

## The Dictatorships of the 20th Century and their Origins in the Pre- and Perinatal Period

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**Abstract:** Psychotherapeutic experience has established adults can and do re-enact unprocessed childhood experience over the course of their lives. However, on the collective-psychological level, this has been studied almost exclusively within the framework of psychohistory. It is this reflection that allows us to shed more light on a number of incomprehensible aspects of political and social life, and to even find some inspiration for how to deal with these enactments. Pre- and perinatal, infantile, and early childhood experiences occur in an existential, emotional, pre-lingual level; retentive memory archives them in exactly this way. This article addresses how the violent acts of Stalinist communism and Hitler's Nazism were re-enactments of violence and abuse that the members of the Russian and German societies experienced around and after birth, manifesting the perpetrator cycle intergenerationally.

**Keywords:** dictatorships, prenatal and perinatal psychology, psychohistory, re-enactments of childhood experiences

*\*Note from the author: The article is essayistic and "transdisciplinary" in style, bringing together facts and observations from different scientific fields: history, social science, psychohistory, prenatal psychology, cultural science, etc., where statements originally functioned only in the frame of their respective fields.*

Adults can and do re-enact aspects of what they experienced during childhood. For example, a child who was beaten and abused may later be a bully and abuser, while on a collective-psychologic level, a society's experience of childhood will find its reflection in the stagings of its

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members (see age-related group fantasies according to Lloyd de Mause, 2000). The replications in adulthood of distressing childhood experiences are perpetuated in the field of psychotherapy. During the last two decades, this topic has become part of public consciousness. Today, many accounts of criminals include their childhood conditions, whereas prior to this time, it might have been assumed that their actions were the doing of evil. While in some parts of society, this is still a valuable perception, this opinion has now lost its majority appeal in the practice of Western-European and American psychotherapy.

Though it is now widely accepted that childhood experiences can be re-enacted during adulthood, there are two issues that limit this perspective:

1. When psychologists and psychotherapists relate the behaviors of an adult to conditions during childhood, this is often done in a cursory way, with a focus on the time when the child was already able to use language. The conditions of the pre-lingual period—before, during, and after birth—remain outside Western-European and American scholastic awareness.
2. This is why usually, the above considerations remain mere assumptions. On the macro level of society as a whole, the ambivalence of how pre-lingual experiences impact us also includes the psychological impacts of political events. In some parts of the United States, there is a distinct connection between the death penalty and the childhood experience of violence in the family and in school. In those states where corporal punishment (the beating of children in the family and in school) is prohibited, the death penalty has been abolished as well (Pfeiffer, 2015). These are important connections—correlations that the customary pathologizing characterizations of problematic political leaders fail to recognize—concealing how the traumatization of political leaders is intertwined with that of their followers. However, these correlations will serve as a guideline for my deliberations.

To explore how childhood miseries, especially adversities suffered during the prenatal and perinatal (pre-lingual) period (Janus, 2011; Evertz et al., 2014, 2020) are replicated in political events poses a considerable challenge. During the time before birth, children are “vulnerable” (Emerson, 2000a). The gestational parent’s difficult

conditions can shift the child's primary experience of the world. Alfred Adler first pointed to this correlation in his thesis about the prenatal origins of the "inferiority complex" (1907). Since then, within the European psychotherapy canon, there have been numerous studies investigating the consequences of prenatal stress on different methodological levels: on a psychological level (Dyttrich et al., 1988; Häsing & Janus, 1996; Levend & Janus, 2000; Janus, 2011; Bail, 2012; Emerson, 2020a), concerning stress research (Van den Bergh, 2020; Emerson, 2020b; Verny, 2020), on "fetal programming" (Van den Bergh, 2013), as well as in epidemiologic research (Gluckman & Hanson; 2004, 2006). How gestational parents can and do shape their unborn is highly complex and the following reflections can only be schematic and in many regards, remain incomplete. In order to create a more complete understanding of how prenatal and pre-lingual experiences linger and arguably shape adulthood, this article addresses the prenatal-psychological and psychohistoric correlations between large-scale historic events and individual psychology that have been disregarded by prevailing European and American psychological literature.

