

Mass Traumas, their Societal and Political Consequences and Collective Healing

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Abstract

This paper focuses on massive traumas at the hand of the Other and their societal/political consequences, which always include shared losses, from losing persons and physical properties to losing self-esteem and prestige. It describes complications in societal mourning and how they lead to transgenerational transmissions of the undigested images of massive trauma to the generations that follow and how such images turn into ethnic, national, religious or political identity markers. The need to protect and maintain large-group identities contaminates political, economic, legal, military and other real-world issues in relationships and conflicts between large groups. Lastly this paper examines psychoanalytically informed interventions that support collective healing and as well as peaceful co-existence between enemy large groups.

Introduction

This paper describes societal and political consequences of massive traumas for large groups. My term “large group” refers to thousands or millions of individuals who, from childhood on, share the same historical sentiments and sense of belonging, even though most of these people never cross paths personally. In our daily life we might reference these identities using shared, large-group ethnic or idealistic terminology, such as when we say we are Apaches, Lithuanian Jews, Swedes, Sunni Muslims or communists. Because some shared images of ancestors’ traumas *at the hand of enemies*, when they remain undigested, are transmitted from generation to generation, such images may become significant identity markers for ethnic, national, religious or political large groups. Preoccupations with such identity markers create present-day obstacles to finding peaceful solutions for co-existence with an opposing social or political large group or for healing such conflicts. This paper also describes psychopolitical concepts that prove helpful in attempts for collective healing.

Types of Massive Traumas

Massive traumas vary in type. Some spring from natural causes, such as earthquakes, tropical storms, tsunamis, floods, forest fires or volcanic eruptions. Some are man-made but accidental disasters like the 1986 Chernobyl accident that contaminated the atmosphere with tons of radioactive dust. Society may also respond traumatically to the murder or sudden death of a person who functioned as a symbol that unconsciously stood for a parent figure and/or was perceived as a representative of a large-group identity. Assassinations of John F. Kennedy (Wolfenstein & Kliman 1965) and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States, Yitzhak Rabin in Israel (Erllich 1998; Raviv et al. 2000; Moses-Hrushovski 2000), Prime Minister Olof Palme in Sweden, the National Democratic Party leader Giorgi Chanturia in the Republic of Georgia, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon, or the deaths of the American astronauts, especially teacher Christa McAuliffe, in the 1986 space shuttle Challenger explosion (Volkan 1997) and Diana, Princess of Wales, in a car accident in 1997 (Shapiro 2020) all led to responses that were experienced as shared trauma.

Other massive traumas such as terrorist attacks, wars and even genocide can be ascribed to the *deliberate actions* of an enemy, an outsider. It might spring from a territorial conflict between two neighboring countries that results in mass atrocities, such as the territorial conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir that has led to the disappearance of more than 8,000 persons since 1989 along with thousands of extra-judicial killings, torture, rape and Kashmiri Muslims’ fear of losing their culture (The Real News Network 2013).

Such deliberate catastrophes can also occur within a national boundary when there is chronic mistreatment or oppression of a smaller racial or ethnic group by the dominant Other. One of the best known examples of this is the history of slavery in the United States and the discrimination toward black Americans that continues today. As I was writing this paper, on May 25, 2020 George Floyd, a black American, died in Minneapolis, Minnesota while handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a white police officer who pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck. This event became yet another symbol of continuing racism in the United States.

Also as I write this paper, an unseen enemy called COVID-19 is threatening human beings everywhere in the world. We can consider it yet another kind of massive trauma that threatens everyone, regardless of their large-group identities.

When nature shows its fury and people suffer, victims tend ultimately to accept the event as fate or as the will of God (Lifton & Olson 1976), but after man-made accidental disasters, survivors blame a small number of individuals or governmental organizations for their neglect or carelessness. Obviously, those suffering severe loss, like the death of a relative, will feel the impact of a trauma more than the people in the same large group who are removed from a catastrophic forest fire or an erupting volcano. Such natural or man-made disasters can also evoke societal responses within the traumatized large group, mostly within the communities near the tragedy. If the backbone of the community is not broken, however, the society recovers. Here is a classic example of “biological regeneration”: In October 1966, a hill of coal waste collapsed sending around 300,000 cubic yards of coal slurry onto the Welsh village Aberfan killing 144 people, among them 116 children. For five years following this tragedy there was a significant increase in the birthrate among women who had not themselves lost a child. The “loss” and the “gain” in the number of children were balanced. The community recovered in a process of “biosocial regeneration” (Williams & Parks 1975, p. 304). On the other hand, there may be biosocial degeneration such as after the Chernobyl accident when women in Belarus, due to their exposure to radiation, feared having handicapped children. Thus, the birthrate declined and there was no biosocial regeneration during the initial years following this man-made disaster.

