

EARLY GULAG STUDIES BETWEEN OSTRACISM AND FORGETFULNESS

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Abstract. This article is devoted to a group of closely related people who, having fought Bolsheviks, remained in Soviet Russia, adopting survivalist conformism, yet did not avoid arrest, prison, exile and camp; who escaped from the country to save their lives and speak analytically about the USSR; who fell into the trap of a “conspiracy of silence” which still lasts. Firstly, the notion of ‘elsewhereness’ is applied to their life-time peripeties. Secondly, ‘liminality’ the unity of those peripeties with a posthumous sequel, considering them part of the group’s interaction with a hegemonising agency, showing the correlativity between ‘elsewhereness’ and ‘liminality’, and applying theoretic perspectives on ‘liminality’ by Spariosu and Szakolczai. Put differently, I view the condition of enduring a “conspiracy of silence” is viewed as an aspect of ‘elsewhereness’, and the policy of “silencing” the group as ‘liminalisation’, yet recognising that the ‘agents’ of “silencing” are themselves inscribed in a liminal situation. Thirdly, the non-personal object of “silencing” is identified – the set of accounts and ideas ignored due to their unpleasantness or to reservations about their source: the pre-Solzhenitsyn accounts and ideas about Gulag, at which anglophone scholarship arrives only recently as if at its own discoveries, while selectively ignoring the precedents. Fourthly, that set is related to ‘elsewhereness’ and ‘liminality’, viewing concentration camp experience as one both of ‘being-elsewhere’ and ‘liminal’, and the venture to create those camps as ‘liminal’. Alongside with this, the heurism of generalisations by I. Solonevich, one of the members of the aforementioned group, and by some people who, in different times, followed the Solonevichs beyond the state border of the USSR (M. Nikonov-Smorodin, M. Heller), is demonstrated.

Keywords: Gulag studies; elsewhereness; liminality; exilic-utopian imagination; permanent liminality; Ivan Solonevich; Mikhail Nikonov-Smorodin; Mikhail Heller; conspiracy of silence

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РАННЕЕ «ГУЛАГОВЕДЕНИЕ» МЕЖДУ ОСТРАКИЗМОМ И ЗАБЫВЧИВОСТЬЮ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена размышлениям об опыте группы близких между собой людей, воевавших против большевиков, оставшихся по собственной воле в СССР, культивировавших в себе способствующий выживанию конформизм, но не избежавших ареста, тюрьмы, ссылки и лагеря; потом нелегально покинувших страну, не только с целью спасти свою жизнь, но и аналитически рассказать внешнему миру об СССР; наконец попавших в западню «заговора молчания», длящегося по сей день. Во-первых, к прижизненным перипетиям группы применяется понятие «инонаходимость». Во-вторых, эти перипетии, в единстве с их посмертным продолжением и с учетом их вписанности во взаимодействие группы с намного превосходящим ее контр-агентом, рассматриваются при помощи понятия «лиминальность»; автором показывается коррелятивность двух понятий (инонаходимость и лиминальность) и применяются две разные теории «лиминальности» (Михая Спарсиосу и Арпада Шаколчая). Иными словами, подверженность «заговору молчания» видится как аспект «инонаходимости», «замалчивание» – как политика «лиминализации» группы, но и как симптом принадлежности самих «замалчивающих» лиминальной ситуации. В-третьих, очерчивается внеперсональный объект «замалчивания» – набор проигнорированных, из-за малопримлемости источника либо их собственной нелицеприятности, сведений и идей: это до-солженицынские сведения и идеи о Гулаге, к которым современное англоязычное «гулаговедение» приходит, как бы выдавая их за собственные находки, игнорируя прецеденты. В-четвертых, этот набор сведений и идей соотносится с понятиями «инонаходимости» и «лиминальности»: лагерный опыт понимается и как «инонаходимостный», и как «лиминальный», а опыт создания Гулага – как «лиминальный». Попутно демонстрируется эвристичность обобщений одного из членов вышеуказанной группы, И. Солоневича, а также и некоторых из тех, кто в разное время последовал за Солоневичами по ту сторону государственного рубежа (М. Никонов-Сморodin, М. Геллер).

