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## Psychological Culture: Ambivalence and Resistance to Social Change

Alexander Etkind

"National character," "modal personality," "collective unconscious," "ethnic mentality," "cultural identity" -- these and similar notions are designed to capture psychological traits that distinguish one social group from another. Attempts to isolate such hypothetical qualities are not different in principle from efforts to describe religious, legal, or other social patterns found among people who have lived together for a length of time, except that psychological constructs tend to focus on subjective characteristics and are somewhat harder to identify. [1] For the first time, the link between culture and psychology came under close scrutiny in the nineteenth century. German linguists Steinthal and Lazarus and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt made an elaborate case for "Folkpsychology" -- a discipline that examined the interfaces between folklore, language, social institutions, and psychological traits. In this century, around the time of World War II, much attention was given to the so-called "modal personality" and "national character" that purported to describe the ways in which other people, often belonging to enemy nations, raised their children and behaved in their daily life. Margaret Mead, Clyde Kluckhohn, Geoffrey Gorer, Henry Dick, along with other social scientists, developed a concept of the Russian national character which sought to explain the contradictions in the overt behavior of America's arch-enemy in psychological terms. [2] In the last few decades, scholars began to pay closer attention to the role that culture and psychology plays in nation-building. As economic differences between nations level off, less tangible cultural characteristics -- emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, axiological -- have come to the fore as key factors determining national peculiarities. E. Gellner put it most provocatively when he said that cultures produced nations, not the other way around. [3]

As is the case with any other field dealing with human behavior, cultural psychology has its share of methodological and ideological difficulties. For one thing, scholars working in this area tend to gloss over considerable psychological variations within human groups. This is the source of many questionable generalizations about ethnic psychology, national character, etc. Complicating the situation, also, are differences in the ways individuals perceive themselves and the manner they appear to outside observers. [4] The latter tend to comprehend other people's actions in terms of their motifs and rigid personality traits, while insiders attribute their own actions to external circumstances beyond their control. Few

insiders agree with the judgments nonmembers pass on the local mores. What appears to be odd and problematic for those looking from without, seems self-evident and natural for group members. When things go awry, insiders are likely to excuse themselves and blame conspiracy, foreign interference, or bad luck for their problems. By contrast, an outside observer is apt to spot bad habits, ingrained inaptitude, or some other questionable personality traits behind the problems at hand and assign much responsibility for these problems to group members themselves. Take, for instance, the Marquis de Custine, a French writer who visited Russia in 1839, returned from his trip disgusted with what he had seen. He did not care for Russian customs, but was convinced that the Russians were to be blamed for their own misfortunes. His conclusion was a classical case of blaming the victim: "The oppressed have always merited their sufferings." [5]

This propensity to impugn other people's motifs and exonerate one's own conduct is the source of many ethnic and racial biases in cross-cultural perception. Cultural psychology could be employed for pernicious political purposes. Thus, the Nazis expressed great interest in Carl Jung's theories about the race spirit and collective unconsciousness. While this fact does not necessarily disqualify Jung's theories, it calls for caution: cultural psychology can be used to fan ethnic hatred. [6]

To counter Jung's national-psychology, Freud and his followers developed a sort of biological internationalism that ruled out any cultural specificity of mental processes. A. Adler and W. Reich took a keen interest in Marxist theory and even tried to help the Soviet government employ psychology in the cause of socialism. Denying any cultural specificity to psychological phenomena can present its own problems. This century knows several utopian projects designed to unify all mankind on the basis of common political (Marxist), mystical (Free Masonry), religious (the Reverend Moon unification movement), linguistic (Esperanto), and other supposedly universal qualities inherent in human nature and waiting to be summoned by skillful manipulation. The manner in which such projects have been implemented sometimes match the ruthlessness of the politics of racial and ethnic exclusion. German Nazis and Russian communists might have entertained opposite views on human nature but relied on the same mass-scale violence to implement their political schemes. Which brings us to the central theme of this essay.