Occasionally a natural or man-made accidental trauma is reflected in the traumatized large group’s political relationship with a neighboring large group. Here I make references to two huge earthquakes after which one increased and the other decreased political tension. Between 25,000 and 50,000 were killed and up to 130,000 injured in the Armenian earthquake of December, 1988, a time when a hot Armenian-Azeri conflict was present. Most injured Armenians refused to accept blood donated by Azerbaijanis after the earthquake. This illustrated resistance to “mixing blood” with the enemy. There was also a massive earthquake in Turkey in August, 1999 that killed an estimated 20,000 people. Only a few years before the quake, Turkey and Greece had almost gone to war in a dispute over some rocks (Kardak/Imia) near the Turkish coast (Volkan 1997) and there remained high tension between the two countries. After the earthquake, rescue workers from many nations rushed to Turkey to help, among them Greeks. By publishing pictures and stories of Greek rescue workers, Turkish newspapers helped to “humanize” the Greeks as a large group. The Turkish disaster and the earthquake in Greece the following month actually initiated a new relationship between the two nations. Many people in diplomatic circles at that time used the term “earthquake diplomacy” to characterize this positive outcome.

If a political leader or public figure is killed (not by Others but by an individual belonging to the same large group as that of the leader) rage focuses on that killer and, if it exists, against the political organization the killer represents. Although this tragedy does not initiate an international conflict, it may sometimes inflame political tension within the same country.

When a massive trauma results from deliberate oppression or widespread torture by the Other who has a different large-group identity, narcissistic investment in large-group

identity, its symbols, and its undigested historical images become inflamed. The heavy shadow of large-group identity falls upon individual identities.

Individual and large-group identities

Unlike the terms “character” and “personality,” which are observed and perceived by mental health clinicians, *individual identity* refers to a person’s inner working model—he or she, not an outsider, senses and experiences it. Erik Erikson (1956) described this as “a persistent sameness within oneself ... [and] a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p. 57). Individual identity is interconnected with *large-group identity*. Using an analogy of a large canvas tent helps explain large-group identity. Think in terms of learning to wear two layers of clothing from the time we are children. The first layer, the individual layer, fits each of us snugly. It is one’s personal identity. The second layer is the canvas of the tent which is loose fitting, but allows a person to share a sense of sameness with others under a common large-group tent. The canvas of the tent refers to one’s core large-group identity. Some common threads, such as identifications with intimate others in one’s environment including their prejudices toward Others, are used in the construction of the two layers, the individual garment as well as the canvas of the tent (Volkan 1988, 1997, 2004, 2020). While it is the tent pole – the leader – that holds the tent erect, the tent’s canvas (large-group identity) protects the psychological state of both the leader and the group. In this paper I will not focus on large-group leaders and the psychological two-way street between them and their followers. Elsewhere I studied in depth the importance of the tent’s pole in steadying the tent canvas (Volkan 1997, 2020).

World-wide, large-group identities develop in childhood and then become fixed after the individual goes through the adolescence passage. Under a huge large-group tent there are subgroups and subgroup identities, such as professional identities. A person can change a subgroup identity without much anxiety, but, for practical purposes, an individual cannot change his or her core large-group identity. I am referring to general and typical situations here and not considering unusual individuals in a society, such as those who may be products of parents from different ethnic groups, or voluntary immigrants, especially in childhood. Think of a man—let’s say he is French—who is an amateur photographer. If he decides to stop practicing photography and take up carpentry, he may call himself a carpenter instead of a photographer, but he cannot stop being French and become German. While a large group’s identity may become modified by major historical events, its evolving a new large-group identity is rare, such as when a substantial group of South Slavs became Bosniaks while under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

Sometimes new large-group identities develop in adulthood. We see this especially in certain religious cults such as Aum Shinrikyo and the Branch Davidians, guerrilla or terrorist organizations such as Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and organizations with extreme political aims such as white supremacists and Neo-Nazis in the United States (Volkan 2020, Suistola & Volkan 2017). Members of such large groups exaggerate selected aspects of their childhood large-group identities by holding on to a restricted special

nationalistic, religious or political belief. Sometimes they become believers in ideas that were not available in their childhood environments. In short, they give up sharing overall sentiments with people who had the same childhood large-group identity but who have not made such specific new selections.

