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The relationship between intellectuals and the 1917 soviet revolution

A history of censorship through literary works

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1. Introduction

This essay will explore the relationship between intellectuals and the Bolshevik revolution that led to the foundation of Leninism. Moreover, in order to explore in depth the several layers comprehended in such relation, the student has used two novels of great fame: *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak and *Everything Flows* by Vasilij Grossman. Furthermore, it appeared necessary to divide the analysis into three categories, based on the concepts and thoughts that the authors have in common. In particular, chapter one explores the idea of art and humanity. Plus, chapter two takes into consideration the revolution and its meanings and consequences. Finally, chapter three vastly describe the concept of freedom, its roots from an historical perspective as well as from an empirical point of view as for what concretely happened in Soviet Russia.

What is more is that in chapter one the reader will find that humanity is considered differently based on the author. What humanity is for Pasternak is described as a strong, deep connection with the life cycle: from creation to destruction. In considering so, Pasternak saw the revolution as an event extremely human, extraordinary as well as ordinary. Moreover, Grossman saw humanity as a mirror: society is a reflection of the man and vice versa. Therefore, the author analysis the two contemporary in order to capture the phenomenon in all its levels.

Thus, the conclusions the authors arrived are that there is a combined frustration towards the material conditions in which the humankind is immerse; summed to the realization that humanity rarely moves in a spectrum between evil and pure, but is more likely to locate itself in a position of fragility towards the events.

To continue, chapter two examines the historical, social and cultural roots of the 1917 revolution. Moreover, the political process which led to such a seizure of power is described by the authors, especially Pasternak, as a long-term path that began centuries ago. However, the immediate political events that created the preconditions for Leninism to happen were the 1905 constitutional protest, which demonstrated a frustration towards the dictatorship of the Tsar Nicholas II; and then World War One.

Russia exited the war as previously compared to the other participants due to the internal protests. In addition to all this, the internal socio-economic situation of Russia was extremely tense. In particular, Pasternak treats such a topic by referring to the distance perceived between the ideology of the revolution and the actual needs and worries of the population. Moreover, the traumatic event of WWI was used as a trampoline by the two writers to explore not only the very essence of human nature, but also the relationships that Russian inhabitants had with the structure of power of Leninism, underlying common features and paths between past situations and the Soviet political regime.

What is more is that chapter two analyses the pillars that support the power structure of Leninism. Moreover, through the analysis of the novels, it was possible to identify the elements onto which Lenin and the Party operated control over the population and the resources. In particular, the first element is that of economy, specifically the New Economic Policy (NEP), which had the objective of allowing small economic initiatives by privates in order to compensate for the period of famine. Secondly, the power was perpetrated through fear and fear of the repercussions. Indeed, the examples of people imprisoned and or punished were several and the population absorbed the value of obedience. Finally, the third element that guaranteed power to the power is that of creating an identity starting from the contraposition to an enemy. To be more clear, Leninism was based on a combination of concepts coming from socialism and nationalism; however, it was crucial to identify an enemy, then called “enemy of the state”, in order to divide the population between potential threats and not.

On the other hand, where there is oppression there is resistance. Chapter 2 explore the forms of resistance operated by Russians.

In particular, Pasternak describe a form of rebellion towards the regime that is more silent than armed resistance but as powerful as the counterpart: criticism. Moreover, both Grossman and Pasternak risked their life and career to pursue the publication of books that were not accepted by the regime. They were forced to leave their country. The personal experience they had with censorship inevitably influenced the political opinions they shared in their novels: the instruments they used were that of doubts and critics. Furthermore, they recognized that the absence of pluralism under Leninism was a major issue.

What is more is that they criticized their peers that did not advanced in the community of intellectuals due to merit and talent, rather because they fitted perfectly the model of the Russian Soviet scientists. Therefore, such realization opened up to several considerations about the role of nationalism in influencing the community of intellectuals.

To add to all this, the essay closes with chapter three, which is dedicated to the concept of freedom. Once again, the written elaborate will show that the starting consideration about liberty of the two authors are different but similar at the same time. Moreover, it will be shown that liberty means for Pasternak a deep connection to the body, whereas to Grossman refers to the potentiality of doing and being anything. Yet, as it happened for chapter one about humanity, they both arrived to the conclusion that the Bolshevik revolution, which had the aim of liberating the working class from the oppression of the bourgeois, as time passed by, focused less and less about their ideology and more about maintaining the power structure. Specifically, it will be shown that ideology only served the power structure and lost its initial objectives.

Additionally, Grossman in particular confront its literature to the philosophical and political implications of liberty. In doing so, he analysis the events in Soviet Russia by proceeding with a comparison with the Western side of the world in terms of individual and collective's freedoms. Furthermore, Grossman elaborates that the crucial difference between Western' freedom and Russia's freedom is that the first one starts from the assumption that the individual must be free in order to produce a collective sense of

freedom, whereas, the second, Russia, has been identified as a state in which its development was perpetrated at the expense of everyone's freedom.

What is more is that Grossman repeatedly states that, when Russia was presented with a chance of constitutionalism after the abdication of Tsar Nikolas the II, preferred to follow the lead of Lenin. In examine the roots and meanings of such event, the authors described a cultural, historical and social path of Russia: that of obeying.

Finally, the last point made by the essay is that Russia never knew freedom and therefore was incapable of managing a constitutional political regime when the opportunity presented itself.

However, as the author highlights in the final pages of *Everything Flows*, freedom and seeking freedom is a necessity for the human being that no oppressive political regime could suffocate for long enough to make an entire population not to rebel.

2. Art and Humanity

This essay is conducted by analyzing the content of two major books and two even greater authors in order to explore the interconnections between literature and Leninism. In doing so, it was necessary to not exclude a more intimate sphere described by Pasternak and Grossman, which is that of art and humanity, as it was not possible to separate their criticism from the wider considerations they had about life and its purpose. Moreover, it has not to be forgotten that the two authors are two deeply heterogeneous thinkers with a vast variety of interests: eliminating the considerations of art and human beings would have meant losing an incredible number of intuitions about how they viewed the society they lived in. Therefore, the object of this chapter is that of returning to the spirit of the times so that the reader could build a deeper comprehension of the subject.

In addition to all this, such a chapter will illustrate how nature was described, both as an ecosystem and as what is perceived as natural for individuals. Plus, both authors shared thoughts about the connection between memories, history and identity, which will be reported here as well. What is more is that the text will continue representing art and humans as their intellect, analyzing what happened to the potential of singular individuals as well as to the communities of intellectuals as soon as the soviet power took over. To add to this, the chapter proceeds with a description of what censorship and expulsion of intellectuals looked like during Leninism. Finally, the dissertation will elaborate on the relationship between life and art and how these two vital aspects have been submitted and dismissed to the needs of the new labor regime.

2.1 Humanity in Pasternak: the cycle of creation, death and nature

We might assume that what is natural is whatever process is unavoidable. According to both authors, nature is ineluctable and will not stop its evolution due to human being's emotions. What is more is that such realization inspired a connection between art and nature. To be more specific, Pasternak has pointed out that inspiration to create comes from death, in that way, the author creates a connection between creating, feeling alive and death. The connection is expressed and explored further and deeper in this passage of the text:

«Now, as never before, it was clear to him that art is always, ceaselessly, occupied with two things. It constantly reacts on death and thereby constantly creates life»¹

The interconnections between life, death and nature are multiple in Pasternak's masterpiece. For instance, the atmospheric phenomenon of a storm was happening in crucial moments of Jura Zhivago's life, such as the funeral of his mother and the moment when Lara Antipova decided to seek revenge².

Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that *Doctor Zhivago* was written at the end of the Second World War, when the author expressed the need to overcome poetry and find a form of art that surpasses the material conditions of society in order to achieve a truer expression of thoughts. He found such needs met in the combination within death, art, nature and life.

Therefore, the author in need to find the truth and deeper meaning of and from life went back in examining its roots, concluding that there is no art and no comprehension of the spirit of the time without a full immersion on the cycle of creation and destruction.

¹ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 130

² Jura Zhivago is the main character of Boris Pasternak's book. Additionally, Lara Antipova is the second love of Zhivago with whom he has lived for several months after the 1917's revolution. Specifically, the episode here quoted refers to when Lara attempted homicide towards Viktor Komarovsky, local lawyer who seduced her at a very young age.

2.2 Humanity in Grossman: individualism and society

The considerations that Grossman has upon the humankind are all based on what happened to Soviet Russia from 1917 onwards. It is indeed comprehensible that a full revolution and a change in regime opened several thoughts on what has led to it and how the population was able to adapt to it.

Moreover, a fundamental concept that the author brings into the surface several times is that of individualism. What is more is that throughout *Everything flows* Grossman ponders widely about the results and the values declared by the new Communist regime in opposition to the liberal democracies in West Europe. Additionally, it is in such framework that the intellectual find in freedom and individualism the funding values in order to guarantee wealth to the whole population. Furthermore, freedom is analyzed both as a personal aspect and as a characteristic that both society and the state have to ensure and protect. The overlaps and interconnection between the private and the public sphere are very much illustrated and of interests of the author. Indeed, Grossman states that individualism is not to be believed as an egocentric conduct of life, rather it has to be viewed as a mirror between men and society. Specifically, the population is made of men and therefore there is a continuum connection between these two entities. To add on this there is that studying both at the same time furthers the knowledge and the comprehension of them all together.

What is more is that the revolution represented a unique occasion to study how men react to extreme inputs and how society cope with traumatic changes. Grossman dedicates several pages to question himself on what constitutes the human nature. He found an answer when describing the process of denouncing suspects to the party and having them imprisoned or killed:

«Whom, then, should we judge? Human nature! Human nature is what engenders these heaps of lies, all this meanness, cowardice, and weakness. But then human nature also engenders what is good, pure, and kind. »³

³ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 72

It appears obvious that Grossman's intent is that of describing a complex and stratified reality. Moreover, he states that a profound fearful obedience to the party, even if it means to betray family and friends, are inborn characteristics of the people as much as it is that of being selfless loving.

It has not to be believed that Grossman, with these words, was saving anyone from their responsibility, on the contrary, he was very firm in not letting anyone proclaim they were morally superior:

«All the living are guilty...You, the defendant, are guilty—and you, the prosecutor, and I myself, as I think about the defendant, the prosecutor, and the judge. »⁴

The author accumulated the morale drive and the action of each individual, regardless of its level of education or well-being. In doing so, Grossman underlines that human nature do not care for the social constructs and that everyone is even to its eyes. Moreover, such passage does not have to be seen as a condemn to the ineluctable fate of human nature, on the contrary, Grossman points out that equality is a synonym of freedom and that the Soviet revolution has missed a fruitful change to implement such theory.

What is more is that Grossman moves away from the classic Russian literature that sees the people as morally superior to urban citizens, as if only the peasant were capable of pure and untouched love. On the contrary, Grossman connects all the people into one dimension and states that such entity is both full of positive and negative qualities simultaneously. Moreover, as an individual is capable of great thing and of betrayal, as well society mirrors such capacity, which, according to the writer, is what happened with the values declared by Leninism.

⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p.160

2.3 Community of intellectuals

When exploring art and the meaning of it, is impossible to separate the artwork from the community of intellectual that set the values and the environment of the discussion. Moreover, it would be partial to only analyze the art without considering that both authors were well known thinkers and public figures in their time. Therefore, a sub-chapter will be dedicated to exploring the relation between Grossman and Pasternak and their peers.

In *everything flows*, a first insight on how art, individuals and community all relate to each other is given by the main character of Ivan Grigoryevich who went back to Leningrad after thirty years of imprisonment:

«In the same way, for a chronic invalid nothing exists in a city except pharmacies and hospitals, clinics and medical commissions pronouncing on categories of disability. For a drunk, a city is built from half-liter bottles of vodka to be shared with two chance companions. And for someone in love, a city consists of benches on boulevards, of two-kopek pieces for public telephones, of the hands of city clocks pointing toward the time of a rendezvous »⁵

What Grossman means in this passage is that the places of the city that a person remembers the best are a mirror of its life status and its personality. Therefore, once again, Grossman stresses the fact that there is a dependency between society and individuals. It is not hard to believe that even such connection exists also for the community of intellectuals and the spirit of the time existing in Soviet Russia. Grossman explains such relationship in the figure of Nikolaj Andreevic, Ivan's cousin.

Nikolaj was a scientist whose career never fully developed until the Soviet silent terror took over the state. He benefitted from the deportation or dismissal of colleagues, reaching the well desired approval from the scientific community. Grossman portrays in the figure of Nikolaj the method of censorship and frightens perpetrated by the state. Moreover, he also illustrates the life cycle of intellectuals at that time: they were either dismissed or given the possibility to retreat their political and philosophical positions, or

⁵ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 56

they were promoted not based on merits but rather based on matching the profile of a “true Russian scientist”.