Ключевые слова: гулаговедение; инонаходимость; лиминальность; экзильно-утопическое воображение; перманентная лиминальность; Иван Солоневич; Михаил Никонов-Сморodin; Михаил Геллер; заговор молчания

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Introduction

Having left the USSR in 1934, Ivan, Boris and Iurii Solonevichs were trapped in a “conspiracy of silence” – “We had to break it through, just as [...] to the border of Finland.”¹ [Солоневич 1936а: 2], – which still lasts in anglophone scholarship. With their narrative about the USSR unwanted, they fell from one ‘mis-space’ (cf.: mistime, mishap) into another. This experience can be conceptualised as liminal.

Elsewhereness and liminality

“Mis-space”, or elsewhereness², is a ‘family’ of *psycho-physical* [Knapp 1991], incl. verbal, experiences of lack of home. It differs from both nomadism as voluntary non-‘domestication’ of any place and being-at-home. Deportation, emigration, inner emigration, intrastate exile and camp incarceration are its most visible ‘members’ in the twentieth century. A non-participation in a “conspiracy of silence”, if one is a member of the “conspiring” community, is an essential aspect of a stance of inner emigration from that community, which rewards with ostracism.

In this article elsewhereness is approached³ in terms of the theories of “rites of passage” (Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner), proportionality of “exilic-utopian imagination” and “mentality of power” (Mihai Spariosu), and “hypermodernity” as a “permanent liminality” (Arpad Szakolczai). The kinds of elsewhereness are viewed as kinds of liminal experience within “complex large-scale societies”.

Elsewhereness and liminality have common temporality. The goal of emigration is to cease

being an emigration etc. Inner emigration has the same horizon, as well as intrastate exile, even when the sentence is for an indeterminate period. Special settlements are liminal in one more sense: of spatial transiency, due to repetitive resettlement of the punished groups [Бердинских 2005: 20, 21; Бердинских, Бердинских, Веремьев 2015: 135].

“Stressing the importance of *transitions* in any society, van Gennep singled out *rites of passage* as a special category, consisting of three sub-categories, namely *rites of separation*, *transition rites*, and *rites of incorporation*. Van Gennep called the middle stage in a rite of passage a *liminal period*” [Thomassen 2009: 6; cf. Turner 1977: 94]. The “threshold” people and situations oscillate between intra- and extrastructurality etc. [Turner 1977: 95, 200–202, cf. 116]. Without communities of pre-modernity, *anomie* could last indeterminately, or result into a formation of a new community [Thomassen 2009: 19–22; cf. Turner 1977: 107, 145–147, 167].

Commensurating elsewhereness with rites of passage allows for an inner periodisation and typology of events within any group of exiles etc. Yet it is not reducible to ‘liminality’.

‘Elsewhereness’ is not rooted in the conceptualisation of rites. Its signified has a ritual character mainly from without and metaphorically (insofar a ritual is the kernel of a cyclic world order, a pledge for expectable restoration of what has been broken). It is temporary *not by convention*, one urging those who-are-elsewhere to acquire some properties which would make them normal members of the community left behind: despite that sentences to exile and camp incarceration are

¹Translations throughout the article are mine, unless specified otherwise.

²In its use by the present author, the term “elsewhereness / инонаходимость” translates Claudia Pieralli’s “altrove” [Pieralli 2013: 222], expanding its original context of application. In the same expanded sense, “инонаходимость” was used in a conference call for papers in 2018 (“Managing exile, suffering displacement, being an émigré: responsibility and mutual sympathy in the mirror of ego-documents and fiction”, at https://www.fabula.org/actualites/managing-exile-suffering-displacement-being-an-emigre-responsibility-and-mutual-sympathy-in-the_84244.php; compare: <http://www.ruthenia.ru/hronika.html?startdoc=1538032844>).

³Impersonal syntax was an imperative choice of the copy-editor of this article.

for a definite term, that camps were called *correctional* labour ones¹, and that political émigrés hope for a victorious return. (Hope has replaced confidence). Elsewhereness is not possible without an axiological or political dissent between the ‘leaving’ and the ‘staying’ (/the relocating institution), a dissent encodable in terms of ‘(im)maturity’ only by the latter party (which would wish to impose on the former the cultural archetype of the “prodigal son”). Homes that are left behind prepare themselves on a par with the elsewhere-being for the hoped for reaggregation, as vividly reflected in émigrés’ imagination.