My background in studying massive traumas

In this paper I will focus on massive traumas at the hand of the Other that inflame large-group identity issues. First, I will briefly outline how I collected information on this subject. As a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, my involvement in political and societal conflicts started after Egyptian president Anwar Sadat visited Israel in 1977. During this historic visit to the Knesset, Sadat referred to a psychological “wall” between the Israelis and the Arabs—a wall that he stated accounted for 70 percent of the problems between them. The American Psychiatric Association’s Committee on Psychiatry and Foreign Affairs, of which I was a member, responded by bringing influential Egyptians and Israelis together for unofficial dialogues once or twice a year for six years to find out if this “wall” could be made permeable. Palestinian representatives joined us during the last three years.

In 1988, at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, I opened the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) with a faculty of psychoanalysts, other mental health professionals, former diplomats, political scientists, historians, an environmentalist and a linguist. This interdisciplinary team and I visited many areas of the world where international conflicts existed and brought together representatives of opposing large groups, such as Soviets and Americans, Russians and Estonians, Croats and Bosnians, Georgians and South Ossetians, Turks and Greeks, for years-long unofficial dialogues. CSMHI was closed in 2004 after my retirement. These dialogues involved many discussions about massive traumas, undigested pasts and ancestors’ histories. During my involvement in this work in different countries I also interviewed, often assisted by a translator, many people about their large group’s remembered traumatic times and images of past events. We met people on the streets, in parks, elementary schools, cemeteries or ruins, and while moving about in taxis or trains.

My observations on the impact of massive trauma began even before I opened the CSMHI. I observed firsthand the ethnic conflict in Cyprus, which began in the early 1960s (Volkan 1979). In 1990 I spent one week in an orphanage in Tunis with Palestinian children who had lost their parents to violence. In the 1990s, I also visited Kuwait twice and talked with adults and youngsters who were adjusting to life following the withdrawal of Saddam Hussein’s forces from their country. I also interviewed Romanians and Albanians who had been tortured during the dictatorial regimes of Nicolae Ceaućescu and Enver Hoxha respectively. In the late 1990s and early 2000s I visited internally displaced ethnic groups in the Republic of Georgia and South Ossetia following ethnic conflicts in this part of the world (Volkan 1997, 2004, 2006, 2013). Most recently I went to Colombia and Malaysia. In Colombia I learned a great deal about the impact that “war” between the government of Colombia, paramilitary groups, communist guerrillas and crime syndicates has had on individuals. In Malaysia I observed concerns about the possibility of escalation of tensions between the Malay people and Chinese and Indian ethnic populations living there, as well as negative outcomes due to the influence of fundamentalist Islam from abroad. Here I must add that human beings anywhere in the world

have the same psychological make-up. Under different circumstances, as individuals and as large groups, people can potentially become “bad” and carry out inhumane actions.

Initial reactions to massive trauma at the hand of the Other

As I write this paper, human beings everywhere are facing a non-visible “enemy,” COVID-19. After the spread of this virus, the International Psychoanalytical Association and other psychoanalytic associations provided guidelines for *distance treatment* by taking advantage of phone or online technologies. Some patients began lying on a couch in their own homes. They would see via the internet the analyst at the beginning and the end of their sessions, and only talk and listen during the rest of the therapeutic session. In the Spring of 2020 I collected data from over a dozen psychoanalysts located in Turkey and the United States to learn about their analysands’ initial reactions to the virus, especially their loss of being in the same room with their analysts during their psychoanalytic sessions. One common theme arose among these sixteen adult analysands: they returned to their childhood losses and re-experienced anxieties, old defense mechanisms and fantasies linked to such losses (Volkan 2020).

What was also interesting to me was how some of these analysands connected the virus trauma with their large-group history. For example, a Jewish man, during the first telecommunication session with his analyst, filled the hour by referencing his identification with Anne Frank. He felt that, by not being able to come to his analyst’s office, he was forced to go into hiding, like Anne Frank had done. At home he became preoccupied with the news of the virus situation in Israel. Another analysand who belongs to a specific religious minority group in Turkey became preoccupied with her ancestors’ rebellion in 1937–1938 in the newborn Turkish Republic during which they were killed by the government forces.

Earlier in this paper I mentioned the death of George Floyd as the latest symbol of continuing racism in the United States. This event was followed by peaceful protests and also by dangerous activities, including arson and looting, in many cities in the United States. We can easily remember other protests following the murders of other innocent African-Americans, including Martin Luther King, Jr. This time the physical distancing that is a realistic requirement to protect human beings from the COVID-19 infection was ignored by thousands of people. We can imagine there is a link between a shared wish to deny the danger of a virus and the eruption of protests related to a large-group history and political motivations. This is only an idea, and it is too soon to study this possibility closely.

