Introduction

In: To breathe or not to breathe?

> I have intentionally made extensive use of my own story, for a number of reasons. For one thing, my own stories are the ones I know best. As Thoreau said in *Walden*: 'I should not talk so much about myself if there was anybody else whom I knew as well.' Another thing. When I read a book . . . of healing, I'm engaged with the author in a personal way and want to know: How did she come to believe this? What in her life made her understand this subject in this particular way? I know I'm not alone in my nosiness. Most engaged readers of books on subjects like this one are voyeurs like me. The stories from my own life that you will read here will give you a sense of the ground from which this book sprouted (Greenspan 2004, pp. 6–7).

When I began writing this book some years ago I had serious troubles breathing. My symptoms included an inability to breathe freely, breathlessness, a crushing sensation and sharp pain in the chest, frequent sighing, yawning and gasping, and a rising terror, a fear that something terrible was about to happen. The experience was frightening and deeply unsettling. The more I tried to control my breathing, the more uncontrollable it became. Trying to not think about it, paradoxically, made it the only thing to think about. Distraction was futile. Several months and doctor's appointments passed and I did not have a proper medical diagnosis or any treatment to minimise the symptoms. Appointments with a psychologist to ascertain if there was any underlying psychological

cause also did not help. In fact, they somehow, albeit temporarily, managed to increase the symptoms. And so I started conducting my own research into the matter.

As I found out, the literature on the subject is abundant, and various causes and cures of my condition have been proposed. According to self-help author Louise L Hay, for example, the symptoms represent 'a fear or refusal to take in life fully' as well as 'not feeling the right to take up space or even exist'. In addition to her diagnosis of the main underlying causes of my symptoms she recommends a solution: create a 'new thought pattern' in your mind, along the lines of, 'it is my birthright to live fully and freely,' 'I am safe everywhere in the Universe. I trust the process of life' (1999, pp. 184, 201). One of my friends, though, thought I was simply hyperventilating and brought me a piece of paper describing some of the symptoms that closely matched my own. But there was nothing on that sheet about how I could stop them to get on with my life. So I resorted to an analysis of yet another self-help author, Ann Gadd, who writes, 'When we make a habit of hyperventilating it is an indication that we often assume ourselves to be in "fight or flight" mode, where our security is in jeopardy.' And if we are 'constantly finding ourselves in situations that make us afraid, it is an indication that we have deep-rooted expectations that things will go wrong rather than right.' Her solution? 'Find the source of your fear' (2006, pp. 40–45).

Not having much to lose, I sat down in front of an empty computer screen with one goal in mind. Can I find out what is behind my symptoms – my disturbed breathing and the feeling I might suffocate? Surprisingly, stories started pouring out of me. As they did, they astounded me. I wanted to know about *my* condition and I was thus utterly surprised that the first story took place in Slovenia and then in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, decades before I was even born. It was family history, and I was aware of scepticism towards historical narratives. For example, Brian Simon summarises this scepticism well: 'Why study history . . . at all? After all, it's all dead, gone, finished – what is important lies in the future . . . History . . . is boring, arid, defunct. Such as it is, it were better forgotten' (1983, p. 65). Mehni Khan Nakosteen,

on the other hand, proposes that history is 'always a study of ourselves, our problems, our hopes and dreams, our failures and successes, our joys and anxieties.' Therefore, 'so conceived, history becomes in a wider context the study of [hu]man[s] in the present sense and in the present tense' (1965, p. 13). Joseph Voros, too, suggests a rationale for reconciling past, present and future: '. . . historians, sociologists and futurists are all involved in pretty much the same work. The main difference [between them] is in the direction they look: historians look back, futurists look forwards, and sociologists look around' (2008).

My narratives, though, looked simultaneously back, forward and around, adding even more confusion to my already perplexed mind. They also oscillated between deeply personal narration and highly theoretical analysis, between local and global issues, and between historical, present and future times and various geographical spaces, making for a strange mix indeed. Furthermore, I was astonished to discover all these things that I never even *knew* I knew. At times it felt as if I was possessed by the spirit of my own and my family's past; as if the fractals of my ancestors' stories had to be depicted and announced to the world.

Writing my stories and their stories made me suffer, made me cry and made me struggle with how much I was allowed to reveal. It made me ask tough questions about authenticity and ethics, self-serving attributional biases and the politics of victimhood,[1] as well as whether I was a traitor or a truth seeker. At other times I wondered how much my ancestors were speaking directly to me. Did they perhaps speak through me? Did they project their fears on to me, or did I project mine on to them? What were these sentences describing events of the past that came out of me without much effort on my part? How did I know all these things? Where were the stories really coming from? Why am I writing in English? Who am I writing all this for? And, most importantly, can all these bits and pieces make for a coherent narrative?

Out: History, present, future

> Not only is another world possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day,
> I can hear her breathing (Roy 2003).

Breathing: Violence In, Peace Out investigates the long-term impact of
transgenerational trauma and of personal and collective experiences
with violence. As well, it looks at the possibilities for the emergence of
more peaceful futures, including the individual/social practices necessary
to bring them about. The text oscillates between a deeply personal and
an academic tone of voice. The personal narratives, which I organised
within the 'in' sections, are mostly employed for describing violent events
and follow the loosely chronological order and thematic context around
which the chapters are organised. The academic voice, the 'out' section, is
used mostly for reflection, analysis of events and for making sense of the
various experiences.

I have used the rhythm created by inhaling and exhaling as it symbolically
reflects not only how we 'take in' life and the world but also what we
'give out' to the people around us. This in–out pace models efforts to
understand the links between violence–peace, self–other, individual–world
history, personal–political, trauma–healing, experience–sense making,
stability–change, safety–threat, oppressing–freeing, perception of reality–
reality and past–future. To make it easier for readers I have used different
fonts for personal narratives/stories and the academic analysis of those
events. At times, as is so often the case in life, the in and out narratives
overlap. This becomes more so towards the end of the book, which focuses
mostly on psychological processes.