‘Liminality’ and ‘elsewhereness’ seem to converge, without any of them being metaphoricised, in “permanent liminality”.

Elsewhereness from the standpoint of potential victim: liminality as an escape

Spariosu [2015: 25] founded on the notion of “protracted / permanent liminality”, a peripheral for Turner, his definition of exile and utopia. He views sharp sensitivity to the linearity of time (and ensuing feeling of loss and emptiness) and the power of “exilic-utopian imagination” as the core properties of the “transhistorical” mindset of modernity [ivi: 13–16].

That sensitivity feeds a power-oriented mentality and the “agonistic dialectics” of tradition and modernity, and margin and centre [ivi: 15]. “Exilic” consciousness, captive to its groundlessness perceived as “ontological lack or emptiness”, generates a compensatory utopia [ivi: XVII–XVIII]. In phases of higher intensity of modernity exilic-utopian imagination begins “experimenting with the communities in which it has originated” [ivi: 37–38].

A mentality that takes for granted a plurality of centres and stems from *philosophia perennis* [ivi: 12, 15–16, 26 etc] is deemed by Spariosu a way out [ivi: 13, 15]; viewing habitation in “no man’s land” as an asset, it prolongs liminality into eternity [ivi: 25–26].

Spariosu animates Greek and Semitic prehistory of the word *limen*, the ‘harbour’ behind the ‘threshold’ [ivi: 22]. He includes the notions of

Purgatory and exile into “liminality” [ivi: 22]. He deems exile a form of *ludic liminality*; a psychophysical condition of detachedness from home, either embroiled in nostalgia (and subsuming to the “agon” of “centre” and “margin”), or revolving into utmost creative freedom [ivi: 30–31], into an ability to affect both the society left behind and the host one, into an “utopia” in the sense of “a-topia”, “nowhere”, a neutral playing ground [ivi: 30, XVII etc]². ‘Ludicity’ domesticates liminality; it distinguishes exile and utopia from such liminal conditions as dreams, illness and death [ivi: 26].

Seeing exile as a *ludic* liminality stems from a genealogy of culture opposite to Huizinga’s. According to Spariosu, it was not that play evolved into culture, but that “violent contest and power” “concealed under the veneer of rational, ‘civilized’ play to such an extent that the play concept itself has gradually become entirely separated” from them [ivi: 21]. That is why he sees behind exiling an “*agon*”, archaic “*power game*” [ivi: 28–29].

Spariosu’s theory of exile fits the case of Nabokov³, but hardly those of Russian emigre communities of Sofia or Paris (and their not very individualistic-minded members). In group exile the foundational contentions of exilic condition: “cosmic freedom” vs nostalgia, ‘ludicity’ vs non-ludic belonging, – become complicated. Exile is agonistic but only *potentially* ludic, moreover that its ludicity is being chronically re-negotiated (being counterbalanced by a sense of guilt / duty to homeland *and* to the community of exiles).

It is possible to model an equidistant trajectory between freedom and nostalgia⁴ (of responsibility?). Its geographical materialisation would be a habitat which, due to its historic and geographic properties, obliges to vigilance and agitation (as Finland or Bulgaria for a Russian émigré, Lebanon or Bulgaria for an Armenian exile). Or a habitat which, due to its political properties, lets preserve one’s freedom from the agenda of the local centre of mentality of power, while preserving responsibility to the lost homeland: “we were not let in Paris, while Berlin does not suit us. [...] *Segodnia* in Riga is impelled to praise Ulmanis. *Mech* in Warsaw – the heirs of Pilsudski. *Novoe*

¹ Due to lack of space I cannot deal here with the evolving rationale behind maintaining camps and with the divergent scholarly opinions about both the evolution and the rationale.

² Spariosu refers to Claudio Guillén’s notion of “literature of counter-exile”.

³ The trajectory of life and works of Vladimir Nabokov can be viewed as an implementation of “counter-exilic” strategy, of choosing “freedom” at the expense of “nostalgia”.

⁴ Non-victorious return to (former) homeland is the physical *acme* of nostalgia.

Slovo in Berlin – Hitler. *Nash Put'* in Harbin – the fake Manchukuo and the fake pacifism of Japan, *Poslednie Novosti* – comrade Blum and the noble-mindedness of great democracies [...] Sofia has a plenty of technical inconveniences [...]. But [...] here the newspaper can be independent" [Солоневич 1936b].