It is realistic for countries to protect their borders when faced with a coronavirus pandemic. Yet, as I listened to the news, I realized how quickly this pandemic had become linked to large-group psychology. Besides the response to the realistic medical, economic, legal and educational concerns, we saw an inflammation of psychological border issues, societal divisions, racist attitudes, and expectations from political leaders. Interestingly, instead of attention being given to maintaining psychological borders, we saw that incredible communication technology also started to create “psychological holes” in the physical borders. For example, I began receiving email messages from individuals in many countries whom I had met but who, in normal times, were not in contact with me. Obviously, we have to wait to see the course this pandemic takes and how it will impact human history.

Covid-19 is a non-human Other for all human beings. In this paper from now on I will focus *only* on human Others who cause massive atrocities and traumas and the shared reactions to them. I will start by giving two examples of *initial reactions* to a trauma caused by the human Other, one from Cyprus and the other from Kuwait. The first one illustrates a kind of biosocial regeneration and the second one a biosocial degeneration.

Following a deadly ethnic conflict with Cypriot Greeks that started in 1963, Cypriot Turks were forced to live in enclaves within 3% of the island for eleven years under subhuman conditions until the Turkish army came to the island in 1974 and divided Cyprus into northern Turkish and Southern Greek areas. During the first five years of living surrounded by their enemy, until 1968, the Cypriot Turks could not even leave their enclaves. Because they maintained hope that Turkey would save them, their backbone was not broken, and they became involved in a form of regeneration using shared symbols and displacement. During this time, they developed a hobby of raising thousands of parakeets. The caged birds represented their imprisoned selves. As long as they could care for the parakeets and as long as the parakeets survived, produced babies and sang, the Cypriot Turks could tolerate their inhumane conditions (Volkan 1979).

Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces' occupation of Kuwait started in October 1990 and lasted for seven months. The invading Iraqi soldiers opened the doors of the cages in the Kuwait City zoo, and they also reportedly raped Kuwaiti women and locked up one or two of them naked in these emptied cages. Whether this story was true or not did not matter. What mattered was the Kuwaitis' belief that such degrading events took place. Our team's interviews illuminated that young Kuwaiti men generalized the idea of the raped women incidents and thus, for some time, wanted to postpone marriage in the (mostly unconscious) belief that the women they would marry might also have been raped (Volkan 1997). The reader will notice how this societal response to the Other in Kuwait brings to our minds the biological degeneration phase in Belarus following the Chernobyl accident.

Besides telling the story of an initial response to a specific massive trauma, it is more important to study the *usual* initial responses when any large group's conflict with an opposing large group becomes inflamed. At such times the relationships between people in each large group become governed by two obligatory principles: 1) keeping the large-group identity separate from the identity of the enemy; 2) maintaining a *psychological border* between the two large groups at any cost (Volkan 1988, 1997, 2006).

When people perceive that two large groups are not the same, each side can externalize its own unwanted aspects and project unacceptable thoughts and affects more effectively onto the enemy—sometimes unfortunately escalating to the “*dehumanizing*” of that enemy to varying degrees. Keeping a psychological border between the two large groups is important for controlling the externalizations and projections from returning. Whether the victimization becomes chronic or not, after the acute phase of the catastrophe ends, these two principles may remain operational for years or decades to come. Anything that disturbs them brings massive anxiety, and large groups may feel entitled to do anything to preserve the principles of absolute differentiation, which, in turn, protects their large-group identity. Thus, hostile interactions are perpetuated. *Minor differences* between opposing groups, such as dialect differences between Croats and Serbs—the Croat *mlijeko* (milk) versus the Serb *mleko*—assume attention. Minor differences become major ones in order to maintain the distinctions between

the two large groups and the psychological border between them. Sinhalese mobs in the Sri Lankan riots of 1958, for example, relied on a variety of subtle indicators—such as the presence of earring holes in the ear or the manner in which a shirt is worn—to identify their enemy Tamils, whom they then attacked or killed (Horowitz 1985).