Breathing: Violence In, Peace Out is therefore a result of an inquiry into
my own condition of feelings of impending suffocation as well as into the
possibility of changing the inner landscape of our collective thinking amid so
much pain and suffering in the world now and in recent history. Up until the
beginning of the actual writing of this book I was unaware how important
the stories of the past and the stories of my ancestors had been in my life.
Once I was engaged in the task of peeling away the metaphoric onion layers

for the purposes of writing a reasonably coherent storyline, I discovered all sorts of memories that existed within the inner layers of my psyche. Like most other children and grandchildren of traumatised people I remember those memories in 'bits and pieces' (Danieli 1998, p. 5). Like many other children and grandchildren of traumatised people I did not realise nor appreciate the burden they carried. I would like to acknowledge their resilience in the face of trauma by dedicating this book to them, to the three generations of people that came before me, people who are still alive in my mind, and people who, for better or worse, help(ed) make me the person I am today.

Neither those who came before me nor I exist(ed) in a vacuum, so the following chapters are also an inquiry into the links between my own and our collective personal histories and world events – how they shape and are shaped by each other. Large sections of the book analyse various ideologies and worldviews that have marked the twentieth century, the century when the events in the stories took place and which still influence the landscape of our thinking around issues of peace, conflict and violence. Lastly, this book is also an inquiry into alternative futures – a range of personal and global future possibilities.

Chapter 1, 'Communism, utopia: The personal is political', starts with a story of my great-grandfather who left Slovenia for the Soviet Union to avoid prosecution and to build a better future for him and his family. Events take place mostly in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and, towards the end of the chapter, in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY or former Yugoslavia). This chapter deals with a totalitarian state and society's oppression–terror and seeks alternative understandings behind such oppression as well as for the ingredients that may prevent it in the future. The out section starts analysing the ways in which politics is not an abstract concept but 'a real and very powerful force influencing people's everyday lives' (Drakulić 1991, p. xv), which is a theme that runs throughout the book. Chapter 1 also starts an inquiry into another central theme: the ways our individual and collective images and views about the future impact on our actions that, in turn, help manifest particular preferred futures. Other topics discussed in this chapter include the raising of children, worldviews and 'othering' – all crucially important

to understand the events described in this chapter as well as the practices of waging terror, or alternatively, of building positive peace.

Chapter 2, 'War, dystopia: The holy trinity of militarism, imperialism and nationalism', describes the impact of the Spanish Civil War and Second World War on my grandfathers as well as on one of my grandmothers. It gives context to my indirect dealings with these massive events of collective violence, the impact they had on me as a child, and on my family as well as our society. While the Second World War experiences are also touched on in Chapter 1, there I focus more on totalitarianism and repression by the state. Chapter 2 continues with these topics while predominantly focusing on wars and inter-ethnic conflict. Chapter 2 introduces yet another major theme within this book: the analysis of some of the mechanisms behind acts of collective violence and the devastating, long-term impact they have on the fabric of a society. As is apparent from the subtitle of this chapter, the three themes given most attention here are those of (social) militarism, imperialism (including the issue of 'balkanism') and nationalism.

Chapter 3, 'Feminism, eutopia: Challenging patriarchy and androcratic masculinities',[2] discusses the role gender identities play in the waging of war and other acts of collective violence. Some long-lasting debates on the gendered division of life-giver and life-taker roles are reflected upon, introducing the latest concepts from gender studies that are relevant for rethinking of gender–war/violence–peace connections and describing alternative nonviolent ways to conceptualise gender roles and identities. This chapter connects the social practice of androcratic–hegemonic masculinity with the doing of war, arguing that the 'doing of gender' remains one among several key variables in the doing of war/violence. The in stories are the personal experience of some members of my family, providing links between the personal and the political and showing again ways in which themes discussed in this chapter manifest in the lived experiences of concrete individuals.

Chapter 4, 'Living trauma, eupsychia: The political is personal',[3] deals with the long-term and ripple effects of violence and includes an investigation into the ways in which previous unhealed traumas impact political events. In addition to showing the depth and width of destruction

of a society through war and violence, the question of the long-term impact of trauma on people's mental and physical health is also raised. As with all previous chapters, the analysis is followed by an inquiry into alternative futures – the range of nonviolent future possibilities, including for healing and post-traumatic growth. Again, events in the former Yugoslavia are provided as case studies. Some experiences of (post-)Yugoslav refugees, displaced persons and migrants are also brought into the discussion. The last in section of the book takes place in Australia. The analysis, however, is broader and global, linked to the specific theme and the current research that best explains the violence–peace dynamics behind these events.

Despite the many heavy and dark stories presented, it is my hope that *Breathing: Violence In, Peace Out* will help bring a little more light into the world and into the lives of its readers. Perhaps life is simply a balance of inhaling and exhaling, taking and giving, and receiving and releasing. If there is but one thing I would inhale, take and receive more of, it would be more inner and outer peace. If there is but one thing I could exhale, give and release, it would be sharing that inner and outer peace with others. May we all make better and more informed choices – including chosing the right thought patterns – to get us closer to more peaceful present–future realities.

Ivana Milojević

Communism, utopia: The personal is political

> Growing up in Eastern Europe you learn very young that politics is not an abstract concept, but a powerful force influencing people's everyday lives (Drakulić 1991, p. xvi).

In: Mirko

Some time between 1937 and 1939, Mirko Weinberger was assassinated. Earlier, he had 'disappeared' in the middle of the night, naturally, for the cover of night is often needed when shameful and unjust deeds are performed. He left behind his wife and two children, who all went on to survive Stalin's Great Purge and the Second World War. When the family left Slovenia, which was then a constitutive part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, they left behind their culture, extended family and community in the hope that a better life awaited them. The Soviet Union held the promise of an advanced, stateless, classless society where workers were valued rather than exploited. It held the promise of a utopia in which the proletariat of the world united, each giving according to their abilities and receiving according to their needs. The family was not only escaping poverty in Slovenia, the rise in Italian fascism, the earlier Italian invasion of the Austro–Hungarian Empire and the Slovene-populated part of it but also, perhaps most importantly, the records that detailed Mirko had been arrested three times for political activities and wounded once by the police.

Towards the end of the First World War, Mirko had been mobilised into the Austrian army. Shortly after his discharge in 1920, he joined the Yugoslav communist party, which promised, among other things, to provide a viable alternative to the tradition of the proletariat forced to fight war after war for the bourgeoisie. In the 1920s, Mirko was an activist and member of the Zagorje miners' trade union and one of the founders of the Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia, as well as of an organisation called Vesna, the Union of Workers' Youth of Yugoslavia. As a member of these organisations he was accused, as the bill of indictment at the court case in Celje in November 1924 stated, of 'propagating communism and revolutionary ideas, which represent a disturbance of public law and order, and peace . . . in addition to propagating communism, the intention of these organisations is to propagate anarchism, terrorism and commit murder in order to achieve such goals.' While the court eventually acquitted him of the charges, the threat of a fourth imprisonment still lurked.