There is a difference between "psychology" as an academic discipline and "psychology" as a shorthand for personality traits common in a given population. This difference is not especially pertinent when it comes to

traditional, preindustrial societies, which did not evolve their own psychological science. But in modern societies that have established psychology as an academic discipline with a strong applied dimension, we have to deal with a peculiar situation where "scientific knowledge" about the individual and group psyche is fed back to group members and to some extent informs their self-perception, if not actual behavior. The case in point is academic psychology in the Soviet Union that, from the start, was entrusted with the political task of building the "New Soviet Man" -- a model personality suitable for a future socialist society. We can speak in this connection about "psychological culture" by which we shall understand a set of theories and practices that describe, prescribe and facilitate the formation of certain cognitive, emotional, and behavioral traits in a given population. Psychological culture is not identical with the way concrete individuals feel, think, and act, but it offers them ready-made models for self-understanding and thus enters their psychological make-up. We should bear in mind, also, that the term "psychology" did not carry the same meaning in the Soviet context as it did in the West. There was no sharp line separating psychology from other so-called "social sciences." All these disciplines functioned as branches of "ideology" -- an overarching field which encompassed political theory, moral philosophy, historical science, applied psychology, and other subservient domains of knowledge reenforced by the government propaganda machinery and penal institutions. To understand Soviet psychological culture, therefore, we need to take a broader look at the political context within which it came into existence and was made to serve the system.

In this chapter, I will examine systematic efforts on the part of Soviet authorities to formulate, shape, and enforce a certain personality type in the Soviet population. I begin with a brief overview of stereotypes about the Russian psyche as it appeared to foreign observers, and survey the precursors of Soviet psychology in prerevolutionary Russia . Then, I shall turn to the Soviet era and the competing political-psychological projects for raising a New Soviet Man. Next, I shall analyze the model Soviet personality envisioned by Stalin and the evolution of this model in post-Stalinist Russia. And finally, I shall discuss the consequences that the decades of building the New Socialist Man have had on the current efforts to form a democratic society in Russia.

### **Russian Psyche from the Outsider's and Insider's Point of View**

Popular stereotypes differ from scientific concepts in at least one important respect: they are not meant to predict actual conduct and test a theory. Their main function is to reduce complexity to a neat scheme, to

make understandable odd behavior, and quite often, to disparage outsiders for their alien ways. Stereotypes are influenced by political attitudes, artistic accounts, exemplary personalities, as well by the past and present relationships between the groups to which both an observer and an observed belong. Notoriously unreliable as guides to understanding other cultures, stereotypes tell us something important about both the culture observed and observer's own culture.

For centuries, Russian culture has fascinated people in the West, who alternatively expressed their admiration and disgust for its inimitable ways. [7] In modern times, this interest would occasionally take curiously sexual overtones. Diderot and Voltaire looked up to the Empress Katherine the Great to realize the Enlightenment ideals. Marx held a life-long contempt for Russia and its rulers, but shortly before his death, he was so impressed with the inroads that socialist ideas made in this country that he set himself the task of learning the Russian language. Nietzsche was in love with a Russian lady, Lou Andreas-Salome, asked her to marry him, and, distressed by her refusal, commenced his magnum opus "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." Carl Jung fell in love with Sabina Spielrein, another Russian woman, who had a great impact on his personal and professional career.

Stereotypes about the Russian psyche popular in the West ascribe to Russians a bewildering mix of qualities, such as laziness and hard work, dependency and disobedience, moodiness and exaltation, mysticism and realism, shrewdness and impracticality, plus abundant and wild sexuality. For Madame de Stael, who travelled to Russia in 1812, "in every way there is something gigantic about these people: ordinary dimensions have no application to them. . . . If they do not attain their goals it is because they exceed them." [8] George Brandes, a Danish literary critic, emerged with a different impression from his 1887 trip to Russia: "[I]ntellectually, the Russians impress the stranger by their realism, their practical, positive taste for real." [9] Yet the same author described Russians as "radicals in everything" and insisted that "when a Russian has got hold of a thought, a fundamental idea, a principle . . . he does not rest until he has followed it out to the last results." [10] So much for Russian realism and practicality. Another (stereo)typical statement comes from a group of Americans writing under the pseudonym E. B. Lanin, who noted in 1891 that Russians were "a good-natured, lying, thievish, shiftless, ignorant mass." [11] Such Western opinions about Russia and the Russians could be multiplied at will.

This may or may not be a coincidence, but Western intellectuals promoting radical psychology spent a surprising amount of time pondering

the Russian psyche, as it comes across in the novels of Dostoyevsky and the country's famous personages (Rasputin is still the most widely known Russian name in the West). In the process, they revealed much about their own psyche projected onto the Russians. Some of the most horrid actions in the novels written by Marquise de Sade (whose father was Ambassador to Russia ) were committed by Russians. L. Zacher-Masoch, of sado-masochism fame, was also a great admirer of Russian culture; his erotic novels were filled with Russian personages and loving descriptions of Russian sexual mores. Freud, who had many Russians in his Vienna circle, once noted that "even those Russians who are not neurotics are deeply ambivalent." [12] His favorite patient, known under the pseudonym "Wolfman," was a Russian man, who provided Freud with the model case of primary scene experience and neurotic hyper-sexuality. Apparently, the founder of psychoanalysis initially felt more comfortable assigning this psycho-sexual dynamics to exotic Russians rather than to more staid Austrians.