Furthermore, it is fundamental for both authors to express their opposition against censorship: both went through censorship and expulsion of some kind in their real life.

2.4 Censorship

The theme of silencing the intellectuals was a very felt one from both authors. However, Pasternak is the one whom opinions were more offensive and rampant, probably due to the fact that he was sentenced to exile. Moreover, Pasternak talked widely about the relationship between the community of intellectuals and censorship. In this regard, Pasternak highlights how arbitrary the expulsion of intellectuals were:

«There exists a certain Communist style. Few people measure up to it. But no one so clearly violates that way of living and thinking as you do, Yuri Andreevich. I don't understand—why stir up a hornets' nest? You're a mockery of that world, an insult to it. It would be ne if it were your secret. But there are influential people from Moscow here. They know you inside and out. You're both terribly distasteful to the local priests of Themis»⁶

What is more is that Pasternak underline how the expulsion is the one of the best things that could happen to you at that time. The expulsion was the punishment inflicted to Yuri Zhivago's family, forced to move abroad and specifically in France.

In one of the letters sent from Yuri's wife, she stresses how glad they were they did not have to pay with their lives. In addition to all this, such gratitude points out at how easily intellectuals could have been sentenced to imprisonment or death:

«This is a misfortune, especially in your absence, but we must submit and thank God for such a soft form of exile in such a terrible time, for it could be much worse»⁷.

Such passage is not there for the sake of the novel, on the contrary. Several intellectuals were exiled from Russia during the Soviet Revolution as ordered by Lenin in 1922. The types of thinkers expelled were diverse: for example, there were professors, politicians and authors, a major example of such event is the expulsion of the well-known writer Sergej Bulgakov.

⁶ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 528

⁷ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 522

The consequences of all this are well illustrated by Grossman in this passage:

«Pre-Revolutionary literature had often lamented the fate of serf actors, musicians, and painters. But who was there today to write about the young men and women who had never had the chance to write their books and paint their paintings? The Russian earth is indeed fertile and generous. She gives birth to her own Platos, to her own quick-witted Newtons—but how casually and terribly she devours these children of hers»⁸

Grossman here points out at how much potential were dissipated. The alignment of culture and soviet culture made impossible for the new generation of artists to complete their education and being able to produce anything innovative and progressive. Moreover, Grossman implies that there is no step into the future if there is no liberty for criticizing society.

What is more is that Pasternak underline another type of censorship, one that is more silent however as deadly as the standard one.

The author highlights in *Doctor Zhivago* the consequences of reducing life to just fatigue and labor:

«Our bivouac life really is false and overwrought. You're profoundly right. But we didn't invent it. A frantic casting about is everybody's lot, it's the spirit of the time [...] I can't tell you how much I miss work. I don't mean agricultural work. Once our whole household here threw itself into it, and it succeeded. But I wouldn't be able to repeat that again. It's not what I have in mind»⁹

Pasternak brings to the attention of the reader the fact that submitting the possibility of furthering someone's intellectual experience to labor is considered to be a misuse of potential.

To add on this, to only consider an individual based on its workforce is to censor any cultural advancement. Moreover, Leninism perpetrated the standardization of ideology not only by imprisoning or exiling the unwanted voices, but also by tiring and draining the energies of whoever could have had a critical position to society.

⁸ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 85

⁹ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 545

3. Revolution

This chapter is a main one. It is dedicated to the shift of powers happened in Russia in 1917 from the monarchy regime of the Romanov to the temporary liberal government of Prince Georgy L'vov, and then arriving to the Bolsheviks revolution and the final seize of power led by Lenin.

Moreover, the chapter will illustrate the historical, political and ideological roots of such shift of power by analysing the protest happened in 1905 by the working class. Furthermore, a sub chapter will be dedicated to the First World War, as it was a traumatic event that permanently influenced the political demands of all European and non-European populations, Russian people included.

What is more is that both Pasternak and Grossman dedicate space in their novel to such events and use them as a trampoline to ponder about abstract topics such as social rules, liberty, power and freedom.

Continuing with the beforementioned lead, the writers wonder and analyse deeply the structure of power of the Soviets. Additionally, they both experienced the oppressive bureaucratic apparat in firsthand, hence they have a strong opinion about what happened and how.

To add on this, for Lenin a fundamental instrument to maintain control over the people and the land was that of eliminating any contrary voice.

Therefore, this chapter will explore the fate upon the community of intellectuals under Leninism.

What is more is that some conclusive thoughts will be about understanding the roots and the identity of Russia through the words of the artists.

They both questioned themselves about whether Russian people had a role on letting this happened.

3.1 Bloody Sunday

The Bloody Sunday, meaning Sunday 22 June 1905, was the peak day of the social protests going on all over Russia in that period.

The protestors were mainly people from the working class, peasants and young intellectuals. They demanded political and social reforms. In particular, they demanded that Tsar Nikolai II would implement a constitution, a multi party-political scene and a parliament (the Duma).

What is more is that the manifestation of discontent was perpetrated by unarmed citizens with the intention of marching to Saint Petersburg, the capital, as a symbolic gesture of confronting the center of the power.

However, the crowd never made it as they were attacked by the police as ordered by the Tsar himself.

Pasternak, in particular, dedicates the initial pages of his novel to such events. According to many historians and experts of political relations, the Revolution of 1905 set the political, ideological and instrumental road to and for the more massive revolution of 1917.

The writer makes the same connection as well by starting his opera with the narration of what happened that day right before exploring the Bolshevik seizure of power.

As Pasternak points out, it all started from the staff of the railroads:

«Doors banged, new people came out. Other voices were heard. “Go on—a re! Country hicks! Don’t listen to the fool. It’s what’s called a walkout, understand? Here’s my hat and here’s the door, I’m not your servant anymore. Let’s go home, boys.” More and more people joined in. The railway was on strike»¹⁰

The discontent, however, was long lasting. Tsar Nikolai II allowed what is known as “October Manifesto”¹¹ in the attempt to calm the population.

¹⁰ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 62

¹¹ A document which ended the unlimited powers of the tsar and gave start to a constitutional monarchy

The results of such action were not the desired ones: «soon after the manifesto of October 17, there was a big demonstration from the Tver to the Kaluga gate»¹². The protests did not end.

In respond to the ongoing anger from the population, Nikolas II decided that he was not going to renounce to any more privileges. As he was informed of the walking to the capital on the Bloody Sunday of 1905, he ordered his guardians to suppress the movement.

« Some well-wishers informed the initiators of the march that there were Cossacks lying in wait for the demonstrators further ahead. There had been a phone call to a nearby pharmacy about the prepared ambush. “So what?” the organizers said. “The main thing then is to keep cool and not lose our heads. We must immediately occupy the first public building that comes our way, announce the impending danger to people, and disperse one by one»¹³.

However, their lives were not saved, as Pasternak describes in the next passage:

«When the dragoons came flying at them, those in the back rows did not suspect it at first. Suddenly a swelling roar rolled over them from the front, as when a crowd cries “Hurrah!” Cries of “Help!” and “Murder!” and many others merged into something indistinguishable. At almost the same moment, on the wave of those sounds, down a narrow pass formed in the shying crowd, horses’ manes and muzzles and saber-brandishing riders raced swiftly and noiselessly»¹⁴

To conclude, this sub chapter demonstrated that the seed for a revolution, for social and political reforms was well planted and instilled way before the events of the 1917, as many experts suggested.

¹² Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 65

¹³ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 66

¹⁴ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 68

3.2 First World War

The First World War was not an unpredictable event. It was shocking and traumatizing, but numerous circumstances gave away the fact that an enormous battle was about to happen.

For instance, what led the war was the imperialistic modus operandi of the major nation states occurring in those years. What is more is that there was an economic and geopolitical competition to gain territories from the former Ottoman empire that was declining irremediably. Moreover, several political and diplomatic agreements were signed among the major powers, creating blocks of territories allied against other blocks of territories.

Furthermore, as it is well known, the act that worked as the spark that ignites the fire was the killing of archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria by Gavrilo Princip. After that, everything moved fast. At least at the beginning, before it became a war based on trenches.

World War One was the first conflict that needed the support of the population to continue, not only as soldiers, but also as workers not at the front and as voters in favor of the actions undertaken by the government. Therefore, WW1 profoundly changed society and the masses.

The main author that speaks about the war is Pasternak. However, the author did not go into details about the actual battles and prefers to analyse and describe the moments of the war that are less extraordinary, such as the life at the basecamp hospital, the issue of the logistic departments, soldiers resting or getting lost and so on.

What is more is that Pasternak talked about the war in a way that underlined a philosophical and moral concept of it. He did not go into depth as much as he did when explaining the Bolshevik revolution; however, he said that the war is appropriate for the spirit of the time they lived in.

3.3 Bolshevik revolution

When the First World War broke through all over Europe, Russia, as many other countries, was an enthusiastic participant. The Duma voted positively about the war expenditure and the entire state went through a wave of nationalism.

However, the issues began when the war became a position war and did not end within few months, as it was the praxis for battles until that time.

What is more is that between the 1917 and the first Bolshevik revolution happened in February 1917, Russia encountered price inflation, battle losses, a drastic diminishment in food and water supply. Plus, the communication and transportation system were at its minimum working efficiency and capacity.

Considering all this, the political compactness that previously guided the country into war, was now rebelling against it, at least a part of the political élite wanted an immediate peace for Russia.

In addition to all this, there is that the revolution started on February 27th, 1917, in Petrograd. The military forces in the city refused to shoot to the masses protesting but joined the manifestants, forcing the Tsar Nikolas the II to renounce to its throne. Moreover, at that point Russia knew two types and sources of power.

On one hand there were the provisional government which consisted of liberals and social-revolutionists who wanted to continue the war.

On the other hand, there were the soviets¹⁵, which will end up with being the only source of legitimate power recognized by the masses. However, the two powers did not coexist in peace. The provisional government tried to dismantle the soviets. What is more is that they were not successful in such operation. On the contrary, such event convinced the Bolsheviks that it was necessary to put an end to this duality of powers and on the 25th of October 1917 a group of Bolsheviks, guided by Lenin, completed the coup d'état and the Soviet Republic was declared that same night.

¹⁵ The soviets were born right after the February revolution. They were self-governed assemblies open to anyone's participation and which demanded for Russia to immediately sign peace with Germany and end its war.

3.4 The Bolshevik revolution in Pasternak

Pasternak has devoted several pages of his work to talk about the first world war and the cultural climate before and after the 1917's revolution. Moreover, he expressed the reality that Russian citizens were living in those years in such passage:

«Suddenly everything has changed, the tone, the air; you don't know how to think or whom to listen to. As if you've been led all your life like a little child, and suddenly you're let out—go, learn to walk by yourself. And there's no one around, no family, no authority. Then you'd like to trust the main thing, the force of life, or beauty, or truth, so that it's them and not the overturned human principles that guide you, fully and without regret, more fully than it used to be in that peaceful, habitual life that has gone down and been abolished»¹⁶.

What the author is expressing here is a sense of loss of identity. Furthermore, the change of the status quo caused by the war and by the revolution made impossible for the civil population to rely on traditional authorities. In addition to all this, in a moment of societal change, it usually is the community of intellectuals who is capable of providing cognitive and philosophical instruments to the general population in order to comprehend the reality.

However, in such passage Pasternak suggested that the only bearable solution is to return to an inner sense and comprehension of truth, peace and happiness. What is more is that the author was not able to provide a course of action common for the society in its entirety not because he was not able to provide for such thing, but because he was petrified by the destruction of society both meant as the cities and villages and as the common values and common sense that permitted humans to live in close proximity with each other.

¹⁶ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 174

The author is well aware of the present and future conditions of the human being:

« People in the cities were helpless as children in the face of the approaching unknown, which overturned all established habits in its way and left devastation behind it, though it was itself a child of the city and the creation of city dwellers. All around there was self-deception, empty verbiage. Humdrum life still limped, floundered, hobbled bow-legged somewhere out of old habit. But the doctor saw life unvarnished. Its condemnation could not be concealed from him. He considered himself and his milieu doomed. They faced ordeals, perhaps even death. The numbered days they had left melted away before his eyes. He would have gone out of his mind, if it had not been for everyday tries, labors, and cares. His wife, his child, the need to earn money, were his salvation—the essential, the humble, the daily round, going to work, visiting patients»¹⁷

Therefore, Pasternak in few powerful sentences describe the level of doubts and desperation that we had for his peers, meant both as other human beings and other intellectuals who were facing challenges never seen before.

The beginning of the first uprisings is described by Pasternak as such:

«The republic was supported by deserters from the 212th infantry regiment, who, weapons in hand, abandoned their positions and came through Biriuchi to Zybushino at the moment of the coup. The republic did not recognize the authority of the Provisional Government² and separated itself from the rest of Russia. The sectarian Blazheiko, who as a young man had corresponded with Tolstoy, proclaimed a new thousand-year kingdom in Zybushino, communalized labor and property, and renamed the local administration an apostolate»¹⁸

What is evident here is the chaos that was happening all over Russia. Once again there were no faith in the traditional institutions and the set of values of the civil population were on a path of change that was long-lasting happening but that was accelerated by the First World War.