Mirko thought that the communist police in the Soviet Union, on the other hand, would be on his side – initially, before and just after his migration to the Soviet Union, it was. New papers were arranged, work assignments given and accommodation provided. His successful completion of communist studies at the Communist University for Minorities (KUMPS) should have meant a stamp of approval, the achievement of a desirable skill set needed in a new society. Instead, years later a number of those who had studied together at the communist school came under suspicion. First, Yugoslav expatriates and successful KUMPS graduates were arrested and taken away to unknown places, then Mirko was also 'removed'.

We will never know what exactly happened on that fateful night when 40-year-old Mirko disappeared for good. Nothing was said. No one informed the family, mentioned a trial or issued a death certificate. It took nearly 20 years for Mirko's name to be uttered by the Soviet government's officials and bureaucracy. During Khrushchev's Thaw (1956–64), exactly a year after Khrushchev denounced Stalin in his speech 'On the Personality Cult and Its Consequences' (1956) while

simultaneously squashing the anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary (for which the Soviet–Russian state apologised in 1991 and 1992), Mirko was quietly pardoned. Unlike the first one, this second pardon did not arrive in time. Twenty years late, it prevented Mirko from joining millions of Soviet political prisoners who were finally released from the Gulag labour camps during the Thaw.

Instead, decades after his disappearance, when the old files were finally opened, it was confirmed that Mirko was on the list of 'foreign suspects' killed in the spirit of the times, which demanded all potential sources of opposition to the government be removed. Neither Stalin nor the Politburo actually pulled the trigger, yet the collective madness that they helped create normalised killings for which no one was ever held accountable. What the files also showed was that, ironically for a Marxist-socialist revolutionary, Mirko was killed in front of a church and buried in an unmarked mass grave behind this sacred building.

Out: Salvation

Perhaps it was not ironic, but fitting, that Mirko died in front of a church. Like the story of Christianity, Marxist communism was also about salvation. The former promises to save us from the devil, from our inherited sin, from oblivion, from our carnal bodies, and sometimes even from ourselves. The latter promised salvation from exploiters, elites, social and economic injustices, and sometimes even from our own selfish desires. Both assure glorious times in some distant future, for which you must either repent and die or arduously work at changing yourself and society.

Utopian sentiments, religious and secular – heavens in the sky or havens on the Earth, or 'the human capacity to visualize The Other as different and better than the experienced present' – are found in all civilisational and cultural traditions. Utopia, 'at once a vision, a way of life, and a tool' (Boulding 1986, pp. 345–46, 365), has been and remains a major force in picturing more peaceable and socially just ways of living, individually and collectively. Whatever their inspiration, their social and historical context, their understanding of peace and violence, or the degree of their rejection of violence, most pacifists and peace activists envision present/future

societies in which conflicts are resolved (more) peacefully and where there is a 'moral commitment to cooperative personal, social, and international conduct based on agreement rather than force' (Cady 2010, p. 313). It is hoped that such nonviolent arrangements – based on a rejection of the use of violence in personal life and in social, national and international affairs, affirming the moral principle of 'thou shalt not kill', and coupled with socially just arrangements – would result in 'harmony among individuals, justice in society, and peace in the world' (Woito 2010, p. 308). Various debates within radical and reformist, principled and pragmatic pacifisms and pacificisms aside, some degree of implicit utopianism is always present within them. This is so in both its positive meaning (how things could and should be, the preferred, more peaceful states of collective and/or individual being) as well as in its negative function (critique of society as it exists, critique of war and various other forms of violence). As the utopian dreamers of Paxtopia explicitly state:

> In a Paxtopian World, nations and the people of the Earth will strive to live in peaceful coexistence. The world will share a common goal – to make life better for ourselves and those we care about, while respecting each other and the planet we share (Utopian Dreamer 2012).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, we are generally expected to give up thoughts of utopia because it has failed us in the past. Even though some utopias have succeeded, and even though new utopias usually learn from the failures of the past, utopianism has become a 'sentiment' non grata. To a large degree, this is due to disappointment over the failures of twentieth-century progressivist politics, of which communism was, once upon a time, a shining example. The blame for a general scepticism towards utopia is also attributed to the other previously 'failed' utopian efforts, including many 'communitarian peace experiments' (Rigby 2010, Boulding 1986). The scepticism is also explained in terms of the socio-historical context of twentieth-century Europe, wherein the general dampening of optimism is connected to a collective reaction towards the carnage of two world wars and the emergence of several

totalitarian societies. Sometimes, it is assigned to a 'reflective realism', given the condition in which '85% of people in today's world live physically and perhaps 98% psychically' (Suvin 2000). Suvin connects this situation with 'present day capitalism without a human face', or a capitalism that is perhaps showing its real face 'now that it fears communism no longer' (2000). Many other theorists of utopia make a connection between 'the regimes and subsequent collapse of communist Eastern Europe' and 'the failure not only of Marxism, socialism, or communism but also of utopian idealism' (Breton 2010, p. 286).

Putting aside historical overviews of utopian thinking that have 'a predictable story line', often ending with 'a coda which proclaims or laments the death of utopia in our own century' (Kumar 1987, p. vii), the dominant and popular discourse on utopia does not share in this lament. Rather, it generally understands utopia 'as a perfect place or condition of existence' (Breton 2010, p. 284) and as such considers it 'imaginary, dangerous, and misleading' (Polak 1973, p. 162). In other words, 'of the many aspects hidden under the one concept of a utopia, one aspect – its imaginary quality, has stamped its mark on the whole and thus distorted it' (1973). Further:

> Although the critique of utopia is as old as the first utopias, most contemporary critiques owe something to . . . liberalist arguments [which assert] . . . that utopians fail to understand the diversity of human values and goals and that the desire for utopia exposes a naive faith in the benevolence of organizations, regulations, routines, disciplines, and unanimity (Breton 2010, p. 284).

In line with such interpretation, utopia is then also understood as a tendency towards uniformity and sameness, which inevitably leads to tyranny. Accordingly, utopia is necessarily about failure (Hughes 2000, p. 84) because its subjects are 'the fallacies and delusions of human hope':

> . . . utopia means conformity, a surrender of the individual will to the collective or the divine [and, as such, utopia is] basically for authoritarians and weaklings (2000, p. 84) . . . while some might

think that to be deprived of a life in utopia may be a loss, a sad failure of human potential [this can be the case only until they] consider how unspeakably awful the alternative would be (2000, p. 85).