Contrary to popular view, Russians themselves had mixed feelings about psychology. [13] "People call me 'psychologist,'" complained Dostoyevsky. "It's not true; I'm only a realist." [14] Tolstoy wrote pages exposing psychology as a false science. The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin claimed that "every psychologist is a spy." In the early twentieth century, during the "Silver Age," a period of major cultural developments that culminated in the Russian revolution, many intellectuals expressed similar ambivalence about psychology. Vasily Rozanov, an influential literary figure of this era, thought that Russians did not need any science of psychology, because inherent in their nature was "psychological acuteness" -- a natural ability to empathize with others, which could only be smothered by rational psychology. After describing in his novel the onset of menses in a young girl, Boris Pasternak made a characteristic comment that she had no need for psychology, which could lure her away from the wondrous nature, perfectly capable of running its course without any aid from psychology. Vasily Ern, a neo-populist philosopher of the first decade of the century, made a similar point to disparage what he called "psychologism," which would only restrict the natural flow of subjectivity, arrest human will, and stop the miracle of immediate psychic action. [15]

There was, of course, another intellectual strand among cultured Russians, the one that hailed psychology as an indispensable instrument for understanding the world and coping with social problems. This strand became more prominent in the 1910s, when chaos gradually enveloped the country, making more common economic and political explanations sound increasingly implausible. Zinaida Gippius, a Russian poet, made this

diary entry about revolutionary Petersburg of 1918: "The reality is so bizarre that it is impossible to believe in facts as they are. Only psychology provides understanding." [16] More subtle -- psychological -- hypotheses were called upon to make sense of a society hurtling into a political abyss. This movement away from legal-rational schemes favored by modernity toward more irrational, post-modern explanations is indicative of the crisis of modernity in Russia and elsewhere in the world at the time. The depths of human psyche would be plundered in search of more radical explanations and cures for the ailments of the age.

This turn toward psychology as a handy tool for reshaping human nature had its important precursors. One of them was Nikolai Fedorov, a Russian philosopher, who championed a utopian project of future society based on the principle called "psychocracy" and guided by a new science designed to make all people genderless and immortal. Odd as it may sound, Fedorov had many followers in Russia, including Dostoyevsky and Vladimir Soloviev. As late as the 1930s, Russian emigre political thinkers (P. P. Suvchinsky was the most prominent among them) swore allegiance to Fedorov and his philosophical social psychology. Fedorov's project had its historical counterpart in the psychological-religious program of "skoptsy" - a radical Russian religious sect whose members practiced voluntary castration of men and de-gendering of women (who had their breasts and clitoris amputated) as a path to sanctity. Ideas and rituals of this Russian religious sect curiously adumbrated some cherished bolshevik ideals like shared property, the end to competition, overcoming of gender differences, and blind loyalty to the leader. V. Bonch-Bruевич, a friend of Lenin and the Secretary of his Cabinet, took a life-long interest in Russian sectarians, apparently hoping to apply their experience to the monumental tasks facing socialist building.

### **Psychological Science in Service of Communism**

It seems odd indeed that bolsheviks, the standard bearers of Marxism in Russia, would give credence not to economics and politics but to psychology as a main leverage for social reconstruction. But in retrospect, this does not seem to be that surprising. After bolsheviks seized banks, factories, communications and declared victory, they expected human behavior change accordingly. But they quickly discovered that political and economic power was not enough: to change old habits, one had to reach deeper into human psyche than politics or economics could. This is where "progressive psychology" came into full view as a queen science called upon to accomplish the task that the old culture reserved for tradition, religion, and common sense. Recognizing the failure of the objective

economic and political conditions to effect desired behavioral changes, the party shifted its hope toward the psychology of hunger, pain, and death. This psychology was to help the party experts disabuse its subjects of obsolete beliefs, to reduce each individual to bare physiological reflexes, and to instil progressive forms of behavior. Bolsheviks insisted that everything should be planned and nothing remained unconscious. And they were convinced that the new science of human psyche was to do the trick.