Somewhere just beyond this point, in the zone of "freedom", emerges bilinguality of elsewhere-being writers, which monoethnic mind tends to identify with bigamy [cf. Beaujour 1984: 64].

Partly analogical phenomenon is discernible within the 'undersoviet'¹ and the concentration camp life. An analogue of "freedom" would be mimicry; under "language" we would mean a 'mental and behavioural style': "If [...] the camp is a copy of 'at liberty', then there ["at liberty"] too should exist 'leeches' [*pridurki*] of their own [...] the many-millioned bureaucratic apparatus of Soviet [...] system. [...] 'sorealism' of Gor'kii, Al. Tolstoi, Erenburg is followed in camp newspapers and magazines by petty writings of Shiriaev, Rozanov, Zaitsev, Solonevich" [Розанов 1979: 188]. "[...] I am very far from presenting myself as an innocent lamb: in that cruel everyday struggle for life, which goes on across Russia, such lambs have not remained at all [...]" [Солоневич 1938: 6]. "The butchers are slaves too" [ivi: 306]. "But insofar to punch a milititioner's mug is an evident nonsense [...] one had to resort to the favourite arms of slaves – to fraud [*zhul'nichestvo*]" [ivi: 15].

Mimicry eased the atomisation of undersoviet people. Zoological individualism, to which Soviet camps brought the confined [Геллер 1974: 266], and Stalinist authorities citizens in general [ivi: 233], embodies a degree of 'agonality' which is farthest from 'ludicity'; a solitary confinement in a metaphysical sense. (Cf. [Солоневич 1938: 48–49, 280]).

The theory of Spariosu enables us to analyse the involvement of elsewhere-being agents in the political game of the relocating power centre.

Elsewhereness from the standpoint of punishing order: liminality as entrapment

Unlike the literary scholar and historian of religion Spariosu, the sociologist Szakolczai views prolonged liminality not as an opportunity but as a danger. Within liminality unfollowed by reintegration, future is inherently unknown, and present becomes an experimental contesting ground between self-proclaimed "ceremony masters" who say that they have seen the future [Thomassen 2009: 21–22]. "Szakolczai argued that there are three types of permanent liminality, critically originating in the three phases of the rites of passage" [ivi: 22–23], seeing Soviet communism, "in which the Second World War never ended", as a formation "frozen" in the stage of reintegration² [ivi: 23].

Having analysed works by social thinkers of the last two centuries [Szakolczai 2000] and several European novels from the 1900s–1950s [idem 2017], he conceptualises "permanent liminality" as the basic property of that history of European humanity which started in 1914 and which he calls "hypermodernity": a self-instigating [cf. idem 2000: 217] programme, operating through the "smooth automatisms" and anonymous forces of markets, technology and "democracy (or mass-mediated public sphere)" ("whether mediated by money or popular justice, the stock-market or the central committee"), aimed at destructing nature, God and tradition, and leading to "eternal flux and complete void" [idem 2017: 234–236].

I would view "hypermodernity" as a *hegemony* of "mentality of power".

The theory of Szakolczai urges to enrich the typology of liminality, confronting with the type of a liminal group within a society entrapped in permanent liminality.

A possible embodiment of this structural type is the 'camp within a camp', exemplified by a mid-1930s characterisation of the USSR: "[...] All that happens in a camp happens at liberty – and

¹The word "*podsovetskii*" had circulation in the 1920s–1930s, and it can still be of non-rhetorical importance. Words of Andrei Siniavskii, cited by Mikhail Geller [1974: 324], can help understand the difference between being a Soviet and an undersoviet human: "The memory for revolution [...] is as saint as is the image of one's dead mother. It is easier to agree that all that followed the revolution was a betrayal to it, rather than offend it with words of reproach or suspicion.". Siniavskii is squeezing out the Soviet man from himself.