Most utopian experiments, of which communism is but one example, end up in mass killings, argues John Carey. This is because the aim:

. . . of all utopias, to a greater or lesser extent, is to eliminate real people. Even if it is not a conscious aim, it is an inevitable result of their good intentions. In a utopia real people cannot exist, for the very obvious reason that real people are what constitute the world that we know, and it is that world that every utopia is designed to replace. Though this fact is obvious, it is one that many writers of utopias are reluctant to acknowledge. For if real people cannot live in utopias, then the utopian effort to design an ideal commonwealth in which human beings can lead happier lives is evidently imperilled (Carey 1999, p. xii).

Consequently, continues Carey, proponents of various utopian experiments aim to eliminate real people by various means, whether by invasive methods such as punishment, eugenics, genocide or purges; subtle methods such as education, alternative social arrangements, including transforming the family organisation, or the justice system; or requests for reforming one's self. Such inclinations may be connected to another key aspect of utopian thought, 'the rage for order' (Boulding 1986, p. 347), which Boulding defines as 'the powerful drive to impose rational, efficient, just and peaceful behavioural protocols and structures on irrational, inefficient, untidy and impulsively aggressive human beings'. Coupled with the fact that utopia is always 'the other – something totally different from existing society, and implying a radical restructuring of the existing order', this rage for order too often results in revolutionary violence, 'even when there is a commitment to peaceableness' (1986).

So was it utopia, or more specifically a communist utopia that killed my great-grandfather Mirko? In the meaning-making quest I have embarked upon in writing this book, should I be adamant that all utopian dreaming,

including those of big and small pacotopias,[1] therefore be abandoned? Should I simply accept the world as it is, including that large-scale violence is unavoidable? Should I argue against communism and socialism in all its forms and manifestations?

Perhaps some answers to these questions could come from further investigation into twentieth-century political utopias, including the communist ones, as well as into utopian sentiment in general. This is important, as (communist) utopia has been accused of many evils, including of murderous outcomes resulting from their insistence on sameness and (totalitarian) order. However, not all utopias show a tendency towards the rage for order and sameness wherein both change and difference are undesirable; indeed, 'many utopias are libertarian . . . and allow for a great deal of variety (more, perhaps, than what is truly offered in the modern world), change, development, and fluctuating desire' (Breton 2010, p. 285). Contemporary ecotopias, for example, argue for greater biodiversity as well as against 'monocultures of the mind' (Shiva, 1993). Feminist and multicultural utopias envision greater gender and cultural diversity than is currently allowed expression in most present-day societies. And contemporary paxtopias or pacotopias envision a *multitude* of peaceful and nonviolent ways of resolving conflict and negotiating differences.

Utopias always have 'roots in the real world, reflecting the values of the time and place in which they were composed or created, even as they express desire to change the world that produced them' (Breton 2010, p. 286). Utopias in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were thus 'dominated by an emphasis on authority and religion', eighteenth-century utopias were 'marked by an emphasis on the importance of reason', and those of the nineteenth century mostly depicted 'the emergence of peaceful societies in concert with universal economic cooperation and equality, as well as reflecting the rise of socialist and anarchist thought' (2010). The rage for order, sameness, uniformity and abandonment of individual differences are thus as much a feature of a modernist industrial civilisation relying on standardisation as they are of utopias of those eras.

Even though the 'standard critique of utopia' may recognise that 'there are different kinds of utopias' (Hughes 2000, p. 84), it still maintains that

'[a]ll utopians err in preferring the fulfilment of ideal representation to the mundane improvements which are possible in their time. It also faults utopians for opting for maximal value orientations' (2000). Grand designs for social reconstruction, the argument continues:

> . . . are nearly always disasters. While contemporary social institutions may be far from perfect, they are generally serviceable. At least, it is argued [generally by conservatives], they provide the minimal conditions for social order and stable interactions. These institutions have evolved through a process of slow, incremental modification as people adapt social rules and practices to changing circumstances. The process is driven by trial and error much more than by conscious design, and by and large those institutions which have endured have done so because they have enduring virtues. This does not preclude institutional change, even deliberate institutional change, but it means that such change should be piecemeal, not whole scale ruptures with existing arrangements (Wright 2010).

By this logic, the global international system – wherein national security is paramount and the theory of 'just war' acceptable – is only a result of trial and error and of incremental modifications over many centuries, which have been proven to ensure more lasting peace. Consequently, if the current system is radically changed, even by global 'cultures of peace' dreamers, chaotic wholescale ruptures will be imminent, potentially bringing chaos and unforeseen dangers. This also implies that grand utopia, such as pacotopia may be, is not only unrealistic and impractical but also outright dangerous (Hudson 2003, p. 16). This is because any grand utopia has the capacity to encourage human beings to 'give vent to totalist adolescent psychological states' and provide 'an illusory basis for human action'. Therefore:

> According to this critique, utopia is a form of subjectivism which ignores the fact that we cannot reshape the world in our own image. It is irrational in its refusal to acknowledge objective reality, immature in its

inability to realise the limited nature of the possible, and irresponsible in its failure to understand the role of fallibility in the realisation of the good (2003).

Despite good intentions, the utopian dream of peace may inevitably result in, as some critics of pacifism argue, the 'dismemberment of your country as well as murder of innocents, political oppression, social injustice, and appeasement of terrorist' (Woito 2010, p. 308). It is by a lack of a particular 'action' – meaning reluctance to use violence to prevent further potentially more massive and harmful use of violence – by 'good men' that the triumph of evil is assured. As such, pacifism remains the luxury, even the pathology, of the privileged.

Such warnings about the dangers of utopia within our current socio-historical context make it imperative that paxtopian or pacotopian sentiments be restrained, for fear of such sentiments being labelled unrealistic, naive, or worse. As a consequence it has by now become critically important to tread carefully on utopian grounds. Not so long ago and all over the world, as a factsheet on the 'Cultures of Peace' by the United Nations Association of Canada states, war was 'considered as inevitable and peace was only a vague utopian dream' (UNAC 2010). But with the development of necessary instruments to establish peace, such as, for example, modern-day peacekeepers:

> The UN established several programs intended to reduce, as much as possible, all the factors leading to outbreaks in [violent] conflicts. These programs did not only focus on peace keepers, who intervene after a conflict has erupted, but also on economic and social development, human rights, and the struggle to end world poverty and hunger. Indeed, all of these United Nations programs contribute directly or indirectly to the prevention of conflicts and thus to peace on earth. It is certainly true that, in the last 50 years, not everyone in the world has known peace, but it is gradually gaining ground. The dream of peace in the world is becoming less and less utopian and more and more attainable (2010).