From before the revolution and throughout the Soviet era, Russian Marxists were sizing up the new discipline as a useful tool for future reforms. In their quest for a new psychology, Marxists tapped one unlikely source: Friedrich Nietzsche. Coming from an entirely different tradition, this German thinker complemented the native Russian strands with his thoughts about psychology as a science of the future capable of revolutionizing the entire society: "[P]sychology shall be recognized . . . as a queen of the sciences, for whose service and preparation the other sciences exist. For psychology is now again the path to the fundamental problems." [17] Bolshevik intellectuals, most notably Trotsky, Bogdanov, and Lunacharsky, accepted this Nietzschean precept and consciously sought to splice Marx's socioeconomic utopia with the Nietzschean psychobiological one. Unlike Nietzsche, they believed that the technical problems of implementing this idea could be solved within a few years with the help of psychological science. No, these people were not lunatics, though in retrospect, at least, they seem to be exceedingly naive in taking the Nietzschean program at face value. What other Europeans saw as metaphor and hyperbole, Bolsheviks took as a guide to action.

While the ideological goals were perfectly clear to Russian Marxists, the practical means were still problematic. However, the optimistic leaders of the new order considered the task at hand to be a technical one. Neither Nietzsche nor Marx nor Freud confronted the problem head-on. Nietzsche's Superman was couched in mythological terms and its arrival was relegated to a somewhat indefinite future. Marx thought that human nature would change more or less automatically as soon as the new social and economic relations were formed. Freud seemed to have relevant methods, but they were not easy to apply.

"The [new] man hasn't come yet, but he is not far away, and his silhouette is looming over the horizon," wrote in 1904 Marxist theoretician, psychiatrist by education, Alexander Bogdanov. [18] "To publish a new, improved edition of Man," intoned Trotsky, "this is the next task of communism." [19] The Soviet era's most brilliant psychologist, Lev



Vygotsky, fully concurred: "In new society, our science will be in the center of life. . . . It will be the last science in the historical period of Mankind. . . . The new society will make a new human being. . . . This new science of new man will be nothing else but psychology." [20] An ex-psychoanalyst, Aron Zalkind formulated in 1929 the main task of the new psychological discipline as the "mass construction of New Man." [21] Anton Makarenko, who succeeded Zalkind as a guru of Soviet psychology, explained the purpose of his "pedagogical science" this way: "We should take as our task the formation of that type of behavior, those characters and qualities of personality, which are necessary for the Soviet state." [22] The eugenics -- a biological science of breeding a better human specimen -- also drew a passing interests of Bolsheviks. In the mid-20s, Nikolai Koltsov, a brilliant researcher whose studies received full support from the authorities, sought to apply genetic methods for the artificial selection of future mankind. Ilya Ivanov, a biology professor, petitioned the Ministry of Education (*Narcompros*) with a more radical idea: the cross-breeding of African apes and Russian citizens. His proposal was approved and financed by the government, which gave Professor Ivanov hard currency and sent him to Africa . This was done at the time when Ivan Pavlov, a Noble prize winning physiologist, had no food to feed his experimental dogs. [23] The program of building the New Soviet Man would be continuously adjusted in its technical details, but its main thrust remained unchanged throughout the Soviet era. Years after Stalin's death, a prominent Soviet philosopher, Evald Ilenkov, restated the original program as follows: "Formation of the personality of the new, communist type man on a mass scale . . . now becomes a practical task and the immediate goal." [24]

Implementing the ambitious program for educating a new man required extensive logistical arrangements. The Civil War was not yet over, but the spectacular institutional buildup in psychology had commenced. Six times more students registered as "pedagogic" majors in 1921 than in 1914. In 1922, Moscow alone sported over twenty institutions devoted entirely to research and higher learning in psychology and pedagogy. [25] Four federal ministries -- of Education, Health, Railways, and Heavy Industry -- had their own pedological services. In 1923, the Russian Psychological Association, the Russian Psychoanalytical Association, and the Russian Association for Experimental Psychology opened up in Moscow . In 1927, the Moscow Testing Association was formed, along with the All-Russian Psychotechnical Association and the Soviet Pedological Association, which had their first Congresses the same year. This bloated establishment helped the Communist party select leaders, place people in appropriate

positions, and improve their natural abilities. [26]