The shifting of such beliefs is well described and presented by Pasternak in the character of the commissar Hinz. Furthermore, he is described as young and belonging to a well-established family. He was sent into a war zone to handle a soldiers' rebellion.

¹⁷ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 241

¹⁸ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 180

Moreover, before encountering the former soldiers he discussed the type of approach and discourse he wanted to share with the fighters:

«I'll tell them: 'Brothers, look at me. See how I, an only son, the hope of the family, with no regrets, sacrificed my name, my position, my parents' love, in order to gain freedom for you, the like of which no other people in the world enjoys. I did it, and so did many young men, to say nothing of the old guard of our glorious predecessors, of the hard-labor populists and the People's Will Schlüsselburgers. Were we doing it for ourselves? Did we need that? You're no longer rank-and-file soldiers as before, but warriors of the world's first revolutionary army. Ask yourselves honestly, are you worthy of that lofty title? At a time when your motherland, bleeding profusely, makes a last sort of shake-off of the enemy that has twined around her like a hydra, you let yourselves be stupefied by a gang of obscure adventurers and turned into irresponsible riffraff, a mob of unbridled scoundrels, glutted with freedom, for whom whatever they're given is always too little, just like that pig—sit him at a table and he'll put his feet on it—oh, I'll get to them, I'll shame them!»¹⁹

The reaction of the people around him was that of embarrassment. Pasternak outlines here two different realities antagonist to each other: on one hand there are the values and the energies spent by the intellectual community to bring culture into the lives of peasants; and on the other hand, there are the actual peasants and labours, sent to war either by force or by a sense of nationalism, exhausted by the fatigues.

Pasternak highlights the different scales of priorities: on one side there is the new intelligentsia and authority who did the revolution to bring power to the people; and on the other side there is the actual people, or at least part of it, who has basic human needs, such as food and a life guaranteed, that are not stimulated by the nationalist propaganda.

Commissar Hinz was not persuaded to not deliver his speech and he was chased by the rebels, indeed.

¹⁹ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 186

3.5 The structure of the power

Once that the revolution happened there was the need to create a system that would maintain and sustain the power gained. Moreover, both authors explored deeply the structure of the Soviet power from an institutional point of view and describing and analysing how it affected the Russian population.

Furthermore, from the analysis of the structure of power, the student has highlighted three main sources of control perpetrated by the Bolshevik regime: economy, fear and systematic elimination of an enemy.

What is more is that all three of them will here be illustrated more in depth.

To begin with economy, Pasternak have noted that the New Economic Policy (NEP) had an enormous impact on the civil population. In addition to all this, the NEP was supposed to be a temporary economic instrument to facilitate the transition towards a fully socialist economy that would substitute a liberal market. To add to this, the NEP allowed some private financial exchange within the limits described by the state. What is more is that such policy was introduced in 1921 by Lenin and stayed until the 1928, when Staling replaced it with the famous five years plan.

Pasternak wrote about the introduction of the NEP in such terms:

«The ban on private enterprise was lifted, and free trade was permitted within strict limits. Deals were done on the scale of commodity circulation among junkmen in a flea market. The dwarf scope of it encouraged speculation and led to abuse. The petty scrambling of the dealers produced nothing new, it added nothing material to the city's desolation. Fortunes were made by pointlessly reselling the same things ten times over. The owners of a few rather modest private libraries would bring the books from their bookcases to some one place. Would make application to the city council asking to open a bookselling cooperative. Would request space for same. Would obtain use of a shoe warehouse that had stood empty since the first months of the revolution or a florist's greenhouse also closed since then, and under these spacious vaults would try to sell their meager and haphazard collections»²⁰.

From such sentences can be deducted that the local financial market remained the same in its essential form and content, even though it was less free and more controlled.

²⁰ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 590

The argument of the state changing only the shape of the country and not its roots, as a revolution would expect to do, is well present and argued in both writers.

The second source of power was fear, manifested mainly by the systemic arrests perpetrated against the enemies of the state. Grossman describes such events in a broad way. The author explores the type of people that would denounce former colleagues, friends, family and even strangers. Moreover, the intellectual ponder widely about the moral sustaining the Bolshevik revolution and the Soviet era of Russia. As regard to the systematic arrests happened after the seize of power onwards, a passage of *Everything flows* testify the variety of people involved in such incarcerations:

« [...] More than two hundred denunciations at one go, without a second thought. The list of his victims is varied: commissars from the time of the Civil War; a poet and songwriter; the director of a foundry; two district Party committee secretaries; an old engineer (not a Party member); one newspaper editor and two publishing-house editors; the director of a special “closed” canteen; a philosophy teacher; the director of a “political enlightenment office”; a botany professor; a handyman employed by the superintendents of a block of apartments; two officials from a district agricultural administration office...It is impossible to list all of them. All his denunciations were directed not against “former” people but against people who were truly Soviet; his victims were Party members, men who had fought in the Civil War, activists. He specialized in the more fanatical Party members, gleefully slashing them in the face with his deadly, razor-sharp words. Few of these two hundred returned. Some were sentenced and executed and shot; others put on “wooden jackets” after dying of malnutrition or being shot in the course of camp purges».²¹

What is more is that Grossman highlight how the power was perpetrated by modest, civilian people, using the new power coming from the possibility to denounce to acquire a sort of control and retaliation from life. In addition to all this, Grossman makes sure to redistribute equally the guilt: the State never double-checked the allegations, harming the same people that the Soviet ideology promised to elevate as a priority. What is more is that such passage highlights once again the mirror that Grossman draw between the State and the people, illustrating the same actions and the same mental processing, emphasizing on how much they look alike, how much they are one the product of the other in a co-dependent relation.

²¹ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 64

The third and final source of power is strictly connected to the previous: the creation and elimination of an enemy. In order to create an identity, it was necessary to what an enemy is and does, so that a comparison could be made. Furthermore, the concept of *enemy of the people* was theorized by the Bolshevik state on December 11, 1917. Moreover, as the author Alexandra Popoff points out, the introduction of such terms was a carrier to implement new laws and a new judicial system:

«New revolutionary courts were set up to judge crimes committed “against the proletarian state,” “sabotage,” “espionage,” and so on. In 1918 Lenin reintroduced capital punishment, which had been abolished by the Provisional Government, and by fall the Cheka had conducted thousands of arrests and executions»²²

This conduct, adding to famine, the phenomenon of dekulakization, emigration and epidemic, cost to Russia approximately 15 million lives.

The red terror initiated by Lenin and continued by Stalin was based on the systematic arrests. Both Pasternak and Grossman were widely affected by the brutality of this mechanism. Moreover, Grossman dedicated a passage to describe the fate of the Kulaki²³:

«The provincial Party committee would draw up a plan—that is, the total number of arrests to be made—and send it to each district Party committee. The district committees would then decide on the number of kulaks to be arrested in each village—and the village soviets would then each draw up a list of names. It was on the basis of these lists that people were arrested. And who drew up the lists? A group of three—a troika. A group of three ordinary, muddle-headed people determined who was to live and who was to die. There were no holds barred. There were bribes...There were scores to be settled because of a woman, or because of some other past grievance...Often it was the poorest peasants who were listed as kulaks, while the richer peasants managed to buy themselves off»²⁴

As the reader might notice, the system was methodic, well organized by arbitrary.

²² A. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman and the Soviet century*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p. 38

²³ Kulaki is a term used since Tsarist Russia to refer to peasants who were land owners and might have had other peasants working for them. During the Bolshevik revolution, the wealth of the kulaki was seen as a betrayal towards the class struggle and for that classified as a primal enemy

²⁴ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 111

What is more is that if a system of power exists, there is also the opposition to this.

Both authors have explored the types of resistance happening throughout the Russian civil population: one was more collective and the other was more private and individualistic.

To begin with, Pasternak illustrates in its novel an episode of the Bolshevik police confiscating a luggage of arms from a potential counter-revolutionary group:

«The sequel to this conversation took place quite soon. By that time a night search had been carried out at 48 Malaya Buyanovka, next to the dispensary at the widow Goregliadova's. In the house they found a cache of arms and uncovered a counterrevolutionary organization. Many people in town were arrested; the searches and arrests were still going on»²⁵

Therefore, this type of resistance was collective, organized, aggressive, visible and potentially violent.

On the other hand, there is a type of rebellion to the power that is more private and silent: doubts and critics. What is more is that in a political regime in which the ideological propaganda is vital, what is crucial as well is for the generic population to be aligned with its purpose and its values. Thus, non-agreement could be a powerful tool as much as a gun machine.

Moreover, in Pasternak such intellectual resistance is shaped in the form of a critic to the abuses perpetrated by the Bolshevik regime to the Russian language and its vocabulary:

«[...] They were a reminder of the immutability of its foundations, perhaps forgotten by the inhabitants during the temporary rule of the Whites. But Yuri Andreevich's head began to spin from the endlessness of these monotonous repetitions.

[...] At one time in his life he had admired the unconditional quality of this language and the directness of this thinking. Could it be that he had to pay for this imprudent admiration by never seeing anything else in his life but these frenzied cries and demands, unchanging in the course of long years, becoming ever more impractical, incomprehensible, and unfeasible? Could it be that for a moment of too-broad sympathy he had enslaved himself forever? »²⁶

²⁵ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 513

²⁶ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 481

Whereas in Grossman the rebellion is more direct and intended for the state and its implementation of the socialist ideas:

« [...] Could this really be socialism—with the labor camps of Kolyma, with the horrors of collectivization, with the cannibalism and the millions of deaths during the famine? Yes, there were times when a very different understanding had found its way into the borderlands of his consciousness: that the Terror really had been very inhuman, that the sufferings of the workers and peasants had been very great indeed»²⁷

The author points out that the obedience was given by the majority of the people out of fear. Therefore, the critic that Grossman moves it directed to the legitimation of Bolshevik party as it only functioned as long as it injected terror into the civilians.

²⁷ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 35

3.6 The oppression of the intellectuals

At first it was believed that the 1917 revolution would affect the population and the common values in a similar way as the 1905 revolution did: targeting only the highest social and economic classes and never completely involve peasants and workers. On the contrary, the Bolshevik revolution showed the world that a new type of intellectuals and thinkers were emerging from the fatigues of oppression and economic deprivation. Moreover, as Pasternak points out, several intellectuals with the most prestigious education and used to the finest arts and music, were not able to capture the spirit of the time:

«Gordon and Dudorov belonged to a good professional circle. They spent their lives among good books, good thinkers, good composers, good, always, yesterday and today, good and only good music, and they did not know that the calamity of mediocre taste is worse than the calamity of tastelessness»²⁸

What they missed was to grasp the essential of their reasoning and of the logic of the party, the illogical conclusion they would reach were evident, as they were not living in the same world as the rest of the people:

« He could see clearly the springs of their pathos, the shakiness of their sympathy, the mechanism of their reasonings. However, he could not very well say to them: “Dear friends, oh, how hopelessly ordinary you and the circle you represent, and the brilliance and art of your favorite names and authorities, all are. The only live and bright thing in you is that you lived at the same time as me and knew me.” But how would it be if one could make such declarations to one’s friends! And so as not to distress them, Yuri Andreevich meekly listened to them»²⁹

²⁸ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 599

²⁹ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 599

What is more is that Pasternak expressed a negative judgement also for the Soviet intellectuals, meaning those thinkers that would not reason by themselves but worked more as a broadcaster for the theory of the Party:

«Innokenty's virtuous orations were in the spirit of the time. But it was precisely the conformity, the transparency of their hypocrisy that exasperated Yuri Andreevich. The unfree man always idealizes his slavery. So it was in the Middle Ages; it was on this that the Jesuits always played. Yuri Andreevich could not bear the political mysticism of the Soviet intelligentsia, which was its highest achievement, or, as they would have said then, the spiritual ceiling of the epoch. Yuri Andreevich concealed this feeling from his friends as well, so as not to quarrel»³⁰

Pasternak highlights that both the intellectuals from the Tsarist regime and those from the Party had in common an absence of free flow of consciousness and incapacity to independently express their criticisms.