Parallel to the request to refrain from dreaming and to focus on practicality, there is an imperative to demonstrate workable strategies that may close the gap between utopian dreaming (for example, peace on Earth) and the current world (ridden with violent conflict). This means that salvation from violence, individually and collectively, for us and others, lies not so much in the construction of an idealised peaceful world, but in the practice of devising nonviolent approaches that deliver more peaceful outcomes. Perhaps then, the argument goes, unlike previous failed utopian experiments, a *strategic utopianism* or the *practical utopia* of more peaceable societies in the future has a solid chance of becoming reality. This is because the main problem with earlier unsuccessful utopias was that their proponents were 'rarely able to devise political strategies to achieve their utopia which [did] . . . not destroy the very goals described' (Boulding 1986, p. 345). Consequently, this means that the strategies and methods must match the vision, as in the general motto, 'there is no way to peace – peace is the way'. In other words, what is absolutely necessary is the use of specific and concrete peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building approaches, all of which are continuously invented, trialled and evaluated. If this is achieved, it can be concluded that the gap between utopian peace promoting goals and new realities will remain minimal, if not obliterated altogether. At the end, however, we are still left with the following problem: how is one to travel if one knows not where s/he wants to go?

In: Zinka

Zinka (Terezija) Martelanc was born in 1899 in the village of Šempeter, near the northeastern Italian town of Gorizia. After her father Alojz Martelanc, a worker in a factory, died when she was 12 years old, she left home to become an apprentice housemaid for Austrian nobles. Her mother, a seamstress, died six years later, when Zinka was 18. With little family support, Zinka relied on her labour to make ends meet. She followed work opportunities and left the region of Šempeter when heavy fighting broke out in the area during the First World War. She moved to Ljubljana and worked in a storage facility and then in a messroom for soldiers, which Mirko frequented.

The period when they met was a turbulent one. Their country had recently proclaimed independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and joined other southern Slavs to create a new state (the internationally initially unrecognised State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs). In that context, both Zinka and Mirko became connected with groups and organisations that spoke for them. After the war and the birth of their firstborn, a daughter, they moved to Mirko's hometown Zagorje on the river Sava, where Mirko found work as a highly qualified glasscutter. At the same time, he was also working in the illegal communist party. By the time Zinka and Mirko had three young children under the age of five, he was arrested for the third time and consequently lost his job. The family's survival depended on the generosity of their fellow party members and others in the glasscutters' union. In return for their generosity, Zinka became the first women in Zagorje to join the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, actively participating in its work.

In 1927 the party sent Mirko to summer school at the International Lenin School. When it was over, Zinka asked her colleagues from *Kominterna* (Comintern or the Third International) when he was coming back. They told her he wasn't. He was not allowed to return because he was now apparently a Trotskyist. With their two surviving children, Zinka decided to join him in Moscow and succeeded in doing so in 1930.

When Zinka first arrived in Moscow she also studied at the KUMPS (Communist University for Minorities). She found the classes difficult, as she had to learn in both Russian and Serbo-Croatian, rather than in her native Slovene. After the successful completion of her communist studies she started working in a factory producing airplane engines. Her hard work paid off and she became a *brigadirka*, the leader of a work group, and an *udarnica*, 'outstanding worker'. Her reward for these efforts was '100 grams of sugar and half a kilogram of flour'. This may not seem much but this was during the period when four million Soviet peasants died from starvation. Ironically, while her husband became an 'enemy of the state', she was earning the trust of Soviet society.

Between 1942 and 1945 Zinka also belonged to a group that organised and led the Moscow radio station Free Yugoslavia, which

focused on 'promoting anti-fascist uprising in Yugoslavia and lobbied for the international recognition of a new, democratic Yugoslavia' (*Vojna enciklopedija* 1974). In 1945, after communism came to power in her country of origin, she returned with her now adult children to Belgrade. She found employment in the library where she was put in charge of 'bourgeois print', a post given only to tried and tested communists due to the potential 'dangers' of such genre. In 1954 she took early retirement from her role as manager of the Central Belgrade library and moved back to Ljubljana. She died there in 1985 but not before being awarded prestigious communist awards: the *Spomenica* 1941 (Partisan Medal), the Order of Brotherhood and Unity with the Golden Wreath (1969) and the Order of People's Merit with the Golden Star (1974).

Paradoxically for a Slovenian anti-fascist, she is buried but 40 easy steps from the *Cimitero Militare Italiano*, a memorial site containing the graves of hundreds of Italian soldiers who fell fighting for the supremacy of those lands during the First World War.

Out: Progress and regress

Perhaps it was only fitting Zinka was buried there, at Ljubljana's Žale Central Cemetery, which became the final resting place for fallen soldiers from all sides. Enemies in life, they lay side by side in death. Death, as they say, is the great equaliser. The communist utopia, on the other hand, imagined a society where such equality would exist for the living.

Even if 'Marx himself would have been horrified to have the Russian socialist experiment called utopian' (Boulding 1986, p. 353), communism was indeed a utopian experiment par excellence. The nineteenth-century founders of 'modern' and 'scientific' communism and socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, envisioned a society in which the 'abundance of resources would replace scarcity, individual freedom would be guaranteed, and historical cycles would disappear since discontent would no longer drive change' (Hollis 1998, p. 145). Other shared key elements that gave the various socialist and communist utopias their recognisable features could also perhaps be deduced to include no large differentiation and power imbalance between towns and villages or mental and manual labour,

no differentiation and hierarchical arrangements between social classes, no private property but more a communal ownership of goods and services, all goods distributed according to need, self-governance, demonetisation of finances, universal education and healthcare, international cooperation, and equality of sexes and peoples.