## **Human Nature and Bolshevik Culture**

The term "human nature" generally connotes stable biological and psychological traits beyond social control. In this sense, "nature" is opposed to "culture." This usage, which goes back to Rousseau, is very common in liberal and skeptical discourse. Freud referred to human nature each time he wished to make a point how difficult it was to change man and society. Radical thinkers and totalitarian politicians valued psychology more than liberal ones. If you think that human nature is a constant and more or less perfect, you need no radical psychological intervention to make it better. Thus, F. A. Hayek rejected Freud, Skinner, and psychology in general as a tool for social reconstruction. [27] The more one despairs about human nature and wants to see it ameliorated, the more likely one is to invest in psychology. Radical psychology and radical politics went hand in hand throughout this century. For political extremists, human nature was not a nature anymore; rather, it was equated with culture and reduced to an underlying socio-historical context. What was made by history, the radicals surmised, could be remade in the new historical circumstances through conscious efforts. Understood in such a fashion, human nature presented itself as suitable object for political manipulation. More and more it would appear to Soviet theoreticians as just another word for human culture. This transformation of the familiar nature-culture construct [28] infinitely enlarged the scope for radical intervention in human affairs and offered endless creative possibilities for the early twentieth century Russian intellectuals.

Since economic determinism proved rather helpless in affecting the human psyche, Bolsheviks turned to behavioral science for theoretical concepts and technical solutions that could complement Marxism. For all these thinkers, human nature appeared to be a culture in disguise, an infinitely malleable substance ready for social amelioration. Such was the broad ideological consensus that united otherwise different thinkers of this period. Said Vygotsky, "When we speak about the melting ( pereplavka) of man as a quality unquestionably required by the new mankind, about the artificial selection of the new biological species, we are dealing with a truly unique situation: man is the first and only biological species that makes itself." [29] "Psychotechnique" was among the most popular words of the epoch. Each major theorist construed it in a somewhat different way, but they all believed in the magic of "scientific" transformation to be accomplished with an aid of a well-tested psychological tool. For L. Vygotsky, it was "concept," for T. Lysenko -- "genes," for N. Marr --

"language," for A. Makarenko -- "groups." Responding to the official critique of his pedagogy, Zalkind sought to reassert his political credentials: "I always worked to prove an extraordinary sociogenic conditionality and plasticity of human behavior." [30] In 1931, Zalkind attempted to formulate the principles that would become the methodological canons for Soviet psychology, which included "activity," meaning that personality should be studied as an active and not a merely contemplative being, and "plasticity," implying that human nature was "not a warehouse" of ready-made traits but a store of dynamic potentialities.

Trotsky's ideas were especially informative in this context. "Man is purging himself from top to bottom; he purged himself from God, State, and the Tsar, he freed economy from chaos and competition and is now purging his inner world from the unconsciousness and darkness." [31] Effortlessly, Trotsky crossed the line between the commonplace and utopia, economy and psychology, Marxism and Freudianism. Everything inherited from the past was to be "purged" from top to bottom. It was not long before Trotsky discovered that the metaphor of "purging" could be applied to him as well. While still in power, Trotsky sought a shortcut to the bolshevik scientific utopia via psychoanalysis. He became familiar with the field during his Viennese emigration in 1908. Adler and his wife were his personal friends; he attended psychoanalytical meetings and left remarkable memoirs on this subject. In 1931, Trotsky sent his own daughter to Berlin to undergo psychoanalytic treatment. His disciple, friend, and life-long collaborator, Adolph Ioffe, was a patient of Adler. In September 1923, Trotsky wrote a letter to Ivan Pavlov advising him to synthesize his physiology with Freudian psychoanalysis. Both Pavlov and Freud, Trotsky reasoned, looked in the same well of human spirit, although Freud did so from above and Pavlov from below. Trotsky's passion for psychoanalysis was infectious, as attested by the creation in 1923 of the State Psychoanalytic Institute in Moscow. At the same time, the Russian Psychoanalytic Association had more top Bolsheviks as board members than professional psychoanalysts. Yet, this institution for psyching the New Soviet Man into existence did not survive Trotsky's political downfall. [32] We might add in passim that Trotsky's link to the psychoanalytic circles had an ironic and rather dark side. Naum Eitingon, head of Stalin's counterintelligence service who personally supervised Stalin's plot to assassinate Trotsky's, had an indirect link to the psychoanalytic establishment: his brother and business partner, Dr. Max Eitingon, was President of the International Psychoanalytic Association.