To add to this, a source of power for the Party and an incredible loss for the community of Russia thinkers was the capacity of the Bolshevik political regime to create a one, unique and solid faith. Furthermore, as Grossman describes perfectly, a new era of intellectuals was emerging, they were not the most educated or the most experts about paintings or music, however, they were the most aggressive and eager to feed on the party propaganda. What is more is that for such faith and trust they were rewarded:

« [...] And then again, in other ways his terrible work was attractive, seductive, intoxicating. "Remember," his mentors used to tell him, "that you have neither father nor mother, neither brothers nor sisters. You have only the Party." It was a strange, troubling feeling: thoughtless obedience, far from rendering him powerless, endowed him with a terrible power. In his curt, imperious voice, in his cruel eyes—the eyes of a military commander—you could sometimes sense a very different nature that lay hidden inside him: a crazed, stupefied way of being that had been nourished by centuries of Russian slavery, of Asiatic despotism...»³¹

What Grossman is illustrating here is the power that comes from overlapping someone's identity to the party's identity. To add to this, by empowering people that had no points of referencing and by systematically erase the rebel's voices, the Bolsheviks were able to create a political regime composed of deeply faithful administrators that saw in the realization of socialism the realization of their scope of life.

³⁰ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 600

³¹ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 66

What is more is that the Party would manipulate the information on the success of socialism in Russia not only to its own citizens, but especially to foreign ministers coming to visit. Such episode is well described by Grossman and it is used as a metaphor to highlight how much the socialist economic system had become an empty vase to be shaped in its form rather than in its content:

« “I remember how one old man showed the farm chairman a piece of newspaper he’d picked up by the railway. There was an item about some Frenchman, a famous minister, who’d come to the Soviet Union. He was taken to the Dnepropetrovsk Province, where the famine was at its most terrible, even worse than where we were. People were eating people there. He was taken to some village, to a collective-farm nursery school, and he asked the children what they’d had for lunch that day. ‘Chicken soup with pies and rice croquettes,’ came the answer. I saw those words with my own eyes, I can see that piece of newspaper even now. There’s never been anything like it. Killing millions of people on the quiet and then duping the whole world. Chicken soup! Rice croquettes! Where we were, every last worm had been eaten. And the old man went on, ‘Under Tsar Nicholas our newspapers told the whole world about the famine. “Help us, help us!” they wrote. “Our peasants are dying.” But you monsters, you Herods—you just turn it all into one big show»³²

To add to this, both Grossman and Pasternak drove the attention to the conditions not only of the humankind under the Bolshevik regime, but also to the conditions of the natural humanly desire to think and ponder about the nature and needs of the mankind. Moreover, in doing they both showed the consequences of what happened to the community of intellectuals that might have never known what freedom of expression was.

³² Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 125

Furthermore, a powerful image comes from Pasternak when describing Doctor Zhivago's activity of collecting his thoughts and publish it even though Leninism was fully implemented in Soviet Russia:

«The books, published in a small number of copies, were distributed through newly opened second-hand bookstores, founded by mutual acquaintances. The books contained Yuri Andreevich's philosophy, explanations of his medical views, his definitions of health and unhealth, his thoughts about transformism and evolution, about personality as the biological basis of the organism, his reactions on history and religion, close to his uncle's and to Simushka's, sketches of the Pugachev places he had visited, and his stories and poems. His works were set forth accessibly, in spoken form, though far from the goals set by popularizers, because they contained disputable, arbitrary opinions, insufficiently varied, but always alive and original. The little books sold. Fanciers valued them. At that time everything became a specialty, verse writing, the art of literary translation, theoretical studies were written about everything, institutes were created for everything. Various sorts of Palaces of Thought and Academies of Artistic Ideas sprang up»³³

What Pasternak is saying here is that there is no possibility to separate the freedom of expression from art without also separating it from its humane component that makes it resonate with the public. Moreover, Pasternak negatively criticized the overly institutionalization of the literature happened under Lenin as it was a way to control knowledge rather to spread it.

Finally, it is opinion of the authors that the community of intellectuals reacted differently about Leninism: most of the free thinkers were banned or imprisoned. Moreover, those who could resist had to be extremely careful about the deviation from the common ideology they would express in their works. All of this caused a deep impoverishment in the quality of the concepts and reasoning circulating in Russia. Furthermore, several new Soviet intellectuals learned to hate and disrespect the works of their ancestors as they would express non-political non-socialist opinions; thus, they were considered defective in nature.

³³ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 591

3.7 The Bolshevik revolution represent the Russian spirit

The Bolshevik revolution and Leninism was absolutely a traumatic event; however, revolutions are not a novel for Russia. What is more is that both authors noticed that the reason why the Party could install itself and govern for decades is because it found its ideological roots in the past of Russia.

Furthermore, the writers explored what in the past years might have led and sustained such revolution.

To begin with, Pasternak described the motherland as a caring but unpredictable mother. Such metaphor is useful to highlight how ambivalent the relationship between Russia and its citizens is. To add to this, the passage is reported below:

«There outside is the spring evening. The air is all marked with sounds. The voices of children playing are scattered at various distances, as if to signify that the space is alive throughout. And this expanse is Russia, his incomparable one, renowned far and wide, famous mother, martyr, stubborn, muddle-headed, whimsical, adored, with her eternally majestic and disastrous escapades, which can never be foreseen! Oh, how sweet it is to exist! How sweet to live in the world and to love life! Oh, how one always longs to say thank you to life itself, to existence itself, to say it right in their faces! »³⁴

As it appears from this passage, love and dedication to the motherland was never in doubt for the authors, even though they both suffered censorship and other abuses.

What is more is that such attachment to Russia did not limit their capacity to formulate a theory about what were the cultural, political and humanly roots that made possible for such a violent revolution to happen. Moreover, Pasternak, through the character of Lara Antipova, shared his perception and analysis of what might have happened.

³⁴ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 494

To add to this, it is said that the watershed was the First World War, as it made murder a common, daily activity, causing a first crack in the humanity:

«I caught the time when the notions of the previous, peaceful age were still in force. It was held that one should trust the voice of reason. What was prompted by conscience was considered natural and necessary. The death of a man at the hands of another was a rarity, an extraordinary phenomenon, out of the common run. Murders, it was supposed, happened only in tragedies, in detective novels, and in newspaper chronicles of events, not in ordinary life»³⁵

However, the war, for as much as unique it was, cannot alone explain the roots of the revolution. Pasternak is fully aware of this and continues its analysis:

«Then untruth came to the Russian land. The main trouble, the root of the future evil, was loss of faith in the value of one's own opinion. People imagined that the time when they followed the urgings of their moral sense was gone, that now they had to sing to the general tune and live by foreign notions imposed on everyone. The dominion of the ready-made phrase began to grow —first monarchistic, then revolutionary»³⁶

Once again, the issue commonly recognized by Pasternak and Grossman is that Russia never known a moment where culture was widely spread, freely discussed and perpetrated and cultivated as a value. For such reason, a reason why Leninism and then Stalinism were easily accepted by the population is because Russian never known anything but obedience to a greater power.

What is more is that obedience shows itself also in the form of absolute and unconditional faith.

Grossman noticed and described such phenomenon when talking about the prisoners in the lager that remained exactly similar to when they were first caught, as if they remained blocked in time:

«There was one profound difference between people living in the camps and people living in freedom. People in the camps stayed loyal to the time that had engendered them. Different epochs of Russian life lived on in the thoughts, in the psychological makeup of each person»³⁷

Political loyalty, along with the practice of obedience, is the second reason why the revolution could be perpetrated as violently as it was.

³⁵ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 508

³⁶ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 509

³⁷ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 89

The third and final reason why the revolution undertake the process it did is because of loyalty and love towards the mainland Russia. Furthermore, nationalism was always a deeply felt political ideology for the Russian population. Therefore, everything that would come from Russia was invested with the combination of obedience, loyalty and love for it.

Such is the reason that Grossman gave himself when trying to understand what moral could sustain and support the massacres perpetrated towards the population:

«They began to build a State such as the world had never seen. Cruelty, murders, deprivations of every kind—all this was of no account. It was, after all, being carried out in the name of Russia and laboring humanity, in the name of the happiness of the working people»³⁸

The new political élite did all of that for Russia, to create a land where to prosper in the future:

« It was not for the sake of dachas and cars of their own that they had built a new State. This new State had been built for the sake of the Revolution. It was in the name of the Revolution and of a new Russia, free of landowners and capitalists, that sacrifices had been exacted, acts of cruelty committed, and blood shed»³⁹

What is more is that Grossman points out to the fact that obedience and contempt for the human suffering are not products of the XX century. On the contrary, he claims that it is an ancient Russian trait:

« Similar figures existed in previous centuries, but it was the twentieth century that brought them out from the wings and placed them center stage. This kind of person is like a surgeon in a hospital ward. His interest in the patients and their families, his jokes, the arguments he takes part in, his struggles on behalf of homeless children, and his concern for workers who have reached the age of retirement—all of this is unimportant, trifling, a mere husk. His soul lies in his surgeon's knife. What is most important about this man is his fanatical faith in the omnipotence of the surgeon's knife. It is the surgeon's knife that is the twentieth century's true theoretician, its greatest philosophical leader»⁴⁰

What Grossman is says is that the precondition for such a blind obedience were trained in the centuries but Lenin had the ability to both appear as a common people and as a enlightened leader that could bring Russia to majesty.

³⁸ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 139

³⁹ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 139

⁴⁰ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 154

4. Freedom

This essay has tried to explore the layered and complicated relationship between the community of intellectuals and the censorship operated by Lenin's political regime and then continued by Stalin.

In doing so, it was impossible not to dedicate an extensive attention to the concept of freedom. This chapter will highlight how the idea of liberty execute itself differently based on the author, but coherently regarding type of literal conduct of the authors. To be more specific, freedom is described in Pasternak in strong connection with the body, the nature, as what is essential to the human being. Whereas Grossman is more philosophical and abstract about it.

However, these two different approaches lead the writers to the same conclusions, therefore they should be considered as complementary rather than in opposition.

To continue, the chapter will present a first analysis about how liberty presented itself after Leninism.

Secondly, the essay will describe what the revolution has meant to the authors, spending some time pondering about the conflict between reality and expectations about such event.

What is more is that the written elaborate will illustrate the relationship between Russia and freedom not only in the decades of the Soviet power, rather from an historical and chronic point of view, in order to demonstrate the analyse the differences between the history and values of the Western side of the world and those of Russia.

Moreover, in order to sustain such comparison, the different meanings of liberties will be presented. For instance, there will be space to explore liberties related to the human being or related to the land.

4.1 Liberty after Leninism

«Lenin died. But Leninism did not die»⁴¹ this is how Grossman starts chapter 23 of *Everything flows*. What is meant here is that the person died but what he has created was meant to last for several decades. Moreover, it is not referred to only as the institutional and administrative offices and method, but also to Leninism as a form of government that would shape public policies of Russia for years or even forever.

However, when the leader left his place, in Soviet Russia began a power struggle to identify his successor. The relevance of such passage is given not only from a political and social point of view, but also as an indicator of what type of set of values would prevail:

«Would it be the brilliant, impetuous, magnificent Trotsky? The charming Bukharin, with his talent for theory and generalization? The ox-eyed Rykov, the practical-minded statesman who most closely identified with the true interests of the people, of the workers and peasants? The well-educated, self-confident Kamenev, with his sophistication, with his grasp of affairs of state, with his ability to come out victorious from Party conventions and their complex battles? Would it be Zinoviev, the internationally respected polemicist, with his understanding of the international workers' movement? The character, the spirit of each of these men was in harmony with one facet or another of Lenin's character. But not with the facets that proved fundamental, not with the facets that determined the essence of the new world that was coming into being»⁴²

What Grossman is pointing out here is that the struggle to succeed to Lenin was a struggle to impose a moral compass that would reveal and express Russia's true priorities and its endurance to oppression. What is more is that what was involved was the future of Russia.

⁴¹ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 170

⁴² Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 170

Furthermore, for the reasons listed above, Grossman dedicates extensive space to analyse and describe the personality of Lenin. Moreover, as it is pointed out in the passage quoted above, Lenin showed signs of interests in the art: music, theater, literature, confrontations. What is more is that the author tries to explain to itself and to the public how it was possible for an eclectic personality such as that of Lenin to be able to commit atrocities. The answer is given here:

«These character traits, far from expressing Lenin's essence, were signs of his weakness, his eccentricity, his seditiousness, his capacity for self-delusion. The essence of the new lay elsewhere»⁴³

What it is said is that the fact that Lenin had other interests apart from politics is not a synonym of openness. Moreover, there is an allusion to the role of art in the power structure. For instance, the passion towards the performative arts is described as useless to maintain the image of a leader. In doing so, Grossman highlights how the Soviet regime substituted the collective priorities for the population and for society, relegating arts and artists as forms of non-contribution to society. Thus, Leninism compromised the relationship between the State and the community of intellectuals by chasing them as rebels and then by silencing them by labeling them as unimportant members of the society doing unimportant activities.

What is more is that this essential way of thinking was captured and further implemented by Stalin, as the essential characteristics of Lenin were perfectly personified by him:

«Stalin's hatred for the Old Bolsheviks who opposed him was also a hatred for those aspects of Lenin's character that contradicted what was most essential in Lenin. Stalin executed Lenin's closest friends and comrades-in-arms because they were all, each in his own way, hindering the realization of the main goal—of true Leninism. Struggling against them, executing them, it was as if he were struggling against Lenin, executing Lenin. But, by doing this, he was also victoriously affirming Lenin and Leninism, raising Lenin's banner over Russia and securing it there»⁴⁴

True Leninism and true Stalinism consist of a systematic, chronic, determined, ruthless elimination of enemies, rebels, whoever voices were not aligned to that of the party.

