



REPORTING FROM THE SMALL MOTHERLAND

1. Reflections on the future



When, without notifying my colleagues in advance, I went LNR, several messages followed me. Someone considered it necessary to write something kind, others simply stated: "Noble, but stupid"; or expressed incomprehension: "Why? You already have everything, don't you?"

I didn't have everything. I had no experience of communication with compatriots who had lived for eight years under continuous shelling, but survived. And now I have it. But this is only the very first experience - special studies and the most intense work are yet to come. And it is to include the work of our entire psychological community.

Let me make a small digression. Back in the 1980s I had a chance to work with a number of situations, extremely significant for military psychology, connected with the defense tasks of the Defense Ministry of the USSR. There were two deployments to the Afghan War in the period of the most active combat operations. Then there was a trip to Armenia after the Spitak earthquake in 1988, when some 100,000 people were killed in one day (the model of underground nuclear explosion). Then there was the crash of two passenger trains near Ufa in 1989 as a result of a gas explosion, accumulated in a low-lying area after a leak from a damaged gas main. The cars scattered dozens of meters, killing 645



people, including 181 children, and injuring and burning another 623. It was a model of a nuclear explosion in the atmosphere. The consequences of the Chernobyl accident (1986) were also studied in detail, which was a real model of the "dirty bomb" deployment that has recently become a hot-button issue. There were other studies as well. It was a unique experience to study mental trauma and PTSD.

Now neither I, nor anyone else in contemporary Russian psychology has an experience in working with the consequences of years of mental trauma, moreover, inflicted by a hostile and at the same time - the same ethnic group. Trauma accompanied by years of blockade, humiliation, torture, murders, terrorist attacks and shelling of residential areas, prohibition of the right to speak one's native language, and in the last stage, which was prevented by the special military operation, it was planned to cleanse vast territories of all Russian speakers and in fact to destroy them physically. The study of the consequences of all this and the development of a rehabilitation program for all age groups who managed to survive it are yet to be done.

When mass psychic trauma results from an environmental or even man-made disaster, it usually undergoes specific transformations and, regardless of whether the victims believe in God or not, such trauma is most often interpreted as "God is sending us new trials. They need to be lived through. And gradually, traumatic experiences pass as if in "off-line mode" over the course of 3-5 years.

Trauma caused by a hostile group provokes and starts up significantly different psychological mechanisms, the most essential of which are projection and projective identification. In the most primitive form, this psychological phenomenon, which is expressed by the formula: "It is not me who hates and persecutes X, it is he who hates and persecutes me. And such a "shift" in assessments of such situations can last for decades or even centuries. Examples of this kind among relatives are, for example, Arabs and Jews, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, English and Irish, Italians and Catalans, Kazakhs and Uighurs, Tajiks and Uzbeks and many others.

Let me add that the negative development of all these (almost paranoid) mass processes is catalyzed by the "psychology of small differences" (or "narcissism of small differences"). The essence of this psychological phenomenology can be briefly formulated as follows: "If someone is almost the same as I am - in history, in language, in traditions, culture, customs, etc., but slightly different - it is like a caricature of me. Naturally, a caricature of oneself (beloved!) is unpleasant and displeasing, and when combined with the mass trauma inflicted by a hostile group, it can become a source of irreconcilable hostility for an indefinite period of history.

There is another significant psychological factor that needs to be mentioned, namely "passing it on to the next generation. As it was substantiated in studies after World War II, the children of survivors of armed and interethnic conflicts form specific memories and specific attitudes toward tragic events in the history of their ancestors, which they did not and could not be witnessing. As a result, one of the psychological tasks for the next generations is to keep the memory of their ancestors' trauma alive and react to it.



The variants of such a response can be very different: from mourning for their fallen to the most tragic variants of individual and collective revenge. Any civilized resolution of such situations involves a powerful and sustained effort. I hope colleagues will understand what I wanted to say in this section.

I will conclude with another psychological phenomenon: in the sphere of hereditary ties nothing is forgotten. I can never forget that my father and mother were participants of the Great Patriotic War, both SMERSH officers, both communists. Father and mother are the very first figures of identification of any individual, carriers of language and culture, traditions and principles. But one must also recognize and understand that the opponents' descendants are bearers of different ("embedded" in them) parental images.