²"Szakolczai invoked [...] example for each type of permanent liminality: monasticism [...], court society (with individuals continuously performing their roles in an endless ceremonial game [...]) [...] communist regimes sustained themselves by playing continuously on the sentiments of revenge, hatred, and suffering" [Thomassen 2009: 23]. But compare: "The authorities aim at world revolution. Given that hopes for an imminent achievement of this aim collapsed, the country has to be transformed into a moral, political and military lodgement, which would preserve, till a convenient moment, the revolutionary cadre, revolutionary experience and revolutionary army" [Солоневич 1938: 4–5]; I would see here a description of "freezing" in the stage of transition. Quite possibly, ca. 1945 the Soviet system switched from one to another kind of permanent liminality.

vice versa. [...] In a camp the basics of Soviet power are given with the neatness of an algebraic formula” [Солоневич 1938: 5–6]. “In the camps goes a process of relative emancipation of the inmates, at liberty goes a process of absolute enserfment of the masses” [ivi: 6]. “Here are meant camp inmates in the strict sense of this word. Beside them, there exist all sorts of more or less imprisoned strata of the population” (*spetsposelentsy*¹, administratively exiled, and “voluntary exiled” peasants are listed) [ivi: 8], “[as for] the number of all these categories [...] I have not [...] even an approximate idea” [ivi: 8].

Today, anglophone researchers of Gulag come close to the outline by Solonevich, as if unaware of the precedent² and focusing on the *secondary* issue of permeability of the border (e. g. [Bell 2013; Shearer 2015]) between the inscribed and the inscribing: on the aptness of the metaphor which they took for an interpretative panacea – *archipelago*. Concurrently they approach an alternative metaphor, “the *empire* of Gulag” [Солоневич 1938: 5], thus again falling into unintended plagiarism³.

Solonevich’s *Rossiiia v kontslagere* hints at a geometry of Soviet and camp spaces which differs from the one that loomed already in a book from 1925⁴ and came to fame through the archipelago metaphor: not only at a form-in-a-form (ma-

trioshka)⁵, but at parallel-and-intertwining forms (a net of river beds and gullies?)⁶.

The historiographic situation is visible through a block of articles devoted to Gulag and the “second” Gulag, the special settlements (see esp. [Shearer 2015: 712–718] and [From the Editors 2015]), and through [Brown 2007]. They have avoided the whole pre-Solzhenitsyn tradition of analysis of Soviet camps and society⁷.

The neglecting and the neglected characterisations of the USSR / Gulag share the ideas that the whole of the USSR is a continuity of places of confinement, differing by degree of unfreedom; that it is a mosaic of jurisdictions (sometimes overlapping) and civil statuses; that there is no clear divide between ‘slaughterers’ and ‘victims’.

“Permanent liminality” can be applied both to the Soviet societal system and to selectivity in its subsequent critique. “Hypermodernity” may have – after the victory over Nazism, denunciation of Stalinism and “*démontage*” of Soviet system – refuted its own dark side. But there remains a spot inaccessible to or safeguarded against critique: the *idol* of a self-sufficient, self-sanctioning and self-redemptive modernity. At times this *mythomoteur* is venerated in the “face” of “Revolution”; at times – in the (perceived) freedom from whatever

¹“Thus, for example, in the B[elomor] B[altic] C[ombine] during my stay there were located 28000 families of the so called ‘*spetspereselentsy*’ – these are Voronezh Governorat peasants, whole villages of which were exiled to Karelia for settlement under the supervision of BBC. They were in substantially worse condition than the camp inmates, for they were with their families and were not given *paioik*” [Солоневич 1938: 8].

²And sometimes they recycle it, blurring its informativeness. Nick Baron [2002: 179, n. 203] cites Solonevich via Mikhail Rozanov [1979: 183], having given [Baron 2001: 616, n. 4] an incomplete list of the sources on Solovki mentioned by Rozanov. Contrary to expected, the cited fragment does not answer the question what actually is the common ground between Soviet “at liberty” and Soviet camp. While the preceding sentence in the source [Солоневич 1938: 5] gives an answer to it, and on the previous page Solonevich is much more emphatic...

³A third related “discovery” is the acknowledgement that “[t]he Stalinist state was hardly the monolith of cold war legend”, but underdeveloped and chaotic ([Viola 2007: 9], cit. in: [Finkel 2008]). Viola’s approach is assessed as “updated revisionist”. Yet even a cursory overview of the newspaper *Za Rossiiu*, issued in the 1930s by the prospective National-Labour Union, would have dispelled the “legend” long ago. More disturbing is the fact that the text of Viola counterposes “mercilessness of dictatorship” to weak development of state structures, the “context” of an agrarian country, and vast territories ([ibid], cit. in [ibid]). Such a counterposition is an implicit step towards absolutism: being so weak and chaotic, Stalinist rule could not have been a genuine evil; apparently, “the environment had eaten on” even Stalin(ist state).