Complications in mourning, transgenerational transmissions, chosen traumas, undigested past and entitlement ideologies

A massive trauma at the hand of the other is connected with various types of losses, such as losing family members and friends, home, economic resources, pride and self-esteem. Whether a person is fully aware of it or not, every significant loss is mourned. We need to differentiate the mourning process from the acute grief reaction when a mourner is in shock and, in a sense, beats his or her head against a wall and cries until reaching a deep recognition that the lost person or thing will not return. We have a mental image, a “mental double,” of persons and things that are important to us. Mourning means being preoccupied and having a relationship with the mental double of a lost person or thing in our minds until this mental double becomes futureless. For example, when a man reaches the practical end of mourning he no longer remains preoccupied, with associated emotions, with the image of a lover he had lost and no longer fantasizes having sex with her. The nature of the *actual* relationship with a person or thing before they were lost determines if the mourning process will last a year or so or much longer. Sometimes people may become perennial mourners (Volkan 1981; Volkan & Zintl 1993).

Losses after a massive trauma at the hand of the Other are linked to other psychological pressures such as humiliation, helplessness, inability to be assertive, “survivor guilt” (Niederland 1968) and sometimes unwanted unconscious identifications with the oppressor (Šebek 1996). Shifa Haq (in press) noted that decades after the disappearance of their loved ones, Kashmiri survivors-mourners continued to have fantasies that the disappeared individuals may one day return. This prevented them from bringing their mourning process to a practical end.

When members of an affected large group cannot mourn the group’s losses or reverse its feelings of helplessness and humiliation, often they psychologically *deposit* their traumatized self-images, accompanied by the mental doubles of Others who played a role in the trauma, into the developing selves of children in their care. This situation is known as “transgenerational transmission.” Psychoanalytic knowledge of transgenerational transmissions of trauma from one generation to the next primarily came from studies of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their offspring. The literature on this topic is vast. (For references to such studies, see Brenner 2019; Kogan 1995; Volkan, Ast & Greer 2002.) I have detailed clinical examples to illustrate that without paying attention to their ancestors’ traumas, we cannot fully understand some individuals’ interpersonal relationships, symptoms and the nature of their adjustment to life (Volkan 2015, 2019).

A child who is a reservoir of depositing is given a *psychological gene* that influences his or her individual and large-group identity. Persons in the next generation—when they are not successful in dealing with the psychological tasks given to them—in turn will hand down such images with their associated tasks to a newer generation. Through the decades, tasks carried

forward, generation after generation, may *change function*. For example, an attempt to reverse humiliation may become an attempt to humiliate the Other. Descendants of victimizers too may experience similar processes, such as difficulty or inability to mourn, as was observed among Germans after the Nazi era (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich 1975). Among the descendants of perpetrators there is more preoccupation with consequences of shared feelings of guilt than preoccupation with the shared feeling of humiliation.

As decades pass and images and tasks included in the transgenerational transmission of massive trauma reference the same historical event, the mental representation of the event links all the individuals in the large group. The mental representation of the event may then emerge as a *chosen trauma* (Volkan 1991, 2013, 2020). A large group does not choose to be victimized. Its choice is to make the shared representation of the ancestors' massive trauma at the hand of the enemy a most significant large-group identity marker.

In open or in dormant fashion, or in both alternately, chosen traumas can continue to exist for centuries. In "normal" times the chosen traumas can be ritualistically recalled at the anniversary of the original event. Greeks link themselves when they share the "memory" of the fall of Constantinople (Istanbul) to the Turks in 1453; Russians recall the "memory" of the centuries-past Tatar-Mongol invasion; Czechs commemorate the battle of Bila Hora in 1620 that led to their subjugation under the Hapsburg Empire for nearly 300 years; Scots keep alive the story of the battle of Culloden in 1746 and the failure of Bonnie Prince Charlie to restore a Stuart to the British throne; the Dakota Indians of the United States recall the anniversary of their decimation at Wounded Knee in 1890. Some chosen traumas are difficult to detect because they are not simply connected to one well-recognized historical event. For example, the Estonians' chosen trauma is not related to one specific event, but to their ongoing, almost constant dominance by Others for thousands of years.

A chosen trauma is not an image of a relatively recent historical event. For example, the Holocaust that links all Jewish persons, whether they were directly affected by Nazis or not, is not a chosen trauma. Survivors and their descendants still possess photographs and some belongings from that time, and their stories are still "alive." Those affected by the Holocaust and their offspring are still dealing with their *undigested past*. Only over many generations, when an individual, that person's parents, grandparents, other relatives and friends have no actual memory of the ancestors' trauma, it may become a chosen trauma.