### Historical Background

This article argues that the violent acts of Stalinist communism (1927—1953) and Hitler's Nazism (1933—1945) were re-enactments of violence and abuse that the members of the Russian and German societies experienced before and after birth. In both countries during this time period, though they stemmed from very different communities and have very distinct ideologies, a great majority of the population considered it a matter of course to use violence when dealing with their children, such as using the saying, "A good beating has never hurt anyone." Equally, women—and thus the female dimension of social life—were oppressed and devalued. The church expressed the essence of this devaluation with a quote from Paul the Apostle, "mulier in ecclesia taceat" — "Let the woman be silent in church" —and not just in church, but in all vital areas of life.

This policy of using physical violence to correct children and of marginalizing women's voices continued the elementary structural violence of the patriarchal empires (Janus, 2018b) that preceded the developing industrial societies where industrial tycoons and syndicates iterated their structures of serfdom and utilization. Emperors and noblemen had used elaborate enactments to induce a narcissistic trance in the population that could veil the violent character of their configurations of dependency and exploitation. In the aftermath of the enlightenment however—and for the first time in history—these stagings were questioned by the social movements of the 19th century.

As the structures of society transformed towards Modernism, the incapacity of the Tsar and the German and Austrian emperors to adjust and administer a constitutional monarchy eventually lead to the outbreak of World War I (deMause, 2005; Janus, 2018a). The reality of the Western democracies' defeat wrenched the people of Central and Eastern Europe from their trance—one that had been induced by medieval structures of dependency and serfdom. Now, they were free to embrace self-governing democratic structures—or at least make the attempt.

In Russia, the experiment did not last. The absolute structures of violence within society and family remained dominant. In Germany, it continued for fifteen years. For the majority of both societies, familial and educational structures were still based on structural violence dating back to the time of emperor and tsar, and the aforementioned dictatorships were a mundane re-enactment of these structures. Those who were forced to unconditionally subjugate themselves to a thrashing and violent father were drawn to perpetuate this unconditional subjugation under a “leader” who seemed all-powerful.

Looking at the context from this enhanced perspective facilitates a crucial insight: the emotional undercurrent of an omnipotent “leader” is the original experience with the gestational parent. Before birth, the mother or gestational parent nourishes, detoxifies, and breathes for the child; during the first year, while the child is still immature, they maintain an emotional co-regulation; and finally, in the second and third year, when the respective regions of the brain are mature enough to provide the child with the capacity to walk and orient themselves, they release the child into relative autonomy (Janus, 2019a). This autonomy enables the child to create relations with themselves and their environment. The child learns to say “I” and to establish an increasingly responsible relation with a “you.”

During the latency caused by neoteny or delayed maturation (Janus, 2008, 2019b), the child acquires the cultural patterns of its environment by means of language and, later on, writing skills, and grapples with these patterns to eventually become the master of their own life during the transformative process of adolescence. Historically, new possibilities for maturity and self-development emerged in the wake of enlightenment; during the past two centuries, the realms of literature and the fine arts as well as the social inventions of the constitutional state, democracy and emancipation facilitated new ways of human subjectivity and autonomy (Janus, 2015).

In communities where serfdom existed, individuals were less blessed with these opportunities for maturity; people lived under the conditions of serfdom, dependency, and exploitation in a relational mode of projection. The parents lived in infantile dependency on civic and sacral authorities, and the children's social relations mirrored these structures.

Just like in early childhood, these authorities were the real center of autonomy and their standards were to be obeyed. Ego formation and self-reliance as we know it today, it seems, were very rarely possible under these circumstances.

In their social relations, people in Medieval times maintained the emotional structures of infancy throughout their entire life: the civic and sacral authorities were to provide everything necessary for their well-being, and their emotional co-regulation was administered by the regularities and festivities of the ecclesiastical year. The tragedy of the Thirty Year War (1618-1648) finally challenged the ecclesiastical claim to exclusivity. In the framework of the Treaty of Westphalia, social tolerance was established on a collective-psychological level, along with the development of a certain mental autonomy and subjectivity—as mirrored, for example, in Shakespeare’s poetry. In his play *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare (1599): “It is not in the stars, it is in us” (p. 341).