⁴“The camp was a copy of the Soviet ‘at liberty’, its microcosm, and this is confirmed by all chroniclers, beginning with Besonov, i. e. since 1925” [Розанов 1979: 186].

⁵A “republic” has been “devoured” by a “kingdom” which is contained within an “empire” [Солоневич 1938: 6–7].

⁶“The camp in which we found ourselves – Belomor-Baltic Combine (BBC) – is an entire kingdom [...] [C]amp’s administration [is] in fact the government of the so called ‘Karelian Republic’ [...]” [Солоневич 1938: 7]. “In the camps goes a process of relative emancipation [...]” [6].

⁷E. g., D. Shearer [2015: 717] praises K. Brown [2007] for generalisations already uttered in the 1930s and substantiated by a historical account in the 1970s: “The decree of the C[entral] E[xecutive] C[ommittee] and the C[ouncil of] P[eoples] C[ommissars] of USSR from 27 Dec. 1932, which established a system of internal passports for the urban population, should be regarded as the act which completed the creation of ‘prison civilisation’” [Теллер 1974: 120]. (Heller discerned the main steps in and modes of “ensermfment” of Soviet population, see esp. pp. 122, 124, 176). One gains the impression that reference to Solzhenitsyn is a kind of a ritual self-exemption from the necessity of referring to whatever else Russian emigre or dissident text, save as in its function of primary source (and not study). One of the reasons for the ostracism maybe lays in the apparent simplicity and value non-neutrality of categories used, e. g., by Heller (“the three whales of the prison civilisation are camp, fear and lie” [ivi: 125]), which arouses an anxiety of being non-impartial and unscientific.

ideological prejudices of the past, allegedly spoiling the credibility of a historical vision (irrespective of their link – or lack of such – to the particular subject of research). This twofold proposition is indebted to applying the theoretic perspective of Szakolczai to the observations of Heller on Soviet parting with Stalinism [1974: 272–281] and to my own on nowadays anglophone Gulag studies.

Two Gulags and two more (bypassing Solzhenitsyn's)

Historiographic amnesia concerns the “second Gulag” too. “Viola aptly calls this the ‘unknown Gulag’, for the special settlements have consistently been left out of histories of the Gulag. [...] Solzhenitsyn [...] lacking contact with and memoirs written by these peasants, [...] could only mention their exile in Gulag Archipelago” [Jolluck 2011: 177].

It is unclear, to whom the world of special settlements was unknown and who left them out of their histories. Tacit normative expectation that historians of the USSR would *not* use publications in Russian is at hand¹. Again a work from the 1930s is neglected: “spetsposelki” were referred to by Nikonov-Smorodin [1938²: 63, 96, 212, 257, 261, 272–273, 315–317, 332]...

The community of forgetful is being constructed by its late member: “Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has been called ‘one of the great truth-tellers of the twentieth century’, and a breaker of the Soviet regime’s ‘blockade of silence’. The writer, who first revealed to his countrymen and the world the inhumanity of the Soviet penal labor system, was also a master of language.” [Alexopoulos 2015: 499]³. Turning from ‘ecumenical’ to the ‘parish’ dimension of the community, Alexopoulos thanks to ten named colleagues of his (judging from the names, English is native tongue to all of them) and to journal’s anonymous reviewers for their

comments on earlier version of the article. Such declarations are indirect and unintended acknowledgments of the normalness of authorities which maintained the camps. To verify this statement, let me introduce a different historical perspective: “*One Day of Ivan Denisovich* by A. Solzhenitsyn, printed in 1962, was the first truthful testimony for the existence of concentration camps, officially confirmed by the state.” [Геллер 1974: 7]. Heller *does not* make the trustworthiness of the reported be contingent on a confirmation by the evil-doer, moreover, one not brought to court.