## **Stalinist Psychology and the Psychodynamics of Soviet Power**

Like several other projects favored by Trotsky, this one was first rejected, then simplified, and finally put into action by Stalin. With the downfall of psychoanalysis and with encouragement from Stalin, "pedology" took its place as the chief psychological theory. Aron Zalkind became its official leader. An ex-psychoanalyst, he was the author of the unbelievably restrictive "New Sexual Commandment of Proletariat." Pedology, supported by Bukharin, Krupskaya, and Lunacharsky, had its boom around 1930. Many psychoanalysts and psychologists, among them Sabina Spielrein in Rostov and Lev Vygotsky in Moscow, found refuge in its immense staff. In 1936, pedology was rejected by the Party and replaced with Makarenko's "pedagogic." Makarenko's normative vision for the New Soviet Man followed the familiar bolshevik blueprint. He was to love work for its own sake, be unswervingly devoted to the communist cause, and enthusiastic about any assignments that the party might give him. The transformation of an ordinary human into a model Soviet citizen must be radical and swift. The New Soviet Man's psyche would enable him to believe in the incredible, to endure the unbearable, to love things people normally hate. Sexual libido had to be reduced to a minimum along with other human needs, so as not to dissipate the individual's energy on trivial pursuits. Interpersonal feelings should give the way to "collectivist" identifications. Aggression and competitiveness would be neutralized in everyday life and reactivated when the country had to fight its foreign enemies. We can summarize the quasi-scientific concept of human nature and psychology espoused by Soviet theoreticians of this era as follows:

- (1) Human nature is far from perfect; its spontaneity is dangerous; like children, human beings should be kept under constant supervision; they require guidance and firm direction from knowledgeable adults.
- (2) Human nature is not fixed, but plastic and malleable; it can be changed in a methodical way; people, like children, are open to the molding influence of environment, culture, and society.
- (3) Transforming human nature is a complicated task; its ultimate aims and scientific procedures might not be fully understandable to the uninitiated; political education is the job for highly skilled and ideologically astute professionals.
- (4) Human beings owe their essence to society; the transforming power of society is vested in social groups or "collectives"; a suiting paradigm for a collective is an army unit or a labor team; family, peer groups, or other

primary group formations do not qualify as collectives.

(5) Concepts and words are primary psychological phenomena; personal experiences are verbally recoverable; the verbalization of personal attitudes is to be encouraged to facilitate official monitoring; nonverbal, unconscious, uncontrollable psychological processes are to be stamped out by the scientific manipulation of the human psyche.

Not to be outdone by Trotsky, Stalin professed himself a proponent of "scientific psychology." [33] It was with his approval that psychology was added to the school curriculum as a mandatory discipline -- an unprecedented measure that remained in effect until Stalin's death. With Stalin solidifying his power over the Communist party and the country, the blueprint for raising a New Soviet Man changed somewhat. It was becoming even more rigidly ideological and, at the same time, more personalized. Elaborate networks of personal relations sprang up, without which nobody could successfully exercise power and climb up in the hierarchy. One is tempted to compare this tangle of political, economic, and personal relations to the operations of a mafia family. To be sure, the members of the latter do not seek to take over the entire society; they pray on society at large rather than try to transform it from scratch, as the bolsheviks set out to do. But there are some instructive similarities, nonetheless. They are apparent in the sustained efforts to impart the organization's ethos to its younger members, initiation rituals symbolizing the individual's dedication to the organization, emphasis on personal trust and undivided commitment to the leader, relentless power struggle and endless fights for a position closest to the chief de jour, readiness on a moment's notice to cut old ties and rededicate oneself to a new power configuration. Learning these rules by heart was as much a condition of success as a matter of survival for those caught in this deadly game.

The mafia-like pattern of personal bonds was reproduced at all layers of power in Stalin's Russia . Each ministry, industry, army unit, work team, office, or scientific division identified with its chief -- a role model for his subordinates. A trusted comrade, such an exemplary individual would have the job done through the sheer strength of his character. A strong leader could accomplish the task even without technical expertise, as long as he possessed the right psychological stuff [34] . Strong will, intimidating demeanor, and heavy hand expected from a person aspiring for a leadership position in Soviet society.

Not surprisingly, the parent-child relationship became the paradigm for all social ties under Stalin's rule. Stalin's image was drummed into the

nation's psyche as a paradigmatic father figure, while Lenin was widely perceived as a grand-father of sort. Freud also noticed this pattern of leader-follower relationship, which he thought to be common to all politics. In the West, though, such psychological mechanisms were not altogether apparent; rather, they represented a fairly sophisticated analytical construct. In Stalin's Russia, on the other hand, people openly declared their love for the nation's *padre familia*. A Soviet professor could praise Stalin-the-father leading his grateful citizen-children to a bright future, and nobody in the audience would see anything wrong with this locution.