This new framework allowed for more personal relations between parents and children, as documented in the autobiographies of the 17th and 18th century (Frenken, 2002). In the 18th century, these ideas prompted educational programs for women (Petschauer, 1989), which, in return, became the framework and root layer of the enlightenment and its changes in mentality. Where the bosom of the church and the divine right of emperors had been the guarantee for life, now man himself became king and creator of his own life and was responsible for his own relations (Obrist, 1988).

Friedrich Schiller captured this mentality change in a verse of his poem, *Das Ideal und das Leben* (“The Ideal and Life”): „Und nimmst du die Gottheit in Deinen Willen auf, steigt sie von ihrem Weltenthron” (“And with divinity thou sharest the throne, Let but divinity become thy will!” Bulwer-Lytton; Schiller 1795, 204). Connected with this change of mentality was the challenge to co-design the transformative process of life with its „Stirb und werde” (“Die and Become”), along the lines of Jakob Burckhardt (1990) „Wir möchten gern die Welle verstehen, die uns trägt, doch wir sind selbst die Welle” (“We long to understand the wave that carries us, yet we ourselves are the wave”).

While this change took place in an elite layer of civil upper class, the majority of the population maintained the old modalities of dependency and serfdom in relation to authority and, in their dealings with their children, showed little in the way of empathy (DeMause, 1979). Exploitation by land barons was substituted with exploitation by industrial barons, thus the hierarchical, patriarchal structures of violence remained in place. It is significant that on a deeper level, paternal power is derived from the original experience of the almighty, protective mother—as Carola Meier-Seethaler (1983) documented for patriarchal cultures in general. These correlations are particularly comprehensible in the example of the transformation from matriarchal

to patriarchal structures in the Sumerian society (Lerner, 1995; Göttner-Abendroth, 2019). Beneath the surface however, the incipient stages of a modern, pluralist and democratic society began to emerge, bringing forth a demand for an autonomous and voluntary life. The discovery of the biographic significance of adolescence by Stanley Hall (1906) at the end of the 19th century was but one sign of this development. In Germany, the novels by Hermann Hesse („Unterm Rad”—“Beneath the Wheel”) and Robert Musil („Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless”—“The Confusions of Young Törless”) deepened and substantiated these discoveries. Arnold van Gennep (1909) then documented the universal significance of rites of passage for the development of identity and for negotiating the biologic maturation processes connected to puberty in human societies.

Still, for most of the population, hierarchies and structures with their dominance of structural violence remained in place. The “Education of Children” implied an authoritarian style that narrowed the potential for personal development; some of the prominent, more emancipated members of society such as Nietzsche and later Hesse (Erikson, 1975) deplored this state of affairs. The so-called authoritarian-subaltern character that Heinrich Mann portrayed in his novel „Der Untertan” (“The Loyal Subject”) remained dominant; the “Untertan” clung to his ideal of imperial loyalty and was willing to sacrifice his life for the emperor. However, the emperor’s claim to represent a higher reality—as it was stated in the divine right of kings and, ultimately, rested upon the archaic relation to the mother—was fundamentally called into question with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

In the framework of the enlightenment, new ideals of autonomy and self-determination emerged; they achieved majority appeal in the Western democracies and went viral, even within the empires. In the face of these new ideals, the traditional idea of imperial loyalty appeared as fundamentally antiquated. Its prelingual origins however, required a collective rite of passage in the form of World War I to impeach its credibility through the reality of defeat.

At the core, the inner dynamics of World War I represented a tangible re-enactment of perinatal patterns. Like birth itself, they enabled the existential transition from one world to the next, and facilitated a mental transformation from being a submissive subject in an empire to being a responsible citizen in a democratic system. However, this system still lacked inner orientation. Formed by education patterns based on authoritarian violence, a part of the population was inclined to seek orientation within structures of dictatorship that reiterated these authoritarian patterns.

Before we look at our central topic—how the systemic violence in dictatorships of the 20th century was a re-enactment of childhood abuse and neglect—this article traces how the collective-psychological rite of passage of World War I was needed to overcome the trance-structures of the empires with their medieval imprint. Then, we will explore how the structural violence applied by the many Russian families and schools in raising their children erupted in brutal Stalinist stagings. And finally, we will point out a few aspects of the background of childhood experience that informed national-socialist stagings of violence.