This communist promise of 'universal emancipation [was] supported by three centuries of critical, international and secular philosophy that exploited the resources of science and mobilized, at the very heart of the industrial metropolises, the enthusiasm of both workers and intellectuals' (Badiou 2010, p. 3). Furthermore, this promise was an expression of a larger human desire for social unity, harmony and equality that at times also manifested in the formation of communes and utopian communities. Intentional political and social communes, often marked by features such as self-determination, sharing of resources (including property, finances and income), common interests, non-hierarchical structure and consensual decision-making, formed many times in history – any time when groups of people 'banded together in communities to bring about the fulfilment of their own utopian aspirations' (Kanter 1972, p. 2). Thousands of experiments followed, all aimed at creating a new reality where society reflects 'humankind's deepest yearnings, noblest dreams, and highest aspirations . . . [and] where all physical, social and spiritual forces work together, in harmony, to permit the attainment of everything [founding] people . . . [considered] necessary and desirable' (1972, p. 1).

Despite these shared elements there were also many differences between the subsequent socialist and communist utopian (preferred futures) visions of various theorists and practitioners. It is only logical that, among generations of communists and socialists spread across the globe, huge differences in viewpoint on a whole range of issues existed. Contrary to some later interpretations, the communist utopia was never monolithic; rather, it was fluid and flexible, a result of many debates and differences of opinion, even though at times certain utopian discourses became the most dominant. Utopian socialists, for example, wanted to 'replace ruinous competition with cooperation' but did not propose the abolition of private property as 'the later scientific socialists and anarchists' (Hollis 1998, p. 256)

had. They believed capitalism was flawed, not that it was irredeemable (1998). Some socialist thinkers were keen on revolutions. Others preferred to focus on reforms. In fact, prominent socialist (including social democrats) and communist thinkers often disagreed on almost everything. Mikhail Bakunin argued with Karl Marx ('not all revolutions need to be violent' verus 'dictatorship of the proletariat'), Leon Trotsky with Joseph Stalin (over the role of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and whether socialism could exist in one country alone), and Eduard Bernstein with August Bebel and Karl Kautsky (gradual peaceful reforms within capitalism or its revolutionary overthrow) (Kolakovski 1980).

While the majority of socialists and communists believed in the necessity of gruelling work in order to change the old society, as early as 1883 Paul Lafargue wrote his best-known work, *The Right to Be Lazy*, arguing against a clerical–bourgeois conspiracy that lifts work to the level of a cult, creating all the personal and social suffering. He also proposed an antidote – refusal to work for more than three hours per day – that would see the 'earth, the old earth, trembling with joy . . . feel[ing] a new universe leaping within her' (Lafargue 1883). Amusingly, his essay concludes with an ode to laziness: 'O Laziness, have pity on our long misery! O Laziness, mother of the arts and noble virtues, be thou the balm of human anguish!' (1883). For her part, fellow activist Clara Zetkin took issue with what she saw as the nationalistic and warmongering attitude of some of her colleagues. Rosa Luxemburg went as far as to critique the despotic forms of behaviour by Bolsheviks and the complete liquidation of democratic freedoms under their rule. Zetkin and Luxemburg defended, again and again, internationalism, before some of their more chauvinistic male colleagues. Another Marxist–socialist, Ber Borochov, published '*Poalei Tziyon* [the Jewish Socialist Labor Confederation] Peace Manifesto' in 1917 in which he wrote:

> We see the main purpose of the impending deliberations to be: to oppose the war aims of the various states by the will to peace and the conditions of peace of a reunited world proletariat, and to organize the struggle for peace. The imperialist governments, which have

on their consciences the horrible, universal slaughter, are unable to control the unchained elements of destruction: they have neither the power to consummate their war purposes nor the courage to relinquish them. The bleeding human race awaits its deliverer. The international proletariat must become conscious of its historical mission to take into its hands the destiny of nations, to establish a peace that will preclude the danger of future wars by the strength of its union and to pave the way for the social emancipation of mankind (Borochov 1917).

Not all socialists and communists bought into the dominant discourse on the necessity of violent social change normative in violent societies – socialist/communist and non-socialist/communist alike. Indeed, an important element of mainstream communist ideology was a detrimental view that justified organised violence as 'the best means to end class violence and social oppression' (Barash & Webel 2002, p. 21). And yet, parallel to this dominant strand of 'realist' politics that promoted revolutionary violence, a rich antimilitarist, socialist–communist–pacifist tradition also always existed (Burke 2010; Young 2010a). Even though it was marginalised within communism and socialism – just as peace movements and pacifism are marginalised within contemporary global society – it nonetheless provided an influential critique of wars that were, according to their interpretation, waged due to imperialism and the expansionist character of capitalist economies, to the detriment of working classes everywhere.

This Marxist and communist argument – that war efforts may be misplaced, that structural inequalities should be addressed with a 'war on poverty' and on other similar grievances related to socially unjust arrangements by the wealthy and powerful – remains important. It is especially so during the post-communist era, which is marked by a general consensus on reverting to 'capitalism and non-egalitarian dogma' (Badiou 2010, p. 3). We are only now starting to realise on a mass scale the dangers of such a reversal; that is, the dangers of moving back to capitalist omnipresence without balancing such a change (and the consequent excesses) with the critique coming from some (powerful) alternative discourses.[2]

Pacifist alternatives are and have always been critical for balancing the excesses of bellicose societies and civilisations. However, due to the negative connotations that both utopianism and pacifism have often had, many pro-pacifist socialists went to great pains to distinguish themselves from these traditions. The difference between the 'bourgeois peace enthusiasts' and socialists, argued Rosa Luxemburg, lies 'in the fact that the bourgeois apostles of peace are relying on the influence of fine words, while we do not depend on words alone'. In fact:

> Our very points of departure are diametrically opposed: the friends of peace in bourgeois circles believe that world peace and disarmament can be realised within the frame-work of the present social order, whereas we, who base ourselves on the materialistic conception of history and on scientific socialism, are convinced that militarism can only be abolished from the world with the destruction of the capitalist class state. From this follows the mutual opposition of our tactics in propagating the idea of peace. The bourgeois friends of peace are endeavouring – and from their point of view this is perfectly logical and explicable – to invent all sorts of 'practical' projects for gradually restraining militarism . . . The Social Democrats, on the other hand, must consider it their duty in this matter, just as in all matters of social criticism, to expose the bourgeois attempts to restrain militarism as pitiful half-measures (Luxemburg 1911).