"Some people say that thoughts appear in the human mind before they are uttered, outside of language, naked so to say," opined Stalin in a broadside against Freudian Marxists and all wayward psychologists, linguists, and philosophers interested in the notion of unconscious. "It is absolutely not true. Whatever thoughts man might have exist only on the language foundation, on the foundation of the language terms and phrases. There are no thoughts naked and free from the language material." [35] This strategic idea perfectly suited Stalin's totalitarian political aspirations. During his reign, anything that eluded ideological control and resisted correct political formulation was to be barred from existence, or at least from psychological textbooks. There is nothing in the human mind that is closed to the party's watchful eye, that could not be revealed and corrected. Society, or which is the same thing for Stalin, power, is in a position to program and reprogram human psyche. Whatever man conceals from himself, he conceals from the authorities. To postulate anything unreadable and unrecoverable in the human psyche was to doubt the party's omnipotence. This precept survived many transformations in Soviet psychology and remained central in the works of such diverse thinkers as Lev Vygotsky, Alexey Leontiev, and Evald Ilienkov. Thinking was nothing else but inner speech, and concepts were interiorized social hierarchies.

### **Nature as Culture: Dimensions of a Metaphor**

Gender, aging, death -- all natural phenomena that could not be readily squeezed into an ideologically correct schema were suspect in Soviet psychological culture. The fact that the high ideological discourse systematically ignored the low bodily functions did not mean, of course, that the latter were wished away. Hidden in the interstices of an omnipotent culture were the incorrigible facts of human nature that kept intruding into life in spite of all the efforts to sanitize it, to purify it from natural imperfections. Thus, Soviets never managed to abolish death;

when a person died, the rituals of grieving and burial were performed, just as they were centuries before the October Revolution. Despite repeated attempts, no cultural forms pertaining to birth, marriage, or burial rituals emerged in the Soviet Union that bore an unmistakable imprint of Soviet ideology. The latter failed to leave any noticeable traces because the human life cycle had no recognized place in Soviet ideology. Ideology had a lot to say on how humans should live, work, struggle, cherish motherland, but nothing at all on how they should go about giving birth and facing death.

Compromises with nature were only temporary; ultimately, culture would overcome its inertia and make every bodily function follow a correct ideological blueprint. What follows is an attempt to codify some of the most salient characteristics that Soviet culture sought to impart to human nature, an ideal type of fully realized Soviet being toward which Soviet citizens were to move under the guidance of their spiritual leaders.

Power as supreme value. Human needs and values are many, but so far as Soviet ideology was concerned, none came close in importance to acquiring power, wielding power, enjoying power. Power was more important than love, respect, and health. It was to give more pleasure than family, creativity, and sex. The reason for this imperative was simple: power guaranteed its owner access to all other values. Education, career, friendship, economic security, and sexual pleasures could be exchanged for power, measured through a proximity to the party and state leaders. Luxurious (by Soviet standards at any rate) life awaited high officials -- summer cottages, limousines, opera lodges, ostentatious food feasts, the company of artistic stars -- just about anything, except private property banned by Stalin. With the power base lost, the person would have to give up everything of personal value. The "cult of power" had a its psychological counterpart "the cult of personality," which Nikita Khrushchev denounced as the essence of the Stalinist political system. In the words of Bourdieu, [36] all forms of capital -- economic, cultural, psychological -- correlated with and derived from political capital in Soviet society. The case of Stalin's henchman, Lavrenty Beria, comes to mind, his fabled sexual exploits being greatly aided by his powerful position as head of the Soviet secret police.

The Soviet authorities' uncompromising attitude towards private property and independent cultural pursuits makes perfect sense in this context, for these could not help but undermine the party faithful's monopoly on power and sever the link between the place a person occupies in the political hierarchy and the amount of pleasures meted out to this person.

Of course, there are values that are difficult or impossible to redistribute, like health, youth, and physical beauty. The latter belong to nature, which place severe limits on what could be done through cultural manipulation to enhance them. Which is why the Communist party perceived such values as a threat to its total power. Unable to control these values, the regime methodically sought to devalue them in the public mind, deprive them of their traditional cultural meaning. Biological universalities and constants of human existence were given new cultural interpretations undercutting their natural significance.