### **The Psychodynamics of World War I**

Lloyd deMause (2005a, S. 109 et seq.), Stanislav Grof (1983), and David Wasdell (1993) discuss the inner dynamics of war stagings within the context of psychohistory. One significant aspect of these dynamics is that on an unconscious level, social coherence is created by means of a trancelike, prenatal sense of being under the protection of higher beings. Societies were in thrall to the mundane representatives of these beings—emperors, nobility, and the pope. Just like the prenatal gestational parent or mother, these surrogates guaranteed a form of mystical sustainment. To question or threaten them triggered a vital sense of struggle for survival—the same that is experienced at the end of pregnancy. The logic of natal patterns that are stored in the brainstem and mesencephalon requires that these feelings must be dissipated by means of re-enactment (deMause, 1996). Towards the end of pregnancy, the growing child depletes its own environment and its mother's capacity to nourish, ventilate, and detoxify via the umbilical cord. Lloyd deMause worked out the so-called “growth panic” as a precondition for the re-enactment of natal patterns in wars (2005, p. 109).

As European societies moved towards providing their members with democratic structures and means of self-reflection after the 1796 French Revolution, the empires started to lose their credibility, since they were still relying on medieval structures of submissive dependency. The emperors hoped to defeat the Western nations that represented those perilous democratic structures. They intended to overcome them in an actual external battle—while in reality the threat emerged from within their own realm, through the development of emancipatory structures and democratic tendencies.

From the viewpoint of today's democratic mentality, it seems difficult to understand the trance-like mindset that produced the firm conviction that it was reasonable to sacrifice one's life for emperor and country. It may be easier to grasp when we remember that the relation to the emperor was a representation of the primary dependency on the mother before and during birth. According to brainstem logic, the threat to life at the end of pregnancy can only be averted by going through the

birthing process. And it is very possible that this process might take on the form of an elementary fight and require moving through a situation of “die and become.” “The fetal drama” is the experiential reality of this correlation, which is well documented in journals with caricatures that show encirclings, stranglings, deadly threats, and other reflections of birthing fantasies (deMause, 1996, 2005).

As Western democracies were victorious, their respective structures gained majority appeal in the German society and became a new ideal and a new orientation of social organization. The old belief, that security in life required subjugation to a surrogate of god, was shattered. However, this war came with colossal collateral damage: Millions of deaths and further development was burdened with the psychic destruction of millions of young men who had become murderers and lost their personal, physical integrity through mutilating injuries. These men—emotionally destroyed as they were—played a significant role in the emergence of paramilitary formations such as the *Sturmabteilung* and *Schutzstaffel* (SA and SS).

The Russian people were likely also traumatized by the consequences of the collateral damage of World War I. Deeply bound by medieval structures of authority, they were vaulted into the reality of industrial war with even less preparation than the Germans. Up until then, tsardom virtually evoked the assurance of a heavenly, prenatal safety with its hypnotic, suggestive glamor of an ideal tsar family and a church that impressed by way of magic mysticism. Its stagings camouflaged the social reality—the actual squalor, and maimed liveability. It lost its credibility when the war was lost, and this was the moment for the society’s latent violence to erupt. The wretched living conditions of great parts of the population, especially the incredible misery of the children, seemed to now govern social life by means of tragic re-enactment.

### **The Stalinist Reign of Violence and its Origins in Childhood**

As a result of underdeveloped labor conditions—conditions of serfdom and exploitation where intermittent starvation was common—the majority of the Russian population was dealing with dire living conditions. This situation was reflected in contemporary literature such as the works of Chekov and Dostoyevsky and is documented by social and childhood historians (Heller, 1987; Ihanus, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; White, 2020).

Stalin’s father suffered from alcohol abuse and domestically abused his wife and child (Fuchs, 2019). Compared to the situation in Western Europe, these medieval structures of serfdom and dependency were still dominantly effective and facilitated the social acceptance of tsarist



tyranny. Comparable evidence from childhood history allows us to extrapolate with great certainty that under these tsarist conditions the life of the children was marked by fear, hunger, illness, and violence (DeMause, 1979).