Heller’s study is the first book on the “literature of Soviet repression” [Gullotta 2012: 73], or the “literature of Soviet trauma” [Gullotta 2011: 96], thus *Return from the Archipelago* by Leona Toker [2000] does not stay in such isolation as Gullotta wants us to believe; – despite that Heller analysed only texts published in the USSR and which mainly *produced* rather than carried trauma⁴. To publish the book abroad was the *sine qua non* to publish it, while being an émigré was not; both choices embody the core property of humanities, reflexivity, in its facet of constriction within a place. His study is especially valuable by inspecting the trauma ‘from’ the cause; by implementing the awareness that literature of inmates partly emerges as a reaction to the embodiment into life of the literary apology for *chekists* and camps.

Perspectives ought to be juxtaposed, as in court; and in order to make it clear that camp literature can cure trauma upon an adequate diagnosis (on it: [Геллер 1974: 255]).

Neglect of pre-Solzhenitsynean literature occurs even when expected excuses – the artistic convincingness of Solzhenitsyn and the inaccessibility of pre-WWII sources – are irrelevant. Lynne Viola issued her *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant*

¹A volume containing documents about special settlements [Царевская-Дякина 2004] was issued prior to Viola’s monograph (2007); the monograph of Berdinskikh, with a section on *kulaks* exile, in 2005 [181–302]; other works in Russian, incl. ones with the participation of Viola, are mentioned in another review: [Moine 2007].

²M. Nikonov-Smorodin, *Krasnaia katorga*, Sofia, 1938. The book is included in the bibliographies of works on similar topics from the early 2000s [Dundovich, Gori, Guercetti 2003; Shapovalov 2001], but is not present in [Toker 2000]. It is contained in the catalogue of *Russia beyond Russia: The André Savine Digital Library*, created in 2008–2012 at the University of North Carolina (<https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/item/collection/rbr/?id=27322>).

³Indeed, it is “the world” and his countrymen from the USSR to whom he revealed; émigrés (and anyone linked to their informational underground) fall out of this loose conceptual net. Alexopoulos is mercilessly right.

⁴“The entire Soviet literature can be analysed with an eye on its attitude to the ‘world of concentration camps’, as a reflection of some or other facets of the ‘prison civilisation’. ‘Camp literature’ truly reflects the evolution of ‘camp world’. [...] For first time in Russian literature the role of the hero is assigned not to an inmate, but to a jailer, for first time the guilt is assigned not to the killer but to the killed [...] A survey of Soviet ‘camp literature’, in combination with an analysis of historical facts linked to the genesis of concentration camps in the Soviet state, lets understand the causes for the transformation of Soviet society into a ‘concentration [camps] world’, into a ‘prison civilisation’, in the phrase of Nadezhda Mandelstam.” [Геллер 1974: 8].

Resistance (Oxford UP, 1996), managing to not mention an article published in 1935 in the then sole British academic journal in Slavic studies [Solonevich 1935], where, within an analysis of Soviet economic policy, an account on the techniques of peasant resistance is contained [ivi: 87–89, 94 etc.], and a 1931 Bogorodsk uprising is mentioned [ivi: 89]. The core idea of Viola's book: collectivisation is “a virtual civil war between the state and peasantry” [Viola 1999: 3], – could have been derived from *Rossiiia v kontslagere*¹, if it wasn't for Viola's *immunity* against pre-Solzhenitsynian Russian textual specimens².

An academic author in the UK in the 1930s, Violet Conolly, is overtly hostile to the book of Solonevich, beginning her 1938 review with a polemic and contestable claim (“[t]here is nothing but horrors in *Russia in Chains*” – while the book's author had declared from the outset that it is *not* about horrors, which were already known to the reader [Solonevich 1938: 18; Солоневич 1938: 5]) and continuing with the claim, supported neither by proofs nor by references³, that the book is an outright unreliable testimony on life *outside* camps (yet the possibility of its reliability on camps is admitted), “the worst kind of anti-Soviet propaganda” [Conolly 1938b]. Judging from a review on her own book from 1937 [Coyne 1938], I suggest a hostility to regimes of knowledge deemed deviant rather than sympathy for the USSR. Her review on another witness' book on the USSR [Conolly 1938a] helps discern a tacit convention: to be received amicably, a work under review should avoid a forthright evaluation of its subject⁴. Half of the review is spent for a condescending discussion of the author's personality, based on the preface to the book. Rejection of the book's content is summarised thus: “to expect anybody to believe that

the whole of the Soviet Union is to-day inhabited by a seething mass of discontented, hungry, miserable people forcibly kept in check by the Red Army”⁵ “is sheer nonsense” (thus the topic of the methods of rule and the invitation to view camps as distillation of Soviet life are utterly ignored)⁶.