The subject as absence. Power was there to be wielded and enjoyed, but not conspicuously, for it did not belong to any particular individual. Contrary to the "cult of personality" thesis, Soviet power was not vested in a person; it came from the state and the party, whose comrades had to exude modesty and reticence and act as conduits for its collective wisdom. Trotsky showed too much personal ambition, which violated the Bolshevik's cherished beliefs. He acted like a master seducer conquering the feminine crowd, to use the image Freud employed in his essay on "Mass psychology." Trotsky's comrades never forgave him his charisma and mass appeal and ditched him at the first opportunity. By comparison, Stalin, was a paragon of modesty and collegiality. His demonstratively noncompetitive style in public suited well the spirit of the time. All top Soviet leaders had to suppress their ambitions and appear to the populace under the mask of humble servants of the state. Carefully planned and consciously constructed, Soviet power was modelled not so much on sexual conquest as on a long bureaucratic climb by leaders who proved themselves in the office, showed respect for their organization and its ethos, and were finally rewarded with the mantle of leadership.

The subject, the flesh and blood human being was conspicuous for its absence in official Soviet life -- the fact reflected in the Soviet political speech. People were not supposed to say "I"-- only "We." The plural form "We" implied an infinite number of other comrades who would have said the same thing under similar circumstances. Passive voice and impersonal forms are ubiquitous in Soviet political jargon. "It is proposed that . . .," a typical sentence would commence, leaving the uninitiated wonder who is exactly proposing. English language does not quite capture such subjectless grammatical constructions so pervasive in Russian speech. Maybe some languages are better equipped for power play than other, though any language could be twisted to convey power symbolism.

The Soviet leader was always a symbol, standing for something other than himself, embodying the idea of Soviet power, and subject to instant recall



whenever he failed to communicate the proper message to his underlings. A replica of power rather than a self-motivated agent, the leader served not as a prototype but a monument to be worshiped in lieu of the original. It would be unseemly for a portrait, a replica, a copy to speak out on its own behalf. In fact, the original was power itself, and the Soviet state could be seen as a shrine in which citizens worshiped power.

The psyche as discursiveness. The New Soviet Man had to be a supremely discursive creature, capable of verbalizing his innermost feelings and thoughts. No event of his psyche should have escaped notice -- his own and other responsible comrades. Psychological processes were to be recovered through speech. To control is to know, to know is to verbalize. Which is why confession qualified as the ultimate proof in Soviet legal practice. True, the confession might have been extracted by torture, but then pain and suffering, being nonverbal psychic events, were meaningless in themselves.

The emphasis on discursiveness did not improve the quality of verbal production in the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders's verbosity went hand in hand with their inarticulateness. To an extent, this was true of the Soviet people in general. [37] The content of speech meant little compared to the fact that someone was authorized to speak publicly, to voice an opinion. Public ceremonies -- from the Communist party congresses to meetings of local party cells -- were transformed into endless verbal exercises. Speeches were tedious, speakers repeated each other, there was little hard information presented to the audience, but that was beside the point. What really mattered was who got to the podium, in what order, for how long, etc. From all that an experienced observer could instantly infer the speaker's place in the pecking order, his closeness to the higher-ups, the amount of political capital at his disposal, and so forth. Generally, the more often a person spoke in public, the more importance people assigned to him. In his waning years, handicapped by numerous illnesses, Brezhnev felt obliged to give six-hour long speeches before the national audience, making the uneasy viewers wonder if he could survive the ordeal.

Speaking took a precedence over writing in Soviet society. Those who wrote speeches were invariably lower in the social hierarchy than those who gave them. Published work also had a lower status than public speaking. Intellectuals engaged in writing and publishing wielded minimal political power. Their skills would bring them a decent living, but with very few exceptions (Maxim Gorky comes to mind here), Soviet writers did not ascent to the pinnacle of power and were never deified as Soviet political

leaders given to public oratory.

The right to voice an opinion in public was reserved for trusted comrades. Common folks had the right -- and duty -- to demonstrate their approval for the leaders and their public pronouncements. Characteristically, the very idea of democracy is linked in the Russian language with speech: *golosovat* -- to vote -- in Russian literally means "to practice voice." People deprived of the voting rights in the '30s due to their bourgeois origins or similar political indiscretions were referred to as "deprived of the right of voice." Gorbachev's campaign for openness -- *glasnost*' -- was construed as regaining of voice and encouraging unauthorized speech.

Body as pain. Soviet art often featured heroic deeds and titanic efforts in which individuals struggled, went through much suffering, and overcame pain to achieve worthy goals. It is much harder to find in it the representation of pleasure. Eating, dreaming, having sex -- any activity that did not pursue a public agenda and that could be enjoyed for its own sake was suspect. Soviet psychological culture was allergic to pleasure. The familiar Soviet formula: "With the feeling of deep satisfaction it is stated that. . ." hints at this ascetic sentiment, an aversion to pleasure. There is no grammatical subject in this verbal cliché. It is not the speaker who feels satisfaction; whatever