The crusade of these two dictators was not against people, it was against freedom of speech, freedom of thinking and freedom of existing.

⁴³ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 171

⁴⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 171

This methodology is what the two have in common and what set the standards and the values for the Russian population. As this essay has reported several times already, the obedience given to the Party was partly because of true faith in the ideology, but mostly it was due to fear of repercussions.

4.2 The meaning of the revolution

Before exploring more in depth the meaning of the revolution it is useful to describe briefly what was supposed to be and who were to be the main allies, so that it would be possible to better underline the differences between expectations and reality.

The Bolshevik revolution started as a series of political demands that the Tsar was not able to meet. Moreover, the Bolshevik party recognized in the peasants a crucial and fundamental ally to have on its side during the seizure of power. In addition to all this, it was because at the beginning of the XX century, Russia's population was composed for almost 80% of its total amount by peasants.

What is more is that it becomes vital to be familiar with the mentality of the peasants so that it would be possible to make a connection between the ideology of the Party and what happened in the lands.

To add to this, the typical Russian peasant was extremely conservative, attached to the land, to the community of peasant around him and to the village. Moreover, this passage means that the locals did not have a true authority different from that of the village.

However, the typical peasant would obey to the Tsar due to fear, hope for a redistribution of lands and out of religion and spirituality, as the Tsar was supported by the Orthodox Church.

Secondly, the other main ally to the revolution were the factory workers. They were the most radicalized as they lived in small, urban centers, usually away from where they grew up, therefore they had no sense of identity or attachment to that geographical site they were located in. Thus, the ideology on struggle between the classes had more impact on them.

To add to this, the nucleus to the revolution has still to be found in the working class. The peasants believed that in such change of powers they could gain something as one of the pillars of Lenin's April theses were that of collectively manage the lands. However, that did not change and such realization started a civil revolution. Therefore, the peasants started to obey once again out of fear of repercussions.

This *forma mentis* is well explained by Pasternak in the following passage:

« [...] You say, aha, the muzhik is the enemy of all order, he doesn't know what he wants himself. Excuse me, but it's too early to be triumphant. He knows it better than you, but what he wants is not at all what you and I want. "When the revolution woke him up, he decided that his age-old dream was coming true, of life on his own, of anarchic farmstead existence by the labor of his own hands, with no dependence and no obligation to anyone at all. But, from the vise grip of the old, overthrown state, he's fallen under the still heavier press of the revolutionary superstate. And now the countryside is thrashing about and finds no peace anywhere. And you say the peasants are flourishing. You know nothing, my dear man, and, as far as I can see, you don't want to know" »⁴⁵

What is interesting to notice is that the potential destined beneficiaries of this revolution were then treated with no regard. For instance, the high rate of collectivization of the grain from the countryside to the city centers that lead to a great famine mentioned before in this essay.

Therefore, what can be deducted is that something changed since the beginning of the theorization of socialism until the actual implementation of Leninism.

Indeed, Grossman points out to such interchange by making a parallelism between Lenin in his student's years and the naïve, immaculate belief in direct democracy, with the Russian state and its care for its inhabitants.

⁴⁵ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 289

This is the passage that explains such shift:

«And little by little, over the years, Lenin's features changed. The image of the young student called Volodya Ulyanov, of the young Marxist who went by the name of Tulin, of the Siberian exile, of the revolutionary émigré, of the political writer and thinker called Vladimir Ilyich Lenin; the image of the man who had proclaimed the era of the world socialist revolution; the image of the creator of a revolutionary dictatorship in Russia, the man who had liquidated every revolutionary party in Russia except the one that seemed to him the most revolutionary of all; the image of the man who had dissolved the Constituent Assembly, which represented every class and party of postrevolutionary Russia, and who had created soviets where only revolutionary workers and peasants were to be represented—this image changed»⁴⁶

Moreover, Grossman explains that as the features of Lenin changes, so does the Soviet State. In particular, what the author makes a parallelism about, is that the characteristics about Lenin that made him more human and relatable, such as his simple tastes, his passion for novels and theaters, were sacrificed along the way to consolidate the power:

« The character traits emphasized by the authors of memoirs and biographies, character traits which once seemed central and which charmed millions of minds and hearts—these traits proved in the end to be entirely incidental to the course of history. The history of the Russian State did not choose these human and humane sides of Lenin's character but cast them aside as unwanted trash»⁴⁷

Lenin's priorities shifted from safeguarding Russia from World War 1, from the lack of constitutional liberties, from the oppression of the peasants and the working class, to safeguarding the existence and resistance of the Party.

⁴⁶ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 151

⁴⁷ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 152

Such change in Lenin's political objectives is well explained in the below passage from *Everything Flows*:

« The author of one memoir about Lenin describes going for a Sunday walk with him in the Swiss mountains. Out of breath after a steep climb, they reached a summit and sat down on a rock. The young woman thought that Vladimir Ilyich's intent gaze was taking in every smallest detail of the beautiful alpine landscape. She felt moved and excited, thinking of the poetry that was flooding his soul. All of a sudden he sighed and said, "These Mensheviks—they're really fouling things up for us!" This charming little story tells us a lot about Lenin. On one side of the scales—the whole of Creation. On the other side of the scales—the Party. October selected those of Vladimir Ilyich's traits that it needed. It cast away those that it did not need»⁴⁸

What is said is that, as time passed by, the revolution became less about the Russian citizens, about socialism and about the conditions of the workers, and more about consolidating a power structure and infrastructure that could permit to the Party to rule for decades without any form of resistance.

Indeed, as Pasternak have noticed and described in his *Doctor Zhivago*, the passion connected to the ideals of the revolution remained present briefly:

«Enough. I understand. I like the way you pose the question. You've found precisely the necessary words. Here's what I'll tell you. Do you remember the night when you brought the law with the first decrees, in winter, during a blizzard? Do you remember how incredibly unconditional it was? That straightforwardness was winning. But these things live in their original purity only in the heads of their creators, and then only on the first day of their proclamation. The very next day the Jesuitism of politics turns them inside out. What can I say to you? This philosophy is alien to me. This power is against us. They didn't ask me to consent to this breakup. But they trusted me, and my actions, even if I was forced into them, placed me under obligation»⁴⁹

Therefore, once again, it is proven that there was a disconnection between who were the targets and the people to please and to give a voice to when the seizure of power happened, and who were actually benefiting from these new rulers.

⁴⁸ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 154

⁴⁹ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 312

What is more is that Pasternak then explore who is the loyal citizens to the revolution that does not belong to the Party. Moreover, the reason why the author do so is to capture what were the premises for such violence to be morally overcome in common people that did not directly benefit from such actions. On the contrary, they might have been hit by those restrictions. The author described this type of personality in the following passage:

«Two features, two passions, distinguished him. He thought with outstanding clarity and correctness. And he possessed a rare degree of moral purity and fairness, was a man of warm and noble feelings. But for the activity of a scientist laying out new paths, his mind lacked the gift of unexpectedness, that power which, with unforeseen discoveries, disrupts the fruitless harmony of empty foresight. And for doing good, he, a man of principle, lacked the unprincipledness of the heart, which knows no general cases, but only particular ones, and which is great in doing small things. From an early age Strelnikov had striven for the highest and brightest. He considered life an enormous arena in which people, honorably observing the rules, compete in the attainment of perfection. When it turned out that this was not so, it never entered his head that he was wrong in simplifying the world order. Having driven the sense inside for a long time, he began to cherish the thought of one day becoming an arbiter between life and the dark principles that distort it, of stepping forth to its defense and avenging it. Disappointment embittered him. The revolution armed him»⁵⁰

The type of person described here is a person that suffered the lack of coherence, authority and suffered from a series of expectation it had and were never met. Moreover, such disappointment and anger towards the moral compass of right or wrong were then fulfilled by the propaganda of the Party as it spoke to all the citizens that were let down for decades and presented itself as a new order, as a pure way of organizing collectively.

Therefore, what the revolution gave was fear to most people, but hope to a minority of them.

⁵⁰ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 323

4.3 What went wrong in the revolution

The natural consequence of reasoning upon the revolution is that both authors tried to explain what happened during Leninism and Stalinism and why it was impossible to be coherent with the initial ideology of the Party and to create a radical change that would increase the general wellbeing of the population.

What is more is that the two elements identified by the writers as being the pillars of the reasons why the revolution could not be legitimated by the majority of the population are the over presence of violence and the long-lasting relationship that Russia and Russians had with liberty.

To begin with, Pasternak identified two lacks in the revolution: its incapacity to pay attention to the details of the lives of its citizens and not being so strict to the rules to the point that made their lives worse; and the high levels of violence.

Such passage is here explained:

«There, you see—you're a Bolshevik and you yourself don't deny that this isn't life, but something unprecedented, phantasmagorical, incongruous.” “Of course. But it's a historical inevitability. We have to go through it.” “Why an inevitability?” “What, are you a little boy, or are you pretending? Did you drop from the moon or something? Gluttons and parasites rode on the backs of starving laborers, drove them to death, and it should have stayed that way? And the other forms of outrage and tyranny? Don't you understand the legitimacy of the people's wrath, their wish to live according to justice, their search for the truth? Or does it seem to you that a radical break could have been achieved in the dumas, by parliamentary ways, and that it can be done without dictatorship?” “We're talking about different things, and if we were to argue for a hundred years, we wouldn't agree on anything. I used to be in a very revolutionary mood, but now I think that we'll gain nothing by violence. People must be drawn to the good by the good»⁵¹

The argument according to which a moment of aggression and violence is necessary as anyone willingly give up their power and privileges is well present not only in *Doctor Zhivago*, but also in the overall debate among experts and historians about the Bolshevik revolution and the size of power.

⁵¹ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 337

However, Pasternak here contribute to such imaginary debate by arguing that obtaining power and legitimation through fear, violence and repercussion might be a useful short-term instrument, but not a tactical perspective for long-term achievements.

What is more is that Grossman adds to the discussion about what went wrong in the revolution by exploring the historical and chronological relationship that there is between Russia and freedom. As the author well explains in his novel, it is impossible to free a state that has never known what freedom is.

Grossman introduces the concept of interdependence between Russia and slavery:

«The remarkable work of Peter the Great, who laid the foundations of Russian scientific and industrial progress, involved an equally remarkable progress in the severity of serfdom. The serfs who worked the land were still further reduced in status—until they enjoyed no more rights than a landlord’s household serfs; the few remaining “wanderers” were enserfed. Peter also enserfed the peasant farmers of the far north and of the southern and eastern frontiers. There was a similar increase in the burdens placed on the peasants owned by the State; this too was in the interests of Petrine enlightenment and progress. Peter believed that he was bringing Russia closer to the West—and that was indeed the case. But the abyss between freedom and non-freedom continued to grow [...] And so, Russian progress and Russian slavery were shackled together by a thousand-year-long chain. Every move forward toward the light only deepened the black pit of serfdom»⁵²

For decades Russia known an unequal advancement and an unequal distribution of powers. For such reason, the revolution was a traumatic event that laid its premises on non-existing conditions for such political move to implement itself in what was supposed to be.

⁵² V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 164

However, after the first revolution, that of February, the peasants rebelled against both the temporary government and the Soviets. It was the first time in the history of Russia that peasants made themselves independent.

The moment is well described here:

« Russian revolutionary thinkers failed to appreciate the importance of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The emancipation of the serfs—as we can see from the history of the following century—was more truly revolutionary than the October Revolution. The emancipation of the serfs shook Russia’s thousand-year-old foundation, a foundation that neither Peter the Great nor Lenin had so much as touched: the dependence of the country’s evolution on the growth of slavery»⁵³

And then again, Grossman identified in this moment a crucial path for Russia where the motherland could choose freedom as new possibilities opened to it:

«After the emancipation of the serfs, the revolutionary leaders, the students, and the intelligentsia fought violently, passionately, and with selfabnegation for a human dignity that Russia had never known, for progress without slavery. This new law was something entirely alien to Russian tradition, and no one knew what would become of Russia if she were to renounce the thousand-year link between her evolution and slavery. No one knew what would become of the Russian character. In February 1917, the path of freedom lay open for Russia. Russia chose Lenin»⁵⁴

However, even though so far the author described a moment of interruption with the status quo and a break in the link between Russia’s development and slavery, the author points out to how truly nothing changed under Leninism:

«The destruction of Russian life carried out by Lenin was on a vast scale. Lenin destroyed the way of life of the landowners. Lenin destroyed merchants and factory owners. Nevertheless, Lenin was fated by history. However bizarre this may sound, he was fated by Russian history to preserve Russia’s old curse: this link between progress and non-freedom. The only true revolutionaries are those who seek to destroy the very foundation of the old Russia: her slave soul. And so it was that Lenin’s obsession with revolution, his fanatical faith in the truth of Marxism and absolute intolerance of anyone who disagreed with him, all led him to further hugely the development of the Russia he hated with all his fanatical soul»⁵⁵

The fact that there were no pluralism under Leninism, not in the market, not among intellectuals and not among the forms of congregation, made Russian history just as the same as it always was, even though a monumental event happened.

