them at the same time appear as victims in their dependency on mercy from »above«. But the situation was more complex in »the outer world«. Koshkin was not imprisoned but dug himself into his own prison, symbolized by the dark and gloomy basement pub just around the corner where he experienced his isolation from the marching masses (that he was in reality part of). Here, in the outer world, the perpetrator was not personified: even though many Soviet citizens professed love for Stalin, perpetration and torture were anonymous and ubiquitously reciprocal. Silencing their own stains, people intuitively tried even harder to conform to the unspoken norms of behavior and unwittingly became their mutual tormentors, while suffering from each other's actions as »victims«. In such a context an analytical distinction between perpetrator

and victim is extremely problematic. Persons suffered from *their own behavior* towards others, from their lack of honesty and openness that made them hypocrites and impostors and perturbed what we could call the »economy of their interior dialogue«. This certainly corresponds to Arendt's conceptualization of the totalitarian subject and its subjection to deductive reasoning as an ideal-type, but at the same time it shows the concrete and much more complex workings of and impediments to multivocality.

I would thus argue that imposture was in fact far from being a funny business as it was wittingly suggested in Il'f's and Petrov's extremely popular Ostap Bender novels (*Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*). In reality it was a state of mind that crippled the possibilities of communicational exchange for those concerned and pushed them into isolation. The regime systematically fostered imposture, for it was conscious of the isolating effect of dissimulation. Aside from stigmatizing past political allegiances, the regime not only excluded entire »objective« categories of social aliens (this was done from the early 1920s on and did not involve personal guilt), but with the »subjectivist turn« of the early 1930s it began systematically criminalizing them and imputing to them individual responsibility for alleged »counterrevolutionary« and »anti-Soviet« *actions* and *thoughts* (this was something like the political equivalent to the campaign against *uravnilovka* and *obezlichka* in economics) (Bauer 1955). From then on they were considered to be *personally* guilty. Legally, discriminating laws were revoked; *de facto* prosecution of social aliens continued. Now they were »unmasked«, accused of having hidden their past. Double-dealing became the worst crime that was regularly pilloried. Constantly the population was summoned to be »vigilant«, to »unmask« double-dealers and to manifest absolute transparency towards the Party (Alexopoulos 2003; Shearer 2009). Given the legally opaque situation (fostered by the regime), such transparency was not only unrealistic but, in fact, seems to have been less and less desired. As such, the demand for transparency in combination with perpetual discrimination became more and more a means of pushing people towards hypocrisy and dissimulation and into harboring a latent feeling of guilt for this.

Koshkin is a perfect example, for he does not cease to torment himself with his past, which he denies at the same time. And it is telling that he never realizes his auto-accusatory project, and even more so, that he does not even confide in his diary that it is *his own* project. Without previous revelations and communications about what troubled him so deeply, he is simply unable to realize this project. The result is an obsessive, and more or less uncritical, identification with the regime and with the Party at whose mercy he is. Uncritical because the egos inside him that try to voice doubts about the general Party line and the regime's politics are immediately silenced and interpreted as a manifestation of a lack of communist consciousness and as philistinism (and Menshevism, though the actual word is avoided). He thus views his problems *with Soviet reality* mainly as the problem of *his incapacity* to find his place and to make his appropriate contribution to the societal good. And this does not even change after Stalin's death, when there is a considerable relief from external pressure. In August 1954 he writes:

[29.8.1954] I have continuously struggled with my damned question and I am incapable of finding a solution – the question whether as a human being with more or less significant substance, experience, knowledge I am needed by society – and by what society?! – By the new socialist society, about the formation of which I have dreamt since I was 17. And I don't know ... don't know, don't know, how and from whom I could get an answer to this question – that is apparently analogical to Hamlet's – To be or not to be?

However, in the diary entry from 1954, probably in connection with his public commemorative speeches on the 1905 Revolution, Koshkin increasingly records meetings with former fellow revolutionaries who are still alive (only few remain), for instance with a certain Troitskii, with whom he had worked at the Shatura site in 1918: together they visit a fellow-revolutionary's tomb at the cemetery, for instance.³⁸ Although he

38 Entry from 8.9.1954, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 70, l. 31.

does not mention conversations about his Menshevism (and they perhaps did not even take place), in the general atmosphere of political détente these meetings seem to allow for a certain relaxation that in turn leads not only to the strange confession mentioned previously, where Koshkin recounts his years in the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions (or party), but also to glimpses of complaint or even limited criticism. And what is new in comparison to what we could observe in the 1930s (and similarly in the 1940s), such outbursts are not immediately revoked by his (self-)accusatory voice. His confused syntax (almost impossible to translate appropriately) nevertheless shows his difficulty with articulating indignation, for instance when he speaks of a Party meeting he attended:

[A]gain big trouble, again battles with this devilish folk. Indeed there are such devilish folk, so that they, these hack-workers of the party, [don't care at all about] principles, about efficient and productive work! Better to kick up a row, to find out how to badger whom, how to gobble him up, to pin a label on him, to pelt him with mud. And this is what they understand by criticism and self-criticism.³⁹

Of course, in Koshkin's case this »criticism« does not go that far, or at least it is unclear if he deplores the subversion of the Stalinist »principle« of »criticism and self-criticism« by the calumnious behavior he observes

39 Entry from 13.9.1954, RGAE, f. 154, op. 1, d. 70, l. 32. The entry follows immediately after the one about the visit to the cemetery with Troitskii. It is interesting to note that in these days Koshkin read with enthusiasm Dickens' *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. The literary description of ubiquitous egoism in mid-19th century England (and USA) encouraged him to name similar behavioral traits in his own environment. This cathartic effect of literature can often be observed in Soviet diaries. Moreover, 19th century foreign literature, that was widely read in the Soviet Union, provided very elaborate interpretational instruments that could also be used to analyze societies other than capitalist ones. Literary discussions could thus turn into spaces that enabled discussants to transcend or sidestep taboos. It is not a coincidence that the dissident movement of the post-Stalin era was so closely related to literature.

at the Party meeting, or if he considers this behavior typical of Stalinist practice in general, that he implicitly juxtaposes to what criticism and self-criticism should mean in his eyes. Judging by the general tone of his diary even in these years, he rather remains an ideal-type of how atomization was to function on the psychological and cognitive levels.

But I would neither imply that there was no escape for those suffering from isolation, nor that the Stalin regime was almighty and managed to control everything out of a position of absolute (totalitarian) power. I rather argue that the regime developed its perfidious practices of atomization out of a vague and inarticulate *feeling of weakness*, out of an unacknowledged existential fear. It was caught up in the web of lies that it had created itself and was subject to its own mechanisms. Mentioning contradictions and inconsistencies was made taboo; and there was indeed a significant gap between Soviet reality and its official representation. In spite of the regime's undeniable repressiveness, people could shape their communicational spaces, especially on an informal level. It was on such levels that doubts were voiced and criticism could develop – this would be the case with the dissidents' proverbial kitchen-conversations in the post-Stalin-era, and we can also observe it with personal documents of Stalin's time (Griesse 2008; 2009). Much more than alternative »political grammars« grounded on a particular composition of »scales of evaluation« (like economic or political liberalism, for instance),⁴⁰ the regime feared criticism that questioned its legitimacy in the

40 The concept of (more or less competing or complementary) »scales« of justification/evaluation/criticism has been developed by the French »school« of pragmatic sociology in order to reconstruct different »political grammars« in societies and its subsystems. See the display of the general model in Boltanski & Thévenot 1991 and, for the elaboration of a »liberal grammar« from a juxtaposition of different manners of settling conflicts in various subsectors of the French and US-American societies, see Lamont & Thévenot 2000. This pluralist approach with a highly elaborate and systematic revaluation of free human agency can be read as a response to Hannah Arendt's criticism of the social sciences and their reduction of human action to calculable behavior. This criticism was primarily intended for behaviorist sociology, but actually it applies to most

name of revolutionary values, i.e. of the values that it claimed to monopolize and upon which it built its legitimacy. Such criticism was particularly efficient: not only Trotsky, but also other more or less well-known renegades (like A. Ciliga, M. S. Voslenskii, F. F. Raskol'nikov, V. Kravchenko) attacked propaganda lies as an indicator of the regime's betrayal of revolutionary ideals and as proof of its usurpatory essence. As these collectivist revolutionary values were constantly disseminated and must have had the most important anchoring in the Soviet Union, such argumentation seemed to be able to raise considerable support in the shortest time. And who could articulate such criticism with more persuasiveness than old revolutionaries, who had made the Revolution, had devoted their lives to its values and who could speak with an authoritative voice on what the Revolution really meant and how the regime had distorted it in order to establish its usurpatory rule?