2. The Past

There are two other reasons for my trip. First, I was taught that both happy and difficult, and even dire times must be lived with one's own nation. Therefore, the Russian President's appeal to provide maximum assistance to Russians in the newly acquired territories is not an empty sound to me, but a guide to action. And secondly, LNR is my small motherland.

I was born in the village Uspenka of Lutuginsky district near Lugansk (at that time Voroshilovgrad). My youth passed in legendary Krasnodon, where an underground organization "Young Guard" was created in the city occupied by fascists during the Great Patriotic War.

On the night of September 29, 1942, not far from the central square, the Nazis buried alive 32 Communist miners in the ground, who had refused to mine coal for the invaders. Naturally, the entire small mining town knew about this atrocity. Several young boys and girls swore vengeance on the Nazis for the martyrdom of the heroic miners and created a Komsomol underground called the Young Guard. And then the number of members of the organization grew steadily.

Who were the Young Guard members? Recent school graduates, boys and girls 17-19 years old. They didn't manage to do much for our victory. They distributed leaflets with texts of the Soviet Information Bureau, put up red flags for the May holidays, helped a group of Red Army soldiers to escape from captivity, burned the stock exchange with the documents of the inhabitants to be stolen to Germany. Someone betrayed them. They were arrested and subjected to inhuman tortures: they put needles under their nails, cut off their ears, carved stars on their bodies, burned with hard iron, tortured. But they did not break, and then the fascists and their henchmen - policemen (from locals) - enraged by their firmness, threw them alive into the pit of Shakhta #5, which became their common grave. If anyone doesn't know, the drift is a vertical mine working-out 4-5 meters in diameter and 20-30 meters deep. As witnesses told us, the moans of the dying could be heard from the pit for several days.



When my generation was at school, the Russian literature curricula in all Soviet schools included Aleksandr Fadeev's novel "Molodaya Gvardiya" ("Young Guard"), which was written in 1946. Most of its protagonists, **Oleg Koshevoy, Ulyana Gromova, Lyubov Shevtsova, Ivan Zemnukhov, Sergey Tyulenin** and others, were real-life individuals who, for their courage and heroism, had been posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union in 1943.

The book was republished for more than 250 times, and its total circulation, including translations into almost all major world languages, was more than 26 million copies. In 1948, based on this book, the outstanding Soviet director Sergei Gerasimov shot a film with the same title, which was watched by all schoolchildren of the country, and not only schoolchildren, but also by Krasnodon citizens - almost every year on a huge screen right on the town square. It is really an immortal classic of Soviet cinema. One of the main roles – of Ulyana Gromova - was played by our outstanding actress **Nonna Mordyukova**, who bore an almost photographic resemblance to her character. This was her first movie role, her debut, which became the basis of her entire future life and creative work. Later the series was filmed based on the same novel by A. Fadeev, but it made no impression either on the people of Krasnodon, or on the general audience.



The whole country knew about Krasnodon and the Young Guard feat. Perhaps not everyone read it, but everyone went through the novel at school and participated in its discussion. And I was lucky enough to study at the same school and even with the same teachers who had taught the Young Guards before the war. And we did not just "read" the novel, we lived in it. In a way, our childhood and youth were a continuation of the novel, and we were all a bit of the Young Guard.



And how could it be otherwise. The mother of the Young Guard commander, Hero of the Soviet Union Ivan Turkenich lived with me on the same street opposite my parents' house. The mother of the commissar of the "Young Guard" Hero of the Soviet Union **Oleg Koshevoy** lived on the next street, and later - in the same house with us. The sister of the Hero of the Soviet Union **Sergey Tyulenin** worked as a secretary for my father. One of the few survivors of the Young Guard **Radik Yurkin** often came to our house, his son **Yura Yurkin** studied in the parallel class with me and we played together in the school orchestra - I played the trumpet, and he played the clarinet. There were Oleg Koshevoy's and Ivan Zemnukhov's classes and desks: the right to sit at them was given to the best pupils. These desks have been restored again and stand in the same classrooms now, as old as they were before the war, against the background of modern school furniture.

Thanks to heroism of the Young Guard, the city was rapidly growing and transforming. Almost all the prominent artists, cosmonauts, the capital's theaters and foreign delegations from all over the world came to visit us.