⁵³ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 165

⁵⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 166

⁵⁵ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 166

Grossman explains the *forma mentis* of the leaders of the Party that did not consider the individuals liberties as a fundamental pillar to have in the creation of the new political regime:

«Under Lenin’s leadership the Bolshevik generation dissolved the Constituent Assembly and destroyed the democratic revolutionary parties that had struggled against Russian absolutism. The Bolshevik generation did not—in the context of bourgeois Russia— believe in the value of individual freedom; it did not believe in the value of freedom of speech or of freedom of the press. Like Lenin, it saw as irrelevant nonsense the freedoms of which the intelligentsia and many revolutionary workers had long dreamed. The young State destroyed the democratic parties, clearing the way for Soviet construction. By the end of the 1920s, these parties had been liquidated. Men who had been imprisoned under the Tsar were either back in prison or carrying out forced labor»⁵⁶

What is more is that such *modus operandi* which consist of eliminating any potential treats or whatever is not directly benefiting the Party will demonstrate to be harmful to the same people that implemented the system:

«Not long after this the ax was raised yet again. This time, however, it was on the generation of the Civil War that the ax fell. A small part of this generation survived, but its soul, its faith in a World Commune, its romantic and revolutionary strength disappeared with those who were destroyed in 1937»⁵⁷

To conclude, the common point that both authors made, even though by referring to two different elements, is that the Bolshevik revolution was not able to capture the essential of the Russian citizens and of what they needed and desired. For such reason, the only legitimation that the Party could even gain was only partially intentional and voluntaristic, for the majority of the population was given out of fear of repercussions.

⁵⁶ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 149

⁵⁷ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 150

4.4 The relationship that Russia had with freedom

In order to define the relationship between Russia and freedom it must be define in advance what is freedom, in which socio-economic status it operates and also what is the human being and why it is so fundamental for both authors such concept.

In this regard, Pasternak dedicates a variety of pages to try to capture the essential meaning and origin of the modern human being. Moreover, Pasternak argues that the origin of the contraposition between art and science was the root for a downfall of negative experiences that put the human being in crisis:

«And then into the glut of this gold and marble tastelessness came this one, light and clothed in radiance, emphatically human, deliberately provincial, a Galilean, and from that moment peoples and gods ceased, and man began, man the carpenter, man the tiller, man the shepherd with his flock of sheep at sunset, man without a drop of proud sound, man gratefully dispersed through all mothers' lullabies and through all the picture galleries of the world»⁵⁸

Furthermore, to add to the beginning of the human there is the fact that Pasternak ponder about the concept of consciousness and how such thing could affect how the world is perceived:

« And so, what will become of your consciousness? Yours. Yours. But what are you? There's the whole hitch. Let's sort it out. What do you remember about yourself, what part of your constitution have you been aware of? Your kidneys, liver, blood vessels? No, as far as you can remember, you've always found yourself in an external, active manifestation, in the work of your hands, in your family, in others. And now more attentively. Man in other people is man's soul. That is what you are, that is what your conscience breathed, relished, was nourished by all your life. Your soul, your immortality, your life in others. And what then? You have been in others and you will remain in others. And what difference does it make to you that later it will be called memory? It will be you, having entered into the composition of the future»⁵⁹

Here Pasternak is talking about how we perceive ourself individually and collectively.

⁵⁸ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, New York, Random House, Inc. 2010, p. 76

⁵⁹ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 105

The combination of these two concepts leads to explanation about what missed in the revolution. Furthermore, what the revolution was lacking, in regard to the sphere of art, human beings, consciousness and collectivism, was explained in the following passage:

« “And you think it’s the other way round? Beauty will save the world, mysteries and all that, Rozanov and Dostoevsky?”

“Wait, I’ll tell you what I think myself. I think that if the beast dormant in man could be stopped by the threat of, whatever, the lockup or requital beyond the grave, the highest emblem of mankind would be a lion tamer with his whip, and not the preacher who sacrifices himself. But the point is precisely this, that for centuries man has been raised above the animals and borne aloft not by the rod, but by music: the irresistibility of the unarmed truth, the attraction of its example. It has been considered up to now that the most important thing in the Gospels is the moral pronouncements and rules, but for me the main thing is that Christ speaks in parables from daily life, clarifying the truth with the light of everyday things. At the basis of this lies the thought that communion among mortals is immortal and that life is symbolic because it is meaningful.” »

Pasternak is arguing that the revolution started as a bottom-up movement and concluded its life cycle with a top-down approach. Moreover, the authors is explaining that what the revolution lacked was the true legitimation of all the population as it did not aim to what dignify the human being, which is the art and the passion to and for knowledge; rather it was a collection of moral rules that were profoundly distant to the life peasants and workers were experiencing.

What is more is that due to such non-alignment between objectives, popular demands and instruments, the masses were extremely confused about the revolution that was happening:

« “Try to understand, mama, they can’t make an exception for you,”

Lara comforted her.

“Nobody’s angry with you. On the contrary. Everything that’s going on around us now is being done in the name of man, in defense of the weak, for the good of women and children. Yes, yes, don’t shake your head so mistrustfully. It will be better someday for me and you because of it.”

But her mother did not understand anything.

“It’s always this way,” she said, sobbing. “My thoughts are confused to begin with, and then you blurt things out that just make me roll my eyes. They dump on my head, and it turns out to be in my own interest. No, truly, I must have gone soft in the brain” »⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, cit., p. 86

The passage below does not only describe the distance there was between the Party and the people that was destined to only increase, but also the difficulties that the population had in decoding the reality of what was happening:

« “Well, so, it’s true I don’t want to. Perfectly right. Ah, go on! Why should I know everything and lay myself out for everything? The times take no account of me and impose whatever they like on me. So allow me to ignore the facts. You say my words don’t agree with reality. But is there any reality in Russia now? In my opinion, it’s been so intimidated that it has gone into hiding. I want to believe that the countryside has benefitted and is prospering. If that, too, is a delusion, what am I to do, then? What am I to live by, who am I to obey? And I have to live, I’m a family man.”»

Pasternak here introduced the fact that certain layers of the population had to self-illude themselves into thinking that the atrocities perpetrated by the Party were either ended or benefitted most of the population, otherwise the moral wait of such consciousness would have been too unbearable.

The methodology of this subchapter is that of analysing the relationship the Soviet Russia had with liberty by combining the investigations about the socio-cultural-humanitarian aspect that characterized the Russian inhabitants and that time; plus by taking into account the motivations why those who denounced other innocents people about crimes they did not commit were doing so.

Indeed, the essay will now proceed in analysing the forms and shapes of liberty in Russia and the consideration they gained by evaluating the reasons why certain phenotypes had no respect or legitimation in the concept of freedom.

What is more is that such work was majestically conducted by Grossman who identified four types of people that would denounce other friends and colleagues and why.

Moreover, Grossman call them Judas.

Judas number one is described as a quite, average person. He loved art and the theater. It is said that he denounced some friends after strong pressures and violence and yet, he had to go to prison:

« We'll call him Judas I. It has been rumored that, long ago, he behaved badly under interrogation. Some of his friends refuse to greet him if they pass him on the street. Those who are a little more intelligent are polite to him when they meet, but they do not invite him back home. Those who are still more intelligent—and more generous and understanding—invite him into their homes but are careful not to let him into their hearts. All of these friends have dachas, savings accounts, medals and decorations, cars. He, of course, is thin, and they are plump—but they did nothing bad under interrogation. Or rather, they were not in a position to do anything bad—they were not interrogated. They were lucky; they had never been arrested. In what way are these plump men morally superior to this thin man? He too could have been plump; they too could have been thin. Was their fate determined by some law, or by chance? »⁶¹

The reason why it happened is intentionally left to be said that is up to the fait as Grossman was trying to point out to the arbitrary that the Party had about the legislative and judicial system.

Moreover, Judas number two is described as a chonical and systematic traitor and whisper to the Party. The reason why he did so was because the new order gave him a sense of power that would fulfill a sense of injustice and inadequacy that he felt since he was a little child:

« And now, here is Judas II. This man never spent so much as a day in prison. He had a reputation for being clever and eloquent—and then people came back from the camps, more dead than alive, and said that he had been a regular informer for the security organs. He had helped to destroy many people. For many years he had conducted heart-to-heart conversations with his friends and then handed in written reports to the authorities.

[...]

Ever since childhood he had been frightened out of his mind. In 1919 his wealthy father had died of typhus, in a concentration camp. His aunt was married to a general, and the two of them had emigrated to Paris. His elder brother had fought for the Whites. He had lived in terror; terror had lived inside him»⁶²

⁶¹ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 61

⁶² Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 63

Furthermore, Judas number three is a perfect that grew up with the bare minimum in terms of welfare and of culture. What is more is that belonging to the last social classes made him feel like everyone was one step ahead of him. Plus, he cultivated a disdain against the intellectuals:

« In 1937 he wrote more than two hundred denunciations at one go, without a second thought. The list of his victims is varied: commissars from the time of the Civil War; a poet and songwriter; the director of a foundry; two district Party committee secretaries; an old engineer (not a Party member); one newspaper editor and two publishing-house editors; the director of a special “closed” canteen; a philosophy teacher; the director of a “political enlightenment office”; a botany professor; a handyman employed by the superintendents of a block of apartments; two officials from a district agricultural administration office...It is impossible to list all of them.

[...]

This sharp-eyed young lad had been poorly educated and everyone around him seemed superior to him, both as regards their general level of knowledge and as regards their heroic past. How could he ever compete with those who had initiated and carried out the Revolution? And yet—the mere touch of his hand was enough to bring down dozens of men covered in revolutionary glory»⁶³

Finally, it is the turn and Judas number four.

He is described as a greedy, materialistic person. It is said that he treated people as a mean to an object. Moreover, Grossman describes him as extremely lunatic and nervous:

« He is the creator of a categorical imperative opposite to Kant’s; for him, a man, and mankind as a whole, are simply means to be employed in the course of his never-ending hunt for objects. There is always a tense, hurt, irritated look in his eyes, whatever their color. Someone has always just stepped on his toes; there is invariably someone he has to settle accounts with. For him the State’s passion for unmasking enemies of the people is a blessing

[...]

And at the price of the suffering of those he destroys, he gets what he needs: additional living space, a salary increase, a neighbor’s hut, a suite of Polish furniture, a little garden, a heated garage for his Moskvich car... He despises books, music, the beauty of nature, love, and maternal tenderness. He wants objects, only objects»⁶⁴

⁶³ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 64

⁶⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 67

What is more is that some common traits can be identified in these Judas. Except for the first one that is commonly considered as victim of bad luck first and then of the Party as second, the remaining three have some similar characteristics.

To begin with, all three were volunteers. No one forced them to denounce the people around them. Moreover, the second features are that they all somehow benefitted from the currently political regime, ist es the Soviet dictatorship.

Thirdly, they all understood that the most precious treasure there was at the time was the trust of the Party:

« He was carrying out his duty, he was not settling scores—but it was also out of an instinct for self-preservation that he wrote his denunciations. He was acquiring a substance more precious than gold or land: the trust of the Party. He understood that in Soviet life the trust of the Party was everything: power, honor, authority. And he believed that his lies served a higher truth: in his denunciations he could glimpse this Truth»⁶⁵

However, Grossman highlighted the fact that the judges about these Judas should be suspended. The reason he does so is because there is a more visceral and profound explanation to what happened in the lives of these Judas.

What is more is that the clue to this passage could be found in the fact that they all benefitted from a more strict and violent political regime. Indeed, Grossman repeatedly, throughout his novel, establish a connection between society and the people who lives in it, saying that they are one the mirror of the other.

Therefore, the Judas were a product of both the Tsarist regime and of Leninism.

⁶⁵ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 65

What is more is that Grossman, even though does not want to relieve the Judas from their moral mistakes, identified in the State the supreme origin of the issues.

Moreover, it was the State that believed to all the denounces and it was the State that created the conditions for the Judas' lives to benefit from doing such actions.