The authority of these Old Bolsheviks was thus particularly dangerous for the Stalin regime, and even more so their personal networks that were regarded with deep suspicion as (potential) generators of criticism. Could they meet without discussing politics? And what was the outcome of such conversations? The fervent public discussions during the Revolution had shown the dynamics and uncontrollable potential of uninhibited human interactions, and the participants in these events had formed their political personae in the course of this dynamic experience. In the eyes of the anxious regime it was hard to imagine that they could have changed forever and that they could have lastingly given up their

sociology including Bourdieu's *habitus* and his comparatively hermetic field-theory that is put into perspective by Boltanski and Thévenot. In a current work I am trying to combine the ethical pluralism (not arbitrariness) of the social world as conceptualized in pragmatic sociology, with the multiplicity of the personality as theorized in ego-state-psychology. In this article this would have led to confusion, as my principal focus was on the state of loneliness and because my principal source material, Koshkin's extremely introspective diary (that recalls very few external dialogues), is rather unsuitable for an empirical demonstration of the correspondences of concrete evaluation-scales between outward interlocutors and inner ego-states.

deep commitment with the revolutionary cause (whatever they might understand by it in actual practice). But, on the other hand, they were needed to foster the regime's legitimacy. The Stalin regime felt itself ideologically too fragile to trust solely in their convictions; on the contrary, it was their fierce convictions that it feared most, so that it increasingly looked to corrupting them by pushing them into imposture and dissimulation. People with blemishes like Koshkin (or Vyshinskii, also a former Menshevik) could be particularly useful instruments, and as we know Stalin favored them as collaborators. In order to foster imposture, the regime elaborated and constantly refined its methods, of which isolation and atomization to inspire vexing feelings of guilt were paramount.

Hannah Arendt speaks of »guilt by association«, meaning that contact with an oppositional or »enemy« was considered sufficient to incriminate a person. But on a more profound level we could speak of »association by guilt«: the feeling of guilt, occasioned by one's own dissimulation, associates the impostor with the falsifying and manipulatory regime. This is not to be conceptualized as a question of pure »negotiation« and overt complicity (»I lie and hide and do not denounce the regime's lie, and in return I can expect from the regime that it doesn't dig too deep and accepts the distorted version of my past ...«), but as a more complex process that comes down to the very cognitive level of recognizing reality and facts. So it often occurs that people mistrust their very basic perceptions (let alone their judgments, which is a much more complex level) if they do not communicate and share them with others. If not confirmed by communicational exchange, perception and »experience« become dream-like, as in Koshkin's poems where the outer world seems to fade away, and as in Bukharin's letters to Stalin where he deplores that »everything has grown dim around me, and darkness has descended upon me« (the »solipsist« self-experience that the former leader of the Rightist Opposition refutes so vehemently in court when facing Vyshinskii.⁴¹

41 Of course, this phenomenon is hard to grasp in written sources, because it concerns the unspoken that is rapidly effaced even from memory. For

But this loss of reality could rapidly come to an end when people spoke to each other and shared experiences. The Stalinist regime did not fear individuals as such: they could be controlled, like Bukharin in the human experiment mentioned previously. It did not even fear informal networks if they had a rather utilitarian design (such as the criminals, who were consequently privileged towards the »political prisoners« in the Gulag). But it feared relations of trust between politically engaged people, especially communists who embraced revolutionary values, relations that enabled open and engaged communication and the forming of opinions on political issues.

These fears grew notably in the aftermath of forced collectivization, when the denial of the great famine and the blurring of reality by the state did take on unprecedented dimensions. This multiplied the regime's fears. It singled out scapegoats instead of recognizing the catastrophic failure of its economic policy. But this was no guarantee at all that others would not point at this discrepancy between reality and appearance. It was the fear of the naively truthful word that would call a spade a spade and thus lead to mutually backed up recognition of basic facts of economic and other realities that were otherwise denied, resulting in the regime's fundamental de-legitimization. To prevent such naively truthful words from emerging, people had to be transformed into liars, they had to be isolated from each other by dissimulation and through a vague and vexed feeling of personal guilt – a feeling that Koshkin describes in such a depressing manner.

It is not a coincidence that the (innocent and uncorrupted) child in Anderson's tale speaks out the very basic and ostensible truth that everybody tried desperately to ignore: that the emperor was naked. These in-

that reason contemporaries of the Third Reich in Germany often claimed in retrospective that they didn't know anything about the extermination of Jews. Often they have not shared their perceptions, of raids on their neighborhood and of the disappearance of Jewish families. They have not asked questions and the futile perception did not materialize and rapidly »vanished from the world«.

nocent, honest parts in the personalities had to be tamed and suppressed in order to ensure the functioning of the systemic taboo.

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