From the viewpoint of psychohistoric research, the various excesses of Stalinist tyranny can be understood as a series of re-enactments of childhood experiences that were common in Russia and for which Stalin's childhood served as a prototype. The famine he seems to have willfully produced by means of forced collectivization at the end of the 1920s can be seen as a re-enactment of intermittent starvation across many generations. These periods of famine were a regular occurrence in Russian history and were catastrophic for both adults and children. The children however, likely experienced them as an absolute and limitless reality of terror. Between 1936-1938, the Stalinist purgations and show trials re-enacted the atmosphere of paranoid violence in many Russian families. This, again, was an absolute and limitless reality for the children, and the re-enactments in these show trials were marked by their monstrosity and inordinateness. The accused's fate was nightmarish; they had no chance to be heard and thought that they could only survive if they accused themselves. This is a very immediate reflection of the infant's experience of a paranoid family atmosphere where violence is a reality and the child has no chance to be heard.

From a psychohistorian viewpoint, these socio-political events reveal yet another layer: the activation of perinatal patterns of existential imminence that for their conquest, required acts of cleansing (DeMause, 1996, 2000, 2005). During the sudden and confusing changes in society after the Russian revolution, eventually, the only "solution" was to restore unity by means of a personality cult around Stalin that, again, was monstrous.

### **The National-Socialist Dictatorship and its Origins in Childhood**

Compared to what is known about the childhood origins of Stalinist dictatorship, research with regard to the National-Socialist Dictatorship is much more accessible and detailed. A number of books have been published on this topic in the framework of psychohistory (deMause, 2001). Additionally, there are papers on the authoritarian character of the Sozialanthropologisches Institut in Frankfurt in the 1920s and 1930s (Adorno, 1995), Theweleit's books (2000), and others.

During the rise of Nazism, the mindset of a majority of the population was still informed by the old German style of education with its emphasis on violence (Adorno, 1995). The people had not been able to develop their capacity for self-responsibility and were overwhelmed by the challenges of liberal-democratic democracy, so instead, they sought their salvation in submitting and subordinating themselves to a "leader."

As psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson (1975) lays out most compellingly, one of the core principles for child rearing in Germany was the aspect of humiliation or degradation. Beyond being beaten, children were depreciated and degraded in complex ways: along the lines of, “You’ll never come to any good.” Fathers fought their own feelings of worthlessness by projecting them onto their sons, while girls were of no significance and had to be silent—not only in church. Children were thought to carry all kinds of bad habits and childish flaws that needed to be exterminated. Humiliation and degradation were at the core of the rigorous system of grading and punishment in German schools as well. In comparison, those who fostered a supportive and encouraging style of interaction with children were in the minority.

The economic crisis brought about by the emperor’s military and economic catastrophe was too severe, and those parts of the population that had been formed by an authoritarian education felt compelled to bow to a “leader.” This submissive act seemed to compensate for the lack of capacity for self-reflection and self-responsibility originally weakened by the authoritarian style of education. While the people themselves were lacking in it, they imagined the “leader” to possess a superior capacity to act. This may be illustrated by the critical observations of Anna Haag who was a contemporary witness of these events: “... ‘der Führer’ already is a mythological figure for the German people, an “evil spirit” that no one dares to contradict, not even in their secret thoughts, because you are afraid he would seek vengeance, as if he were a god—an evil god who knows and punishes everything.” (Von Harbou, 2021, p. 9).

This constellation was fueled with additional drama because the „Führer” drew his magical and totalitarian power from the real magic and all-encompassing power of the primary mother before, during and after birth (Janus, 2018a; Meier-Seethaler, 1993). In a sense, in the framework of patriarchal society, the father had taken her place and, incognito, co-opted her power. As a fatal consequence, even the earliest, pre-lingual, conflicted experiences with the mother, such as prenatal omnipotence and perinatal experiences of powerlessness, destruction and poisoning, were activated by the „Führer” and his relations with the world. The collective enthusiasm and collective expectations that were projected onto the „Führer” triggered in him his own prenatal feelings of omnipotence, as well as difficult aspects of his birth experience, such as archaic fears of destruction and poisoning. As a consequence, he increasingly lost contact with the political and economic reality and, in a state of delusion, appears to have acted out his feelings of omnipotence and simultaneous archaic fears.