On September 12, 1954 I went with my parents to the opening ceremony of a monument to the Young Guardsmen in Krasnodon, which is now world famous - certainly an outstanding work of monumental sculpture. At the foot of this monument I was accepted in Pioneer's organization and was given my Komsomol card there. On all national holidays we were on honorary watch there and laid flowers at the monument and at the miners' grave, which was nearby at the entrance to the city park.





In 1958, the Palace of Culture named after "Young Guard" was built, which could decorate any capital city. There was a unique art gallery, a beautiful library, sports halls, volleyball and basketball courts, a music school, and a beautiful concert hall with almost 600 seats.

In 1960, when I was ten years old, I was in this hall at the public trial of former policemen, who had long been hiding from retribution. They were all sentenced to the death penalty - execution. The sentence was carried out on the same day near the town market, in front of a huge crowd of people. Because of my age and small stature I could not see anything, but I heard these traitors screaming and begging, "Don't kill! Forgive me, countrymen!" They did not.

I have visited my small motherland more than once. The last time was about ten years ago, when they tried to "remake" it into Ukraine. I saw the abandoned grave of the heroes-miners with the extinguished eternal flame, the garbage dump at Shakhta #5, the abandoned city with dark windows and deserted houses. To do anything with the monument to the Young Guardsmen and the Museum of Oleg Koshevoy the new "masters of life" did not dare. Could I not go there now?

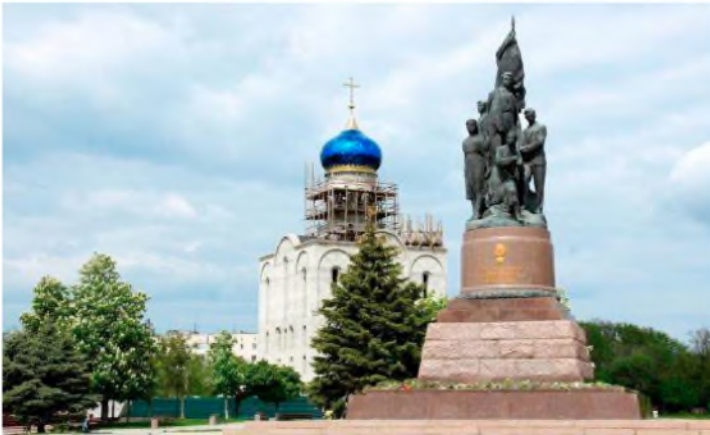
3. The present

On my way to the LNR I met a lot of people. Good people. Some were particularly memorable. A girl named Tanya in a roadside motel, about thirty years old. Her two younger brothers volunteered to go to the frontline. The middle one was the first, and then the elder one said he wouldn't let him go alone. The youngest is still at home, as he is under eighteen, but he will go too. She doesn't cry, says: "I am proud of my boys. And I pray". Together with her husband, they built a chapel near the motel to pray, because the church is too far. In another roadside cafe, I met two married couples and got to talking. They are brothers, one is the chairman of the local Communist Party branch, 32 years old. They were celebrating two years of the youngest's marriage, he was 23. And then both of them also went to the military registration office.

There are checkpoints and roadblocks at the entrance to the LNR. There is no border, but everyone's documents and cars are checked. The queue of cars lasts for four or five hours at least. We entered Krasnodon. The town is, to put it mildly, not well maintained. Approximately as we had in the 1990s. But then I walked around the memorials and was amazed: first of all, my countrymen put their effort in restoration of the most important thing - the memory.



There is a striking obelisk and an inscription on a waste heap at Mine No. 5. Not everyone knows what a waste heap is - it is such a mountain of rock extracted from the mines, some as big as the Egyptian pyramids. It is better to see than to tell. The grave of the hero-miners is well-kept, the eternal flame is burning. The guards from Tyumen wouldn't let me into the school. I was not allowed in, despite my ID as a colonel and war veteran - you can't do it without a permission, terrorist attacks can still happen.



The monument to the Young Guard members is clean and orderly (compare two photos from different years). And behind the monument there is a temple. In the center of the city on the pedestal again there is a tank, which was removed, repaired and fought over. The inscription on the pedestal has also been restored. If you can't read it in the photo, I'll translate it: "This combat vehicle is the monument to the civilian heroism of the Krasnodon citizens who, during the Great Patriotic War, donated their personal savings for the construction of the Molodaya Gvardiya tank column."