In the 1930s, the American James Burnham, then a socialist, argued that it is 'the duty of socialists to attack pacifism sharply and uncompromisingly' (Bennett 2003, p. 62). Similarly, Italian Marxist Coletti, 'paraphrasing Lenin's work *State and Revolution*' (Sullivan 2002, p. 30) wrote, 'It is impossible to be a Communist . . . if your aim is not a violent seizure of power.' Coletti denounced the pacifist tendencies of German social democrats, criticising them as 'accommodation with capitalism', whilst Bolsheviks subsumed them under derogatory rubrics such as 'social chauvinism', 'social pacifism', 'centrism', and 'power sharing with the burgouise' (2002). This reaction, at the very least, testifies to the

existence of and the necessity for engagement with pacifism, if not to the strength and prominence of pacifistic minority views, both within and outside the ranks of socialists and communists. In other words, there were always pacifist alternatives within socialist and communist discourses, even though it was their opposite that, by and large, became more popular and accepted.

Sadly, it was precisely such attacks on pacifism and utopianism, rather than socialist–communist utopia per se, that were instrumental in creating the 'pragmatic' policies of Stalin's era. Violence is rarely promoted as an ideal; rather, it is usually justified on the counts of being 'the only realistic and workable strategy'. In other words, we do not engage in violence because we want to, we use it because we must. Unlike utopians and idealists, who provided positive elements of preferred/utopian visions, it was predominantly the 'realists' and 'pragmatists' within communist ranks that argued for ways out of various (and continual) crises via military means and revolutionary violence. Furthermore, the idealism and the violent end of the first socialist government in history, or the first government of the proletariat, the Paris Commune of 1871, were not forgotten. Despite its many successes, the majority of socialist–communist theorists and leaders, including Marx, Lenin and Stalin, focused on the violent ending of the Commune, the brutal reprisal by which conservative repression saw tens of thousands of Communards slaughtered. Among Communards' mistakes, Marx (1871) and Lenin (1917b) later concluded, was their generosity towards the enemy. In other words, the compromising and idealism of the Communards did not work, and this overshadowed what did.

Large-scale violence always leaves behind a trail of (individual and collective) traumas, and such trauma often skews survivors' views of the past in a way that selective remembering of violence becomes paramount. Partially due to this, cultures of peace, or peaceful change and transformation, remain history's hidden side (Boulding 2000). It then takes conscious and concentrated effort to recover and remember such hidden history. For example, during the 72 days the Paris Commune existed it introduced many social measures, such as the regulation of work and pay to the benefit of the workers, the separation of church and state, and electoral

and educational reforms (including the introduction of free education). The intent was to help create a more democratic and progressive society. The Commune's violent end informed the views of many prominent socialist–communist thinkers, but so did its peaceful attempts to better society. Subsequent generations of socialists and communists were inspired by these attempts, even though the Commune failed within a few months. Later generations consequently went ahead and, via social and political activism, helped create policies benefiting many worker-class families who gained from the increase in higher education and other opportunities.

This was not limited only to the influence of the Paris Commune. Likewise, in some historical phases and countries, many of the utopian goals of early socialist–communist visions were achieved – universal health and education, higher literacy rates, affordable housing, nearly full employment, more opportunities for women to get paid work and an increase in overall living standards for the majority of the population. Unfortunately, these achievements, which mostly took place in the more liberal socialist countries and historical periods, were overshadowed by the brutality of the more totalitarian countries and historical periods. Some inner contradictions also helped with the eventual collapse of socialist–communist societies almost everywhere. These collapses – and their often-violent endings – overshadowed the more peaceful and just periods that are also part of socialist–communist history, achievements and traditions. But, in the end, the feeling of security, sense of community and equality, idealism and concern for exploited classes that existed as a consequence of progressivist socialist policies were eventually replaced by the overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction about the lack of democracy and individual liberties, such as freedom of speech and thought, as well as economic stagnation and poor material standards (in comparison with Western capitalist and democratic nations). Too much focus on wealth distribution and too little on wealth creation, coupled with issues around communal property (such as resentment over differing input and degrees of care by various communal co-owners, the controlling behaviour of petty tyrants) were some of the inner contradictions that helped bring down communist systems.

In addition to economic stagnation, perhaps most damaging was the reproduction of hierarchies and inequalities by the socialist–communist elite vanguard in all socialist–communist countries. This situation helped to 'spread [an] atmosphere of bribery and dishonesty throughout the whole society . . . [leaving] deep wounds inside and [hampering] normal relations between people' (Svoboda 2004). A number of socialist systems, including the Soviet Union, eventually collapsed because in reality they were not following their own utopian principles. Rather, they became *absurd* societies, 'with an intolerable disjunction between myth and reality' (Galtung 2008, p. 34). In the end, it was the discrepancy between utopian goals (such as equality) and the reality on the ground (such as reproducing inequalities) that created an intolerable schism.

After the collapse, a number of ex-socialist countries' achievements were thrown out together with the proverbial bathwater. Replaced by the structural adjustments of our current era, the new policies aimed to achieve alternative (though implicit) utopia, the capitalists' promise of material abundance and endless personal choice. It seems that even explicitly anti-utopian political projects need some level of utopianism in order to mobilise people to help bring about social change. That such a capitalist utopia is also temporary, fleeting and available as a reality to only a minority of the world's population does not make it any less attractive or real. For the 72 days the Paris Commune existed it was probably as real as our own reality, as were all the other socialist–communist achievements. During its existence, the particular utopia was not only aspirational, it produced a new reality – it was generative and positive, creative and transformational. This is equally true for a number of other, already mentioned, socialist and communist utopian aspirations, despite their final – often violent – collapse.

This later interpretation of utopia is in agreement with Hertzler's argument (1965, p. 266) that while 'not all of any of the utopias has been realized . . . much of them have been, as is the case in any improvement scheme.' Likewise, it agrees with Fred Polak's argument about yesterday's utopia often becoming today's social philosophy:

Many utopian themes, arising in fantasy, find their way to reality. Scientific management, full employment, and social security were all once figments of a utopia-writer's imagination. So were parliamentary democracy, universal suffrage, planning, and the trade union movement. The tremendous concern for child-rearing and universal education, for eugenics, and for garden cities all emanated from the utopia. The utopia stood for the emancipation of women long before the existence of the feminist movement. All the current concepts concerning labor, from the length of the work week to profit-sharing, are found in the utopia. Thanks to the utopists, the twentieth century did not catch man totally unprepared (Polak 1973, pp. 137–38).