During the first week of March 2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, in collaboration with other partners, held a meeting in Vilnius called "Dealing with the Trauma of an Undigested Past." The Lithuanians' undigested past is linked to still-remembered tragedies from Soviet times. Meanwhile Lithuanian Jews are still trying to work through the wounds caused by the murder of an estimated 195,000 to 196,000 of their people in Nazi occupied Lithuania (Voren 2011). During this gathering there were no references to chosen traumas. When my team from the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction and I were bringing together influential delegates of opposing large groups for years-long unofficial dialogues we would inevitably see inflammation of chosen traumas. For example, when in the 1990s we worked with people representing Estonians, Russians and Russian-speakers who were living in Estonia in order to help Estonia develop its new independent identity in a peaceful fashion, we had to deal with the Russian chosen trauma known as "Mongol-Tatar Yoke." The Russian delegates went back to a 13th-century massive trauma and,

through a *time collapse*, linked emotions connected to this chosen trauma to problems with the Estonians after the collapse of the Soviet Union. When Greek and Turkish representatives were involved in a series of talks, inevitably the Greeks evoked the image of the Ottoman Turks' capture of Constantinople in 1453.

The inflammation of a chosen trauma that raises obstacles against finding peaceful solutions for a present-day conflict is due to a chosen trauma's link to an *entitlement ideology*. For example, the Greek's chosen trauma is linked to the Greek entitlement ideology known as *Megali Idea* (Great Idea). It refers to a shared wish to recapture land under the rule of "Others" that is considered lost Greek land (Herzfeld 1986; Markides 1977; Volkan & Itzkowitz 1994). A re-activated chosen trauma and the entitlement ideology linked to it increase the large group's narcissistic investment in large-group identity. Then, peculiarly, peace is perceived as a process of withdrawal of such narcissistic investment.

In order to illustrate why we need to pay great attention to chosen traumas and entitlement ideologies, I examined and wrote about the story of the inflammation of the Serbian chosen trauma by Slobodan Milošević and his advisors (Volkan 1996, 2004). The Serbian chosen trauma is the shared mental representation of the June 28, 1389 Battle of Kosovo. The entitlement ideology connected with it is called *Christoslavism* (Sells 2002). According to the myth that developed among the Serbs some 70 years after the Battle of Kosovo, the event and the Serbian characters of this battle—especially the Serbian leader Prince Lazar who was killed during the battle—mingled with elements and characters of Christianity. As decades passed, Prince Lazar became associated with Jesus Christ, and icons showing Lazar's representation in fact decorated many Serbian churches throughout the six centuries following the battle. Even during the communist period when the government discouraged hero worship, Serbs were able to drink (introject) a popular red wine called "Prince Lazar."

During the year preceding the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo an elaborate ritual took place with the full permission and encouragement of Milošević. Lazar's 600-year-old remains, which had been kept north of Belgrade, were placed in a coffin and taken to almost every Serb village and town, where they were received by huge crowds of mourners dressed in black. Over and over, Lazar's remains were ritualistically buried and reincarnated, until they were given a final resting place at the original battleground in Kosovo where a huge monument made of red stone symbolizing blood had been built. It was June 28, 1989, the six-hundredth anniversary of the battle. In the mythology, Prince Lazar had chosen the Kingdom of Heaven over the Kingdom of Earth. By design, Milošević arrived by descending from a helicopter, representing Prince Lazar coming to earth to find a new kingdom, a Greater Serbia. Thus, Milošević and his associates, by activating the mental representations of Lazar and the Battle of Kosovo, along with the peak emotions they generated, first encouraged a shared sense of victimization followed by a shared sense of entitlement for revenge. This led to new massive traumas in Europe at the end of the 20th century. Even present-day conflicts that continue in this region cannot be fully understood without paying attention to the Serbian chosen trauma.

I live in Charlottesville, Virginia. On August 11th and 12th, 2017 a white supremacist and Neo-Nazi rally was conducted in my beautiful city. Marchers who came from other locations in

the United States chanted racist and anti-Semitic slogans and carried Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols as they opposed removing a statue of Robert E. Lee, the commanding general of the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War, from a park in the city's historical downtown. During the demonstration, a white supremacist deliberately rammed his car into a gathering of counter-protestors, killing a 32-year-old woman and injuring others. The tragic event in my city and other similar events in the United States are linked to American white supremacists and Neo-Nazis who belong to large groups with a shared entitlement ideology of establishing a country populated and controlled by pure descendants of selected white Europeans. Their illusionary entitlement ideology is related to losing slavery and racial segregation (Volkan 2020).