Solonevichs are unmentioned in recent voluminous history of Gulag written by an author on the border between scholarship and politics [Applebaum 2003].

Quite lately, Leona Toker devoted seven hundred words to *Rossiiia v kontslagere*, in a book comparing the literary productions of camp inmates from the USSR and Nazi Germany [Toker 2019: 52–53]. She provides the intellectual tradition in which she partakes with a number of alibi for using Solzhenitsyn as a starting point of studies of Gulag: she cunningly hints at antisemitism (a tactic one or sincere – it is all the same; such charge may inflict stigma) of Solonevich; mentions the Sovietophilia of leftist, and the tolerance towards the USSR of liberal, western intelligentsia, thus charging *it* with the responsibility for the blindness for Stalinism, while discharging western state apparatuses, democratically shaped public opinion and the community of academic experts in the USSR; without reasoning, suggests a deficit of artistic persuasiveness of pre-Solzhenitsyn testimonies on Gulag, and an adverse effect due to contradictions between those testimonies (possibly implying that readers read everything and compared).

The issue of the academic tradition's selective memory is screened by the issue of Solonevich's hypothetical influence on Solzhenitsyn.

Toker is silent on the literary output of *Boris Solonevich*, to mention his documentary novella ‘A day of a physician in a Soviet concentration camp’, coeval to *Russia in the concentration camp*⁷.

¹“The watershed between authorities and the ‘people’ [*liud'mi*] is drawn with a severity that is usual only in epochs of foreign conquest. [...]” [Солоневич 1958: 4].

²Viola takes two lines from Tvardovskii's *Land Muravia* as an epigraph for her introduction (publ. 1936). The earliest title on Soviet matters in her list of secondary works is from 1958. Her lists of primary and secondary works lack such by Russian émigrés, with the ambivalent exception of a book by Georges Agabekov (1931), a defected Cheka/OGPU officer.

³Judging from the neighbouring texts, the sole authority of the reviewer's personality was an argument in the genre of short review.

⁴Reticence towards issues requiring non-value-neutral stance is nurtured by a fatigue of stories about the Soviet “horrors”. Cf.: “It is surely no longer necessary [...] to insist *ad absurdum* on the incredible happenings of the early days of the Soviet regime.” [Conolly 1939].

⁵I am not sure that the book says this.

⁶Thirty-one years later, the same author does not skip to indicate these methods, reviewing a book on Mongolia [Conolly 1969: 181].

⁷Both anglophone translations of the title “*Rossiiia v kontslagere*”, British and American, alleviate the effect of the original, depriving it of social-political concreteness, through metaphorisation (*Russia in chains*) or transfer into the plane of long-term literary history (*Paradise Lost*) [Solonevich 1938a, 1938b].

Non-mention of Solonevichs indicates an indifference to an undercurrent (actual or hypothetical) of anglophone knowledge about Gulag. The mainstream of this knowledge seems to be rooted in the agenda of Cold War¹, not in disinterested cognitive quest, humanitarian conscience or even anticommunism. That is why the mainstream traces its origin to the acquaintance with the two most famous works of Solzhenitsyn. It is a *history of victors*. Anglo-American participation in the physical triumph over Nazism opened the eyes

for the fragmentary testimonies on the niceties of Stalinism but also precluded speaking of them, for a period.

Possible causes for the entrapment of pre-Solzhenitsyn sources on Gulag

The question can be divided into two. Why certain people did not trust the testimonies? Why do they (or related people) keep silent about them? I am postponing the answers to a subsequent publication.

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¹The guess is supported by this confession: “not far from the surface of American histories of the Soviet Union is a self-congratulatory subtext on the righteousness of the American way” [Brown 2007: 74]. What changed after 1945? The USSR did not become more inharm (even, ostensibly, on the contrary – having triumphed over Nazism); but it occupied a piece of the ‘outer’ world, Eastern Europe. If we try a culturological explanation with [Neumann 1999] in mind: the USSR became dangerous to people deemed almost *worthy enough* to be defended. Now there was an excuse for a symbolic war. And under the circumstance of image problems for the major Western power (war in Vietnam), books of Solzhenitsyn could not but receive benevolent attention.

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