Furthermore, Grossman wondered who fault ultimately is if someone's lives improve if someone else's lives is eliminated:

« Why are you so eager to condemn those, like us, who are small and weak? Why not begin with the State? Why not try the State? Our sin, after all, is its sin. Pass judgment on the State then—fearlessly, out loud, and in public. You have no choice but to be fearless—you claim, after all, to be speaking in the name of truth. Come on then, get on with it! And please also explain one other thing. Why have you waited till now to raise these questions? You've known us all long enough. In Stalin's lifetime you were only too glad to spend time with us. You used to wait outside our offices for us to receive you. Sometimes you used to whisper about us in thin, sparrow like voices. We too used to whisper like sparrows. Yes, like us, you participated in the Stalin era. Why must we, who were participants, be judged by you, who were also participants? Why must you determine our guilt? Do you not see where the difficulty lies? Maybe we really are guilty, but there is no judge who has the moral right to discuss the question of our guilt. Remember how Leo Tolstoy said that no one in the world is guilty? But in our State things are different: everyone is guilty— there is not one innocent person anywhere. All that we can argue about is the degree of guilt. So is it for you, comrade Prosecutor, to accuse us? Only the dead, only those who did not survive, have the right to judge us. But the dead do not ask questions; the dead are silent. So please allow me to answer your question with another question. I'm speaking to you straightforwardly, man to man, from the heart, like a true Russian. What is the reason for this vile, universal weakness? Your weakness, our weakness, everyone's weakness? This mass submissiveness?»⁶⁶

In this powerful lines Grossman points out to the fact that there was no men ho survived the Soviet Regime that can call himself non-guilty, as the passive obedience was a form of legitimation. Indeed, the described a scale of guilt were to put everyone.

⁶⁶ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 69

4.5 Revolution and non-freedom are rooted in Russian identity

The relationship between freedom and Russia could be explored more and be taken a step forward. Indeed, that is what the authors did, especially Grossman, in analysing and describing the interconnection between Lenin, freedom, Western side of the world and Russian identity. To be more specific, the writer pondered about what are the motivations why Russia had a history of non-freedom and how such historical legacy dialogued to the Soviet era.

Furthermore, the path that liberty undertook began with wondering about what could happen right after a period of time when freedom was prohibited. Moreover, Grossman investigated the first steps to undertake in such conditions.

For instance, the path of freedom starts with and in the character of Ivan Grigoryevich, who was imprisoned for most of his life. The story about how and why he remained confined for so long is here told:

«It was evidently not a matter of external circumstances. It was Ivan, Ivan himself, who was responsible for his misfortunes, for his bitter fate. In a philosophy discussion group at the university he had had fierce arguments with the teacher of dialectical materialism. The arguments had continued until the discussion group was shut down. Then Ivan had spoken out against dictatorship in one of the lecture halls. He had declared that freedom is as important a good as life itself, that any limitation of freedom mutilates a person as surely as an ax blow to a finger or an ear, and that the annihilation of freedom is the equivalent of murder. After this, he had been expelled from the university and exiled for three years to Kazakhstan, to the province of Semipalatinsk»⁶⁷

The ideology and concept of freedom was so important to Ivan that he preferred not to have it in a prison rather than accommodate to a State that falsely guaranteed it.

⁶⁷ V. Grossman, *Everything Flows*, New York, New York Review Books 2010, p. 39

What is more is that when the Soviet regime collapsed, Grossman testified that the mankind felt confused, lost, disoriented:

« There in the station, thinking about the painful days he had just spent in Moscow and Leningrad, he remembered a conversation with a tsarist artillery general who had at one time slept next to him on the bedboards of a camp barrack. The old man had said, “I’m not leaving the camp to go anywhere else. It’s warm in here. There are people I know. Now and again someone gives me a lump of sugar, or a bit of pie from a food parcel.” He had met such old men more than once. They had lost all desire to leave the camp. It was their home. They were fed at regular hours. Kind comrades sometimes gave them little scraps. There was the warmth of the stove. Where indeed were they to go? In the calcified depths of their hearts some of them stored memories of the brilliance of the chandeliers in the palaces of Tsarskoye Selo, or of the winter sun in Nice. Others remembered their neighbor, Mendeleyev, coming around to drink tea with them; or they remembered Scriabin, Repin, or the young Blok. Others preserved, beneath ash that was still warm, the memories of Plekhanov, Gershuni, and Trigoni, of friends of the great Zhelyabov. There were occasions when old men released from a camp had asked to be readmitted. The whirl of life outside had knocked them off their feet. Their legs were weak and trembling, and they had been terrified by the cold and the solitude of the vast cities. Ivan Grigoryevich now felt like going back again behind the barbed wire himself. He wanted to seek out those who had got to feel so accustomed to their barrack stoves, so at home with their warm rags and their bowls of thin gruel. He wanted to say to them, “Yes, freedom really is terrifying.” »⁶⁸

Therefore, freedom is considered by Grossman as the maximum objective of a life, but at the same time it is described as a complicated, terrifying concept that is not easy to handle.

⁶⁸ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 75

On the other side of the spectrum, there are the collaborators of the Soviet regime. When the Party and the State collapsed, they felt naked and without a guide:

« It was a new, strange, and very particular sense of guilt—guilt with regard to his own moral weakness, to his speech at the meeting, to his having signed the collective letter denouncing the monster doctors, and to his willingness to consent to an obvious lie. Guilt with regard to the genuineness and sincerity of his consent; it had come from the bottom of his heart. Had he lived right? Was he really, as everyone around him seemed to think, an honest man? This aching sense of repentance grew only stronger. Now that the divinely impeccable State was repenting of its crimes, Nikolay Andreyevich began to sense that the State's body, the State's flesh, was in fact mortal and earthly. It too, like Stalin, suffered heart tremors; it too had albumen in its urine. The divine impeccability of the immortal State turned out not only to have suppressed individual human beings but also to have defended them, to have comforted them in their weakness, to have justified their insignificance. The State had taken on its iron shoulders the entire weight of responsibility; it had liberated people from the chimera of conscience»⁶⁹

Thus, what Grossman is describing here is that once that the State collapsed, the responsibility of its actions had to be redistributed between all the people that in a way or another benefitted from it.

Once that the author completed the description about the responsibilities on keep alive the Party moved then to another subject, that of exploring the relationship between freedom and soviet Russia.

He started with talking about the type of freedom that was allowed in literature. Moreover, Grossman testified that the manipulation of information was massive and that the self-proclaimed realistic soviet literature was describing a reality that was not present at that time:

« Theaters and cinemas made Ivan Grigoryevich feel sad and anxious; it was as if he were being forced to watch something there and would never be let out again. Many novels and poems felt like a violent assault, as if the writer were trying to drum something into his head; he found this unbearable. These books seemed to be about a life he had never encountered—a life where there were no barracks, no strict-regime camps, no brigade leaders, no armed guards, no security officers, no system of internal passports, and none of the sufferings, anxieties, and passions that made up the lives of everyone around him. The writers simply dreamed people up. They dreamed up their thoughts and feelings; they dreamed up the rooms they lived in and the trains they traveled in. The literature that called itself “realist” was as

⁶⁹ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 33

convention ridden as the bucolic romances of the eighteenth century. The collective farmers, workers, and peasant women of Soviet literature seemed close kin to those elegant, slim villagers and curly-headed shepherdesses in woodland glades, playing on reed pipes and dancing, surrounded by little white lambs with pretty blue ribbons»⁷⁰

The reality of things is that several types of freedom were neglected in Soviet Russia. To begin with, the right of strike. Moreover, it appears contradictory that a State founded in the workers and workers conditions would not allow them to speak their voice about such a thing; yet that was the spirit of the time:

« Once, as they were going down the street together after finishing work, Mordan suddenly said to Ivan Grigoryevich, “It’s not only because of my wife and daughter that I didn’t go back to Leningrad. It’s the Putilov proletariat...As a worker myself, I can’t bear to see what’s happened to them. They can’t even go out on strike. How can we call ourselves workers if we don’t have the right to strike?” »⁷¹

What is more is that at this point the author asked himself what freedom is.

Moreover, the following passage describe the definition that Grossman gave to it:

« “I certainly will answer. I used to think that freedom was freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience. But freedom needs to include all of the lives of all of the people. Freedom is the right to sow what you want. It’s the right to make boots or shoes, it’s the right to bake bread from the grain you’ve sown and to sell it or not sell it as you choose. It’s the same whether you’re a locksmith or a steelworker or an artist—freedom is the right to live and work as you wish and not as you’re ordered to. But there’s no freedom for anyone—whether you write books, whether you sow grain, or whether you make boots.” »⁷²

Therefore, the author states that it is impossible to establish a collective freedom if there is no individual freedom. Moreover, individual freedom is defined as the potential of being able to express yourself and decide as much as possible for the course of your life. In Soviet Russia that was impossible as there was no independence not even in being able to eat in a fulfilling way.

⁷⁰ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 85

⁷¹ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 80

⁷² Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 83

What is more is that the author then continued in exploring the places where freedom was taken away from the humankind and continued to study their reaction. To add to all this, a powerful passage is dedicated to the people that were imprisoned for a long time and then were realised. Moreover, Grossman described that some of them wanted to get back to the prisons:

« During his years in the camps Ivan Grigoryevich had learned a great deal about human weaknesses. Now he saw that there were more than enough such weaknesses outside the barbed wire as well as behind it...No, suffering did not always purify. In the camps the struggle for an extra mouthful of soup, for an easier work assignment, was unrelenting, and the morally weak stooped to a pitiful level. Sometimes Ivan Grigoryevich tried to guess how people he met now might behave in the camps; it was not difficult to imagine some sleek and haughty figure scavenging about, scraping his spoon around someone else's empty soup bowl or prowling around the kitchen in search of potato peelings or rotten cabbage leaves. Ivan Grigoryevich had felt sorry for those who had been crushed by violence, by hunger and cold, by their desperate need for tobacco. He had felt sorry for those who had turned into "camp jackals," always on the lookout for a crumb of bread or a slobbery cigarette butt. What he had seen in the camps made it easier to understand how people behaved when they were free. What he saw now was the same pitiful weakness, the same cruelty, the same greed, and the same terror that he had seen in the camps. People were the same everywhere, and Ivan Grigoryevich felt sorry for them»⁷³

The author argued that the incapacity to adapt to a world without freedom is equal to each man. Moreover, it is not important whether or not they spent a vast amount of time in prison or not a day at all, they have the same emotional setting that guides them into the world, meaning that they feel disconnected to reality and without a point of reference.

What is more is that the author admitted that he pitied them for how lost they felt in freedom.

⁷³ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 85

Grossman continued his description about what happened to former criminals once they exited the confinement camps:

« What is the reason for this difference? Is it that a man becomes frozen in the camps, as if under anesthetic? When he had been in the camps, Ivan Grigoryevich had constantly seen people's natural longing to escape beyond the barbed wire, to return to their wives and children. But after his release, he sometimes met other former zeks —and their submissive hypocrisy, their fear of their own thoughts, their dread of being re-arrested were so overwhelming that they seemed more truly and thoroughly imprisoned than when they had been doing forced labor. Leaving the camp, working as a free laborer, living with his nearest and dearest, such a man would sometimes doom himself to a higher power of imprisonment, a more complete and profound imprisonment than anything he had been subjected to behind the barbed wire. Nevertheless, in the torment, in the dirt and murk of camp life, it was freedom that was the light and strength of the prisoners' souls. Freedom was immortal»⁷⁴

The author argues that existed a deeply more lethal form of imprisonment than that of the body, which is that of the soul and of the mind. Moreover, Grossman said that the man in or out the lagers were the same both in not being able to handle freedom when given to them and in desiring it as profoundly as possible.