We know that Hitler’s youth was marked by traditional German violence. He was beaten on a daily basis in such a way “that even his mother had pity for him” (Miller, 1993; Stierlin, 1995; Fuchs, 2019). His

father is quoted with the following curse: „Der Mistbub, der Elende, terschlagen wird ich ihn noch” (“That son of a bitch, one day I will beat him to death”) (Sandgruber, 2021, p. 199). His father did in no way consider or see him as a separate person, and in his presence, he must have perceived himself as the „Untermensch”—the subhuman being he later antagonized in the Poles and Russians, and as the vicious and vengeful cretin he later especially persecuted in the Jews.

Hitler’s ego-development had been impaired and curtailed by his father’s violence causing him to live in a dreamlike relationship with himself and the world. This however brought him into a form of ghostlike resonance with those members of the German society that likewise had been damaged by the customary, violent form of education. In his monologues at the „Berghof”, his private residency near Berchtesgaden, Hitler is said to have asked several times: “Why do they accede this?” “They” however, acted out of their own experience of an authoritarian and limitative education. The „Führer” had made their unconscious desires his program — a “world dominion” that could compensate for all insults and injuries. Ultimately, this program of omniferous global dominance aimed to restore the prenatal unitary world that had been lost too suddenly owed to “physiological premature birth,” and to act out correlated feelings of hate against “subhuman beings,” the “racially worthless” or “useless eaters” that in reality, reflected personal feelings of inferiority.

There is another abysmal correlation: women—patriarchally devalued and oppressed—passed on their experience of debasement and alienation to their children not only after birth, as exemplified in Johanna Haarer’s famous book (1940) „Die deutsche Mutter und ihr erstes Kind” (“The German Mother and her First Child”), but conveyed it even before birth in the form of a significant disconnection to the unborn child which, in turn—as we know from our prenatal-psychological observations—perceived this state as rejection, as being unwanted, and worse.

Two things are crucial to understand this correlation: the significance of feeling wanted and welcomed as an elemental experience, and its opposite—the dreadful effects of feeling unwanted and rejected. The significance of these feelings has only been uncovered over the course of the last few decades in many therapeutic settings (Häsing & Janus, 1994; Levend & Janus, 2000, 2011; Dytrich, 1988; Matejcek, 1987). Such primary unrelatedness or rejection may be experienced as an act of poisoning or destruction. Alfred Adler (1907) clairvoyantly saw early on that while difficult prenatal conditions create a fragility, even a normal birth can turn into an overpowering experience of trauma and rape (Janus, 2000). The birth-related condition of lack of oxygen with subsequent acidosis may be perceived as elementary poisoning (DeMause, 1996). Later in life, this experience may be reactivated in stressful situations and these elementary fears may be re-invoked.

Typically, if there is an incomplete ego-integration—the characteristic consequence of authoritarian, violence-oriented education—this content is perceived in a projection as coming from the other. In our example, „Führer und Volk,” the leader and his people shared the delusion of a “Judaism of the World that threatens to poison the body of the German people’s community.” This destructive attack had to be reversed and aimed towards the attackers in order to destroy them, as happened on a collective level in the extermination camps by means of deadly poisonous gas. This context is the primary prenatal emotional background for the violence and extermination that was acted out by the national socialist system. Today, prenatal-psychological and psychohistorical reflections can help us to better understand this correlation.

After this infestation and imprint through the national-socialist tyranny, it was particularly fatal and tragic that, as a result of the conditions of military defeat, the East of Germany fell to the realm of Stalinist tyranny with all its consequences. Political events there continued to be determined by the re-enactment of infantile experiences of distress.

### **Communist Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic and its Origins in Childhood**

Regardless of humanitarian social ideas brought about by the enlightenment and despite conscious will guided by these ideals, the politics of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), similar to those of Russia, moved towards a culture of violence and denunciation that left its imprint on all parts of society. This culture unconsciously reflected the distress of those working-class children that had been developmentally damaged by the historic oppression of their parents.

In his autobiography, Erich Honecker (1981) explains how these oppressed and damaged workers organized associations and conventions in their fight to achieve personal development and education for themselves and their children. Unhappy, authoritarian, and abusive parent relations were re-enacted in a form of daycare that often overwhelmed the children and damaged them in their development. (Israel & Kerz-Rühling, 2008). Personal experience with the conditions of deprivation, and the damages due to a working world marked by exploitation, were repeated on the level of society and thus passed on to its children.

