

Silence in the Soviet Era

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Silence in the Soviet Era

I enter a room and the first thing I hear is silence. In a rush to turn on the CD player I drop my bag, move some clothes around, and step on some books. I don't want silence to disturb my comfort. Silence screams and makes you think about this world and about the questions you never find answers for. So you stop looking.

Besides silence is annoying in many other ways. I could never use to my advantage. When a child I had this remarkable capability to get into trouble for speaking up when I needed to be silent and to be reticent when I needed to justify myself or tell about what was oppressing me. I would get [hurt](#), but I would never tell anybody about it. I would cry on my own. Words and thoughts would stuck in me, and...silence.

I have never known how to [fight](#) this dumb muteness, in myself or in others. While my introversion affected me, I saw that I was a satellite of my whole culture. For as long as I lived, I saw how people in Belarus chose to be silent because of the fear to speak up against oppressive regimes.

In the Soviet era, anyone who dared to disagree was declared as an enemy of the state. One morning a person would wake up and his/her neighbor, friend, or a relative was gone. State enemies were dealt with in most brutal ways. Some were sent to isolation in [Siberia](#), which meant struggle to survive in Arctic conditions; others ended up in jail. In Belarus, there is a place known as Kurapaty, a forest some kilometers away from the capital where "enemies of the state" were brought. After being ordered to dig a pit, they were put around it and fired at. All together about 30, 000 common people were estimated to be killed. Although such repressions occurred mainly in the 30s under Stalin's rule, the first public acknowledgment of the event took place only in 1989 with the archeological discoveries of the bones and skeletons. Those who, realizing that dead would not speak for themselves, tried to organize events to attract people's attention to the historical tragedy, were chased by the state militia.

A decade past since that discovery, but no public recognition of the tragedy arrived.

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