The novelist then continued with pondering about the reason why it was so uncomfortable for Russians to implement freedom once that the Tsarist regime were overthrown. According to the author, it is because the history of Russia is a history of subjection:

«And then, in the same letter, Chaadaev brilliantly put his finger on a striking feature of Russian history: “the enormous fact of the gradual enslavement of our peasantry, which can only be seen as the strictly logical consequence of our entire history.” The implacable suppression of the individual personality—its total, servile subjection to the sovereign and the State—has been a constant feature of Russian history. This too was seen and recognized by the Russian prophets»⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 90

⁷⁵ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 160

What is more is that along side with a history of subjection there is a history of exaltation of the Russian spirit. Moreover, several thinkers and philosopher testified in their words and works of art that it would have come a moment in time when the Russian would have stopped accepting the influences from other population and would start to be the spiritual guide of the world:

« But along with the suppression of the individual by prince, landowner, sovereign, and State, the Russian prophets sensed a purity, profundity, and clarity unknown to the Western world. They saw a Christlike power—the power of the Russian soul—and they prophesied a great and brilliant future for this soul. These prophets all agreed that the Christian ideal had been embodied in the Russian soul in an ascetic, Byzantine, anti-Western manner—in a way quite independent of the State—and that the forces inherent in the Russian soul would manifest themselves as a powerful influence on the peoples of Europe. They believed that these forces would purify and transform the life of the Western world, enlightening it in the spirit of brotherhood, and that the Western world would joyfully and trustingly follow this Russian man who was so universal in his humanity»⁷⁶

And then again, the authors continued with pointing out the expectation that Russian thinkers had for their nation that were unfulfilled:

« The nineteenth century, however, seemed at last to have brought closer the time foretold by the Russian prophets, the time when Russia, always so receptive to other teachings and other examples, always so greedy to absorb other spiritual influences, was herself preparing to act on the world»⁷⁷

However, these intellectuals failed in recognizing a vital issue in such narration, which is that Russia had a strong past of enslavement. Therefore, there is little that a nation could teach to other when it developed from non-liberty:

« These prophecies of Russia's most powerful minds and hearts had one fatal flaw in common. They all saw the power of the Russian soul and its significance for the world, but they all failed to see that this soul had been a slave for a thousand years, that its peculiarities had been engendered by the absence of freedom. However all-powerful you are, what can you give to the world if you have been a slave for a thousand years? »⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 160

⁷⁷ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 161

⁷⁸ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 160

Furthermore, as Grossman highlighted, a major issue is that Russia borrowed the concept of freedom from the Western side of the world. Moreover, it was never possible for such nation to undertake its own path and develop its own definition of freedom as there was never the time nor the space to experiment in such dimension:

« For a hundred years Russia had been drinking in a borrowed idea of freedom. For a hundred years—through the lips of Pestel, Ryleyev, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Lavrov, Bakunin; through the lips of her writers; through the lips of such martyrs as Zhelyabov, Sofya Perovskaya, Timofey Mikhailov, and Kibalchich; through the lips of Plekhanov, Kropotkin, and Mikhailovsky; through the lips of Sazonov and Kalyaev; through the lips of Lenin, Martov, and Chernov; through the lips of her classless intelligentsia; through the lips of her students and progressive workers—for a hundred years Russia had been imbibing the work of the thinkers and philosophers of Western freedom. This thinking was carried by books, by university faculties, by young men who had studied in Paris and Heidelberg. It was carried by the boots of Napoleon’s soldiers. It was carried by engineers and enlightened merchants. It was carried by impoverished Westerners who came to Russia to work and whose sense of their own innate human dignity evoked the envious astonishment of Russian princes. And so, fertilized by the ideas of freedom and of the dignity of man, the Russian Revolution ran its course»⁷⁹

The author described that the combination of exaltation that happened for centuries combined with the concept of freedom made the nation incapable of absorbing the changes gradually and created the perfect set of uncertainties and instabilities that led the revolution to happen.

Moreover, the path that Russia undertook in trying to find a balance between the collapse of Tsarism a few months of a liberal and democratic regime are well described by Grossman through the allegory of a woman which embodies the Russian soul and felt lost and confused:

« And what did the Russian soul do with these Western ideas? How did she transform them within herself? Into what kind of crystal did she make them precipitate? What kind of shoot would she cause to spring from the subconscious of history?

“Russia, where are you rushing to?...She gives no answer.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 161

⁸⁰ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 161

The allegory then continued describing the moment in which the girl studied with her eyes the potential candidates for the next political regime:

« Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of revolutionary teachings and creeds, leaders and parties, programs and prophecies came as suitors to the young Russia who had cast off the chains of tsarism. As they paraded before her, the captains of Russian progress gazed longingly, passionately and pleadingly into her face. And then there they stood in a great circle—moderates, fanatics, laborists, populists, friends of the workers, advocates of the peasantry, liberal factory owners, light-seeking men of the church, crazy anarchists. »⁸¹

However, only one contender demonstrated the ability to capture the girl's eyes, meaning to understand the Russian soul deeply and profoundly, and that was Lenin:

« The slave girl's gaze, the great slave girl's searching, doubting, evaluating gaze came to rest on Lenin. It was him she chose. As in an old tale, he guessed her hidden thought. He interpreted her perplexing dream, her innermost secret. But is this truly what happened? He became her chosen one not only because she chose him but also because he chose her »⁸²

The connection between the girl and Lenin was reciprocal.

They chose each other.

⁸¹ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 161

⁸² Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 162

Moreover, Grossman described the moment in which the girl decided to follow Lenin as he seemed determined, assertive, strong. However, at a certain point, it felt like Lenin was not only guiding the girl, but was also obliging her to follow him:

« She followed him because he promised her mountains of gold and rivers flowing with wine. She followed him, willingly at first, trusting him, along a merry, intoxicating path lit by the burning estates of landowners. Then she began to stumble, to look back, ever more terrified of the path now stretching before her—but the grip of the iron hand that led her was growing tighter and tighter. And he, imbued with apostolic faith, walked on, leading Russia behind him, failing to realize that he had succumbed to a strange delusion. In Russia's obedient walk, in her renewed, postrevolutionary submissiveness, in her maddening pliancy, everything that he had brought her from the revolutionary, freedom-loving West was being transformed. Everything he had brought to Russia was drowning and perishing. He believed that his unshakable, dictatorial power guaranteed that the ideal he believed in, the gift he had brought to his country, would be preserved in all its purity. He rejoiced in this power. He identified it with the justice of his faith— and then, for one terrible moment, he realized that his unyielding strength as the leader of a country so gentle, a country so submissive and easily influenced, was really a supreme form of impotence. And the tighter his grip, the sterner his stride, the more obedient Russia became to his educated and revolutionary violence—the less power Lenin possessed to struggle against the truly satanic force of Russia's serf past»⁸³

The power relation between Lenin and Russia became one in which the first had to lead the second in stricter and violent way more and more as time continued. Moreover, in doing so Lenin demonstrated its incapacity to be legitimately and willingly followed by the population. Furthermore, in doing so Lenin also demonstrated that Russia's past as a population made of servants was never truly erased.

⁸³ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 162

Therefore, Russia's attempt to emancipation is intertwined with submission and fear, whereas Western's emancipation is permeated of freedom and liberty:

« Everything seemed entirely clear; to a superficial observer, there could be no doubt that Russia was moving toward the West and growing in enlightenment. But the more the surface of Russian life came to resemble the surface of Western life, the more evocative of Western life grew the roar of Russia's factories, the rattle of her carriages, the clackety-clack of her train wheels, the flapping sails of her ships and the crystal gleam of her palace windows —the deeper became the hidden abyss that separated the innermost essence of Russian life from that of Western life. The evolution of the West was fertilized by the growth of freedom; Russia's evolution was fertilized by the growth of slavery. This is the abyss that divides Russia and the West. The history of humanity is the history of human freedom. The growth of human potentiality is expressed, above all, in the growth of freedom. Freedom is not, as Engels claimed, "the recognition of necessity." Freedom is the direct opposite of necessity; freedom is necessity overcome. Progress, in essence, is the progress of human freedom. What is life itself, if not freedom? The evolution of life is the evolution of freedom. Russia has always evolved in a peculiar way; what has evolved has been the degree of non-freedom. »⁸⁴

Western development is based on freedom, whereas Russia's development is based on non-freedom. Moreover, the progress of humanity is a progress towards more freedom. Therefore, whatever points to the direction of regressing from the level of freedom allowed to individuals and to the collectives, is also pointing to the direction of diminishing humanity's potential and development.

Indeed, Grossman underlined once again that the Russian revolution as much as the violent and oppressive Soviet state found its roots in the Russian history of enslavement and obedience as "the girl" never knew anything different from such reality:

«[...] —a State bordering both cruel, treacherous, vengeful, hypocritical Asia and enlightened, democratic, mercantile, mercenary Europe; a State in which law is simply a weapon of tyranny and in which tyranny is the law; a State whose roots reach far back into the centuries of Russian serfdom, which made slaves of the peasants, and into the centuries of the Tatar yoke, which made slaves even of those who lorded it over the peasants »⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 163

⁸⁵ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 175

To conclude this chapter, one of the final considerations that Grossman made in regards to the path that freedom undertook in Russia is that liberty is not only a philosophical concept, it is the supreme motivation of men, the maximum reason to remain alive. Moreover, freedom is described as the element that no matter the amount of suppression and control it experiences, it will always emerge as it is a visceral desire for the human-kind to be free:

« In deep darkness, in deep secrecy, freedom was coming to be. A river that swept away everything in its path, a river that had become the one reality for everyone, was thundering across the earth's surface. The new national State that was the sovereign of every living breath and the sole owner of countless treasures—of factories, of nuclear reactors, of every last field in the country—was celebrating its victory. The Revolution seemed to have taken place solely for the sake of this State, for the sake of its thousand years of triumphant power. Nevertheless, the sovereign of half the world was not simply a gravedigger of freedom. In spite of the genius of Lenin, the inspired creator of a new world, freedom was coming to be. In spite of the limitless, cosmic violence of Stalin, freedom was coming to be. It was coming to be because human beings were still human beings. It was man who carried out the revolution of February 1917; it was man who constructed skyscrapers, factories, and nuclear reactors at the new State's command—and there is no way out for man but freedom. Because even while constructing a new world, human beings remained human beings. *** Ivan Grigoryevich felt and understood all of this—sometimes clearly, sometimes vaguely. No matter how vast the skyscrapers and powerful the cannon, no matter how limitless the power of the State, no matter how mighty the empire, all this is only mist and fog and—as such—will be blown away. Only one true force remains; only one true force continues to evolve and live; and this force is liberty. To a man, to live means to be free. No, not everything that is real is rational. Everything inhuman is senseless and useless. It did not surprise Ivan Grigoryevich that the word “freedom” had been on his lips when he was sent to Siberia as a young student, and that this word was still alive in him, still present in his mind, even today»⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Grossman, *Everything flows*, cit., p. 182

5. Conclusion

This essay has explored the relationship between intellectuals and Leninism by analysis the novels of two great authors: *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak and *Everything Flows* by Vasilij Grossman. In order to do so, the methodology used is that of dividing the several layers and implications of such relationship into three macro concepts: art and humanity, revolution and freedom. Plus, a supportive literature has been used to support the thesis presented. However, the main instrument used is that of analysis the text and extrapolate the political ideology of both authors.

What is more is that chapter one described art and humanity in order to define what constitutes and identify the humankind according to the authors. Such passage was made necessary to discover how inhabitants reacted to the revolution and why. Indeed, it was impossible to separate the art from the artists, therefore it was necessary to dedicate a chapter to such aspect. In particular, in such part of the text it was discovered that Pasternak sees humanity in the context of full and deep connection with the cycle of life, whereas Grossman described such relationship as a mirror: as society is composed of men, how and what men could be seen in the society they live in and vice versa.

Secondly, another major discover of chapter one is that of exploring how intellectuals reacted to Leninism, highlighting the fact that the typical pluralism of opinions present in the community of intellectuals was substituted by nationalism. What this means is that culture was subjected to the needs of the Party and was used as a vehicle of and for broadcasting the achievement of the Bolsheviks. In this regard, a major act of rebellion was that of criticism the political regime.

What is more is that in chapter 2 is analysed the socio-economic, cultural and political roots of Leninism. It is a main chapter as it describes the power structure of Leninism. In such descriptions, both authors reveals their opinion and criticism towards the Party, the society and their peers.

In particular, the roots of Leninism were declared to be long-lasting, not an innovative phenomenon. However, the actuals triggers that lead to the seize of power ware conducted to 1905 with the civil protests about constitutionalism.

The protests represent both the frustration of the population towards the political regime and the modus operandi used to such political élite in dealing with the protests. The second event that triggered the beginning of Leninism is that of World War One, which through Russia into years of deep famine and socio-economic difficulties.

What is more is that chapter 2 then analyses the power structure of Leninism and identify three fundamental pillars: economic power, represented by the New Economic Policy (NEP), the systemic and chronic repression of any dissident voice and, finally, strictly connected to the previous point, the creation of an enemy of the state in order to create and identity of the “perfect Russian nationalist”.

To add to all this, another important feature of chapter 2 is that it proves that the Bolshevik Party dethatched progressively to its primal socialist ideology and moved its objectives from class liberation to the maintenance of power and control.

Finally, the essay is closed by chapter 3, which deals with the concept of freedom and liberty. Freedom is dealt with by the author by starting from two different definition, as it happened for the concept of humanity. However, these differences were not fundamental and the writers converged to common values.

In particular, Pasternak describes freedom as connected to the body, as being able to indulge with nature, whereas Grossman define it as the visceral and ineluctable desire of human beings which makes them humans. Moreover, another major point of such chapter is that of analysing the roots and path of freedom in Russia. Furthermore, it was proved that no individual freedoms no collective’s freedoms were ever allowed in Russia. Plus, it was proved that Russia’s development, differently from Western Europe’ development, started and was based on the subjection of a category of people. What is more is that Grossman traces a direct line with the condition of the serfs under Tsarism and the conditions of the working class under Leninism: even though the amount of welfare was different, the forma mentis remained the same, which is the incapacity to guarantee a constitutional and plural political regime and community without censorship.

To conclude, the essay took into consideration two authors and two novels. However, further researchs on the topic could be conducted by amplifying the research sample. In doing so, it would be possible to further validate the points already made in such text as well as create new concepts and comparisons between authors that lived through the Leninism era.

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