On healing

Countless methods have been applied in the effort to achieve collective healing of undigested pasts as well as the continuing impact of chosen traumas. Some of them, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work in South Africa under the leadership of Desmond Tutu, are well known. Others, even when they bring some interesting ideas to consider, do not lead to changes in societies and do not significantly help to improve peaceful co-existence between opposing large groups. During the last three years I was present at two series of meetings in the United States attended by both white and black Americans, people with high-level religious positions, historians, political scientists, former diplomats and mental health professionals. It was moving to hear stories related to slavery and racism. Sharing such experiences made all participants feel close to one another, and ideas about what could be done emerged. For example, during one meeting an African-American participant demanded that whenever a black person is on trial at least three African-Americans should be on the jury. In another meeting, participants agreed that erecting a monument in Washington, DC symbolizing both the black and white Americans' traumas during the American Civil War would be helpful in bringing the races together. Such demands or suggestions, even though they may be thoughtful and positive, remain within the conference room. To actually change racist circumstances in a specific area, such dialogues should be followed by some actual, concrete activity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, after I began isolating from routine activities outside of my house, I started to watch old television series. One of them is called "In the Heat of the Night," which was originally shown between 1988 and 1995. This series dealt with racial tensions and bigotry in the American South in 1960s. As I watched, I realized that artistic expressions viewed by millions were, and are, more influential in healing the scars of slavery and racism than academic gatherings.

In November 2006 at Cape Town University in South Africa I was honored to give the opening speech for the celebration of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 75th birthday and the 10th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' founding. The work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began in the 1990s as a way to deal with atrocities committed during apartheid. It involved victims telling their stories and "forgiving" their victimizers, who apologized for their deeds. During the 2006 anniversary gathering I observed some hostility between individual victims and perpetrators who had appeared at the Commissions' meetings. I became convinced that the success of the TRC was due to its helping

the societal mourning process in South Africa and evolving to serve as a monument that absorbs painful affects (Volkan 2009). I had met Desmond Tutu earlier at the Carter Center after I was invited to join the International Negotiation Network (INN) under the leadership of former United States President Jimmy Carter in the late 1980s. Instead of seeing an angry man, I saw in Archbishop Tutu a man full of goodness. He was for me a living symbol of human dignity, and his personality organization helped South Africans go through a mourning process.

After the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, the practice of "apology and forgiveness" that exists in many religions began to be promoted also as a diplomatic/political practice for healing massive traumas and finding solutions for large-group conflicts. The problems faced by those attempting to recreate the TRC's work, and their failures, suggest that a closer examination of when and how reliance on apology and forgiveness is useful, and when it is not, would be useful. Furthermore, my observations of dialogue series between representatives of "enemy" large groups in the presence of a psychologically informed neutral third party show that parties in conflict cannot reach an agreement on making an apology, accepting it, and forgiving the other without controversy; mostly, they cannot reach such an agreement at all.

As we know, attempts in different locations following the example set by TRC in South Africa did not end in success. A few years ago, when I was in Colombia, the selection of members for a Colombian truth and reconciliation commission was taking place. I sent a message recommending that a Colombian person with extensive knowledge of individual and large-group psychology be included as a member of this future commission. My suggestion fell on deaf ears. Here we should remember once more the importance of the personality organizations of political and community leaders: do they support societal healing and have the capacity to feel empathy for others, or do they focus on personal narcissistic gains?

Members of the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction and I developed a methodology for helping to develop peaceful co-existence between opposing large groups in conflict. We named it the *Tree Model*. The title of this methodology reflects the slow process of an unofficial diplomatic activity that grows like a tree and develops many branches. It is the only psychoanalytically informed, interdisciplinary methodology for finding peaceful co-existence between enemy groups, and it has *three basic phases*:

(1) Psychopolitical diagnosis of the situation between the enemy large groups: This phase includes the facilitating team's in-depth psychoanalytically informed interviews with a wide range of members of the large groups involved. This leads to an understanding of the main conscious and unconscious dynamics of the situation that need to be addressed. Sometimes understanding unconscious shared processes in a large group requires months.

(2) Psychopolitical dialogues between the influential representatives of opposing large groups: When the same influential delegates representing "enemies" come together for a series of dialogues for unofficial negotiations, usually meeting for four days every three months over some years, they evolve as spokespersons of their large group's shared sentiments. The facilitators do not offer advice or their own strategies for

conflict resolution, but they utilize ideas stemming from psychoanalytic technique in conducting the psychopolitical dialogues. It will be sufficient to state that during the psychopolitical dialogues, the facilitating team pays full attention to large-group identity issues mentioned earlier in this paper. It takes into consideration the importance of threats against large-group identity, it notices the importance of the shared mental representations of the large groups' histories, and includes the impact of transgenerational transmission of trauma, images of past historical events, as well as time collapse. One crucial aim of the psychopolitical dialogues is to establish a "time expansion" between more recent problems and past ones belonging to the ancestors so that more realistic negotiations about current issues can take place. This is done by not forgetting or denying ancestors' traumas, but by understanding and feeling how the mental representations of such traumas have become large-group identity markers. Eventually, the opposing large-group participants go through mourning processes and more realistic communications between the representatives of enemy large groups take place.