On the one hand, there is the re-enactment of the parents’ experience of violence in their childhood in the political system of the GDR, along the lines of, “He who will not listen must be made to feel.” Until well into the 1970s, in Germany, it was considered acceptable to beat children. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Western allies

gave massive support to the democratic parts of the population and thus mellowed these tendencies and pushed them into the background.

In the GDR however, these tendencies were in line with a disposition for violence among even the post-stalinist Russian leaders. Their support went to those parts of the population that still held on to traditional structures of violence. The incredible culture of denunciation in the GDR can be seen as re-enactment of elementary mistrust that authoritarian parents hedged against their own children. In return, the children's latent rage and lack of loyalty were a result of their parents' indifference and disregard of their needs. A number of other elements of GDR culture could be identified and possibly brought to comprehension as re-enactments of childhood distress.

### Final Remarks

Psychotherapeutic experience has established the fact that adults re-enact unprocessed childhood experience over the course of their lives. Considering the collective-psychological level, however, this has been almost exclusively reflected in the framework of psychohistory. It is this reflection that allows us to shed more light on a number of incomprehensible aspects of political and social life, and to even find some inspiration for how to deal with these enactments.

Childhood and infantile experiences occur in an existential, emotional, pre-lingual level; retentive memory archives them in exactly this way. Affirmative conditions within the family are required to replay elementary experiences again and again in ever-new ways over the course of time and thus make them accessible to reflection. If the conditions are debilitating, or even traumatic, these experiences remain unaltered. In trigger situations, they come back to life as re-enactments.

It is a precondition for emotional and reflexive processing that we understand these correlations, and this is why the psychohistorical perspective that we have introduced in this article is of great significance. Mainstream political discussions remain on a descriptive and evaluating level; Real processing and the development of new perspectives is impossible on this plane. Today we can comprehend that the National Socialists used the *Untermensch*—or subhuman—to externalize the fight against their own humiliated and devalued inner child. At the same time however, it remains outside of our comprehension that of course, when Erdogan persecutes the Kurds, he too is fighting his own inner child, his experience of being circumcised and devalued in authoritarian ways. His eerie, unreal certainty that Kurds are “terrorists” who must be “exterminated” is a result of this correlation.

For the sake of completeness, I would like to point out another aspect of this correlation: an evolutionary biological peculiarity in the structure of the human brain. In the course of evolution, the brainstem developed

to the level of frogs, and thus facilitates simple reflexes. The mid-brain developed to the level of mammals, and thus facilitates social behavior, with complex emotional reactions. Finally, over a relatively short period of time, the cortex which basically just folded itself on top of these two structures, is only partially connected to them. This is the reason why, in our human behavior, we must first act things out (as happens in child therapy and in games) before we can reflect on their content and meaning at the cortical level (MacLean, 1990).

This a very complex concept (Köstler 1978), and I only mention it in this context because of its significance as a complement to the psychological aspects of the “physiological premature birth” (Portmann, 1969). It is the source of the “unfinished state,” or the immaturity of the brain and of both the infant’s helplessness and needs during the first extrauterine year. Long into its second year of life, the child remains in a magical and dreamlike state of experiencing that dates back to their time in the womb. This dreamlike experiencing or dreamlike consciousness remains with us throughout our entire life as a background of our experiences; it is present in our myths and fairy tales, in superstitions and creative work.

If the conditions of our development were difficult and traumatizing, this dreamlike pre-lingual experiencing can manifest in our adult life as irrational beliefs or delusional perceptions, and may lead to destructive behavior (Janus, 2012, 2021). To understand these correlations seems highly significant as it opens up new possibilities for action in the political arena, and on the opposite side of a military solution—one that still seems to be ultima ratio in international conflicts and is born from the traditions of patriarchal history that insist on enforcing peace with violence.

The aspects I have presented in this article may illuminate the fact that a society’s capacity for conflict resolution and peace-making crucially depends on the quality of primary development during childhood and the parents’ capacity and competence to create relationships (Grille, 2005; Axness, 2012; Janus, 2010). It may give rise to the hope that we are capable of growing out of the “slaughterhouse of history,” despite all contrary concerns. We have the knowledge, now let us use it! (Janus, 2018).

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