Our family moved to Krasnodon in 1954. It was a small mining town with, as far as I remember, thirty or forty thousand inhabitants. We lived poorly. My father was a military officer, but they did not luxuriate either: a crust of black bread dipped in sunflower oil and sprinkled with sugar was the most delicious cake. I don't think they lived any richer there before the war. And these people raised money for a tank column! As I read it, I felt ashamed. Maybe we - the inhabitants of modern metropolitan areas - should also think about that?

Is it really not clear what is going on? There may not be a clash with NATO, but a joint army from "some" NATO countries is already forming in Ukraine, and it will be there for a long time. The political top of the "collective West," which is in death throes, does not allow the thought of losing and does not understand that it is going to perish anyway, so it will continue all the way. And we, too, cannot roll back, otherwise there will be no Russia and the Russian world.





At the exit from Krasnodon there was another tank on a pedestal, covered with wreaths and fresh flowers. It turned out that they had also removed it from the pedestal, but a young guy repaired and started the engine and found shells. His father-tanker, who had already been in the army, came to the rescue. Both died. That is why there were wreaths and flowers.

From Afghanistan, I remember that the war doesn't make regular life stop, birthdays and state holidays are celebrated, weddings and ordinary feasts with songs and dances take place without any special occasion. There it is all right. But now when I am back I have no desire to watch the cheerful programs of our TV channels, where current events are not even remembered, as if they do not exist.





I gave lectures at Volodymyr Dahl Luhansk State Pedagogical University and St. Luke's Luhansk State Medical University, at the Krasnodon Methodological Center for school teachers and psychologists, and met with students of 7-10 grades at my home school. The auditoriums for the flow lectures were crowded. And I don't think it's my merit - it's just that our fellow professors, students, and schoolchildren missed communicating with Greater Russia.





A few more touches. When some of the tops of the Medical State University fled from Luhansk to Ukrainian-controlled territory after the formation of the LNR, not forgetting to take all the accounting and bills, the remaining teachers worked for several months without pay - it was impossible to abandon the students. They tell us about this without pride, "it was just the right thing to do. According to school psychologists, after eight years of shelling and living in basements, almost everyone has some form of PTSD, and speaking of that, they made no exception for themselves.

There is everything in the stores, the supply is excellent. Life is getting better, although there are still a lot of difficulties. Some asked: why did it take so long to come? But I did not meet those who are offended. They say: "That's all right. We can endure it. The main thing is that we are at home, in Russia.
These are my impressions.

PLEASANT MEETINGS



*Lugansk State Medical University. At a meeting with the Vice-Rector for Science, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor **Yuri Grigorievich Pustov** and Vice-Rector for International Relations, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor **Svetlana Valentinovna Vitrishchak**.*



Meeting with psychologists and methodologists of the LNR "Krasnodon Methodological Center. In the center, to my left, - meeting organizer **Elena Viktorovna Poborchaya**.



Natalya Egorenko (center), principal of secondary school № 1 named after A. Gorky, and her deputies **Victoria Yevgenyevna Demchenko** and **Anastasia Olegovna Levina**.



Natalya Cherniaeva (left), director of the Krasnodon Methodological Center, and **Svetlana Zadorozhenko**, deputy director.



*Meeting with the staff of the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Lugansk State Pedagogical University. To my right is the director of the Institute, candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor **Maria Valentinovna Rud.***

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Professor, Rector of the East-European Institute of Psychoanalysis, Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Candidate of Medical Sciences. Member of the Presidium of the Russian Psychological Society and Vice-President of the St. Petersburg branch of the RPO, member of the Presidiums of the OPLP, RPA. Member of the Krasnoselsky Club of Political Consultants. In 2017-2021 nominated five times by the Nobel Committee for the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for the development of the Intangible Theory of Mental Health. The author of more than 200 works, including seven monographs and three textbooks, which have been reprinted four times and translated into English, French, Armenian, Serbian and Arabic. He is a three-time winner and five-time laureate of the national competition "Golden Psyche". St. Petersburg