



Tragedy Of a Lost Country

I fell in love with Valentina Kiseleva posts instantly when one day I saw what she wrote about the birch forests of Russia. There was a feeling that I had found a sister, native to me on the perception of the world, on significant codes of Genesis, a sister who just like me lives with a soul widely open to the world. When she wrote that she returns home to St. Petersburg, after several years of living in America, I realized that I was lucky to meet a very sincere and whole person. Valentina's post about our Motherland expressed all the pain a generation of people suffered over the loss of their country and live now with shrapnel blasted souls. When Vladimir Putin said the collapse of the Soviet Union is the greatest geopolitical tragedy, he accurately describes the tragedy of the 250 million people that lost together with their country the place in the world where you want to go back, but sadly there is no place to return.

Here is what Valentina Kiseleva wrote:

Ode to the Motherland

I remember when my grandmother sold the house in Kemerovo and moved in with us in Saint Petersburg. How much I missed it – a one-story log cabin in the middle of a flowered garden on twelve acres, where everything that can, and cannot, grow in Siberia was growing and blooming. I was there for only two or three summers in early childhood, but I remember every bush and every corner. Later many years in a row we travelled to the Crimea for vacation, and I was not attracted by the idea to visit my grandmother in Kemerovo. She regularly was visiting us, and vacation on the sea was more attractive than a summer on a small plot with infrequent attacks on a river with not very clean water. And then my grandfather passed away, dashing times came to Kemerovo a little earlier than to St. Petersburg. To live alone in a house became dangerous, and hard, and my grandmother sold the house to good hands and moved to Leningrad. I've been a student at the Institute and led quite a stormy student life, rich as all student life in medical school can be, full of hard studying but we kept no less strenuous schedule for get-togethers. But no saturation saved me from a completely inescapable feeling of longing for my native land. I dreamed of a bed, and a basement, I dreamed of a bird and cherry tree with branches above the roof, and a buckthorn along the fence. On bath day aunt Nura's sauna, followed by mandatory viewing of Saturday's TV programs with a cup of brewed fresh mint. Some kind of homesick was killing me. Why all of a sudden? Yes, there was nowhere to go back already. The house was no longer ours, my younger brothers visited the new owners and was told that it was fully reshaped and remade. Suddenly a sense of roots having been chopped off appeared though I did not grow up in this house. And my roots are very far from Siberia – my grandmother's ancestors on both lines, aristocratic by birth, were sent away during the times of Decembrists – around the beginning of the nineteenth century. That story during the Soviet era was spoken very rarely at our home almost in a whisper. Why then was I hooked so deeply in my soul and torn? The thing was that this little paradise was not for me any more. That house symbolized for me the foundation of my life, my ancestors lived there, I remember, and I knew my mother was born and raised there. There was the happiest time of my childhood, there my mother was robbed by Gypsies. My brothers lived in this city and the World seemed to have lived on, absolutely unshakable.

And then everything suddenly collapsed. I've been deprived of my World with all its attributes leaving instead emptiness. Here as well, suddenly today when I began watching "Sunstroke," the film by Nikita Mikhalkov, I felt inexpressibly sad and empty. I remembered how I've been deprived of my country – taken, sold, and redrawn after it was broken. Like the main character of the film, a Russian officer, I've been torched by the question "what for?" What for all it was – a happy childhood, a music school, foreign language lessons, sports clubs, and literary classics. Why all this was and then much later gone? I've been listening to the question asked by the film's main character, and my soul was tearing in half again, as it was then, when I had to leave. We have not fled the country, no one dares to throw me a reproach. Country did not exist any more, and we were thrown away by the explosive wave. And the same wave exploded my soul.

We are fortunate today with a man in power ready to revive Russia. And I will put all my energy, all the experience and all knowledge, which I can only, in the revival of my homeland, to the restoration of my house. But I understand that the house in which I grew up, will not return. My country can become even better, brighter and more beautiful, but it will be a new country. And the world of my childhood is never to return. And so it doesn't matter how many years have passed, and am I happy and proud of Russia, the pain of that, my homeland taken away will remain forever.

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Posted March 5, 2016 by Galima Galiullina, Ph.D.