Power exists only at the point where it is implemented, argued Michel Foucault; it 'exists only when it is put in action' (1982, p. 219). Similarly, the power of utopia fails only once it is no longer used: as 'a vision, a way of life and a tool' (Boulding 1986, p. 365). In the end, communist utopia produced some positive shifts, some progressive movement, even though these too were temporary:

> [despite the word 'socialism' recently acquiring] dramatically new connotations . . . nonetheless, some socialist ideas deserve respect and retention. In its original form, socialism was an admirable attempt to assist laboring peoples relentlessly exploited by capitalism in its early, oppressive stages. Many people have found the fundamental socialist ideal of universal social equality and justice a source of moral strength. Since capitalism and liberalism might not have survived without the influence of certain socialist ideas, to refer to what happened in the Soviet Union and East Europe as the triumph of capitalism is an oversimplification (Ikeda 1995, p. 45).

Attributing mass killings during Stalin's era to utopianism may also be an oversimplification, a straw-man argument or replacement of thesis. The actual numbers of deaths, of course, were staggering. In the Soviet Union alone, between Stalin's ascent to power and the end of communism

in 1991, it is estimated that tens of millions died, were shot or perished in prisons or in exile. Unlike similar massive death tolls that often occur in inter-ethnic conflict or inter-state wars, which seem more 'acceptable', these were examples of a totalitarian society running amok against its own citizens. In addition to these tens of millions in the Soviet Union, millions more were killed by this and other communist regimes in other times and other places, making communism 'not merely an abstract idea but . . . a global tragedy that brought grief to millions of victims throughout the world' (Bestuzhev-Lada 1996, p. 132).

At the same time, Stalin, rather than being somebody inspired by a particular utopian ideology, was by most accounts a pragmatist (Phillips 2000), a person who was more interested in maintaining power and utilising a particular style of government to meet those ends. Like many other pragmatists he believed that higher goals justify sacrificing human lives and that resorting to violence is an acceptable political strategy. This mythology has, among other occurrences, resulted in 'huge colonial genocides and massacres, the millions of deaths in the civil and world wars through which our West forged its might, [all which were sanctioned by] . . . the parliamentary regimes of Europe and America' (Badiou 2010, p. 3). Stalin's methods of repression were not new, nor were they the tools of communism alone. They were borrowed from previous regimes, have been used in non-communist totalitarian regimes as well, and thus have nothing in common with the utopian impetus of desiring differently.

Stalinism was perhaps more a result of not enough utopianism than too much, or about each utopia's unintended and unavoidable detrimental consequences. Utopia is about improvement, and thus it can be measured only by overall social progress. For societies to move forward utopia and utopian sentiments are paramount. It is only when a system/society proclaims 'the end of history', seeing itself as a pinnacle of social achievement and the best of all worlds, that utopianism is weakened and the decline imminent. If utopia is to provide 'as much freedom and happiness for its inhabitants as is possible to human life' (Breton 2010, p. 284), if it is to visualise a world 'free from poverty, strife, [violent] conflict, economic struggle and competition, hunger, disagreement, and

disorder . . . with every member of the citizenry enjoying a corresponding inner peace' (2010), then surely Stalinist repression had nothing to do with it. Mass killings, on the other hand, are a marker of a social and civilisational regression, and a sign of a society declining. Rather than being about the unintended consequences of utopianism, mass murders are in every way a departure from utopian sentiment, which requests better ways of organising human affairs. Each and every time humans choose to engage in such violent behaviours – despite the ideology that informs them – they are regressing from better ways of being, from which such extreme examples of direct violence are absent. In other words, neither utopianism nor mass killings exist as abstract and timeless states of being; they exist only once the actions and principles are set in motion. They manifest only once certain behaviours, by real human actors in the real time/space dimension, are put into action.

Blaming a positive vision of an improved present/future for social manifestations that are exactly its opposite may not be logical; however, it has certainly been very effective. In a similar manner that utopianism is blamed for manifestations of its exact opposite, dystopia, pacifism has been blamed for violence, feminism for the patriarchal backlash, multiculturalism for the rise in ethno-nationalism and socialism for the return of conservative social policies and the dismantling of the welfare state. At the same time, the long-term negative impact of repressive violence is most commonly conveniently forgotten. It is forgotten that, for example, repressive violence against the Paris Commune worked, in more ways than one, even though Marx's later statement that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (Marx 1871) was to have huge repercussions for even more violent historical episodes further down the track. Despite this, the recognition of previous violence causing further violence is commonly brushed away when totalitarian communist regimes are discussed. Rather, the worldview behind the system that those regimes sought to transform points the finger of blame towards the 'last refuge of the dispossessed' and the suppressed: hope. Not only has this discourse discredited utopian sentiment by and large, it has also managed to convince many about

the undesirability of all that is in some ways connected to socialist and communist visions. Good and bad lumped together, such discourse engages in the either/or categorisations and black-and-white thinking, which are, (not so) coincidentally, the exact crimes of which communist utopia stands accused.

In: Mira

Mira Weinberger was ten when she left for the Soviet Union with her mother and brother. Born in Ljubljana in 1920, in a house overlooking the River Ljubljanica, she officially became Frida Franklin in 1930 on newly received documents. This name was to help her cross borders. Overnight she became the daughter of Pavlina Maslova Ivanovna, born in Bucharest, a narrative which terrified Zinka because, 'Anybody wanting to check my identity would soon enough find out it was fake, given that I spoke neither Romanian nor Russian!' Mirko had earlier become Mr Franklin, a Canadian with Slavic first and second names (Josip Karlovič) in his documents. These fake identities could have easily been exposed and created additional anxiety for the family. They were never given any rational explanation for the practice of renaming when Soviet bureaucrats issued the documents. With these new identities they started their life in Moscow. But the new, better life did not last long, if it eventuated at all.

When Mira turned 17 she was fatherless. When she turned 19 she was a widow with a newborn baby girl – her husband Boris perished when the plane he piloted went down during the Soviet Union's attack on Finland in 1939. Soon after the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War (as the Second World War was known in Russia), she was expelled from the university where she was studying economics for being a 'foreigner'. A day after she turned 22, Mira gave birth to her second daughter, when she was in a camp for displaced persons in Engels, a port town on the Volga River in the Saratov region of Russia. A number of the women living in her barrack advised her to 'expose' the baby, because she looked unlikely to survive and Mira was malnourished. Mira's attempt to abort the baby during early pregnancy had failed when the doctor was arrested by the