Earlier I discussed concepts of apology and forgiveness. These concepts are related to what I named an "accordion phenomenon" (Volkan 1988, 1997, 1999, 2020), which appears during the second phase of the Tree Model. This refers to opposing participants suddenly experiencing a rapprochement that is followed by a sudden withdrawal from one another. This phenomenon resembles the playing of an accordion, as the groups "squeeze" together and then pull apart.

Derivatives of aggression within the participants from the opposing groups, even when they may be denied, underlie this phenomenon. Initial distancing is thus a defensive maneuver to keep aggressive attitudes and feelings in check, since, if the opponents were to come close, they may harm one another—at least in fantasy—or in turn become targets of retaliation. When opposing parties are confined together in a meeting room with a third "neutral" team and are sharing conscious efforts for a civilized negotiation, they tend to deny their aggressive feelings as they press together in a kind of illusory union. After a while, this closeness threatens each side's large-group identity. The closeness then induces anxiety; it feels dangerous, and as a result, a distancing occurs. It is during times of squeezing together that participants become directly interested in ideas or feelings that can be related to concepts of apology and forgiveness. But, as I stated, when the accordion phenomenon is at work in the dialogue process, giving and accepting apology and forgiveness is illusory. When the accordion pulls apart, preoccupations with such efforts disappear. Realistic negotiations can be carried out when the alternating between distance and togetherness (the accordion action) is no longer extreme and everyone can easily hold on to their group identity. It is at such times that forgiveness and apology also can be considered realistically. However, on their own, they have no magical powers; they are useful only when they are part of a multilevel effort toward reconciliation.

(3) Collaborative political/societal actions and governmental and societal institutions that grow out of the dialogue process: In order for the newly gained insights to have an impact on policy makers, as well as on the populace at large, the final third phase of the

Tree Model, which also lasts for some years, requires the collaborative development of concrete actions and institutions approved directly or indirectly by central governments and regional authorities. In Estonia we were able to build model coexistence projects in two villages where the population is half Estonian and half Russian. We also created a model to promote integration among Estonian and Russian schoolchildren, and influenced the language examination required for Russians to become Estonian citizens. Two persons from our Estonia team ran for the presidency of Estonia, and one of them, Arnold Rüütel, became president of Estonia from 2001 to 2006.

A detailed description of the application of the Tree Model is beyond the scope of this paper, but such details are published elsewhere (see: Volkan 1999, 2006, 2013, 2020). There are limitations to this model. First, it requires that psychoanalysts and other clinicians develop expertise in international relations and collaborate with diplomats, political scientists, historians and others. Building an interdisciplinary team has its own psychodynamic challenges. Second, the tree needs water (funds) and it can be difficult to find sponsors for a process that will take many years before the fruits of the tree can be observed by everyone. Nevertheless, as the world changes, there is an increasing need to find serious new methods for preventing conflicts, reducing tensions between opposing groups and helping with collective healing.

In order to increase our knowledge about the collective behavior of large groups, in 2007 I established the International Dialogue Initiative (IDI), which brings together psychoanalysts, diplomats, sociologists, and other professionals from eight countries—the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Palestine and Iran—once or twice a year (see: www.internationaldialogueinitiative.com). For me, the IDI has become a symbol illustrating how human beings with different large-group identities and historical backgrounds can continue to speak with one another, co-exist peacefully. Members bring a psychologically informed perspective to the study and amelioration of societal conflict. Three years ago, IDI began offering workshops for training in large-group psychology.

From the beginning of history human beings have humiliated, oppressed and killed the Other. Human nature has not changed. Due to astounding world changes—advances in communication technologies, the evolution of a new type of globalization, massive voluntary and forced migrations, terrorism and related world events and now the COVID-19 pandemic—old official diplomatic methods often may not be enough or even applicable to many current international problems. This paper examines psychological obstacles getting in the way of a peaceful world. An understanding of the influence of the psychology of large groups *in its own right* has become a necessity. We should also continue to search for ways to achieve collective healing and a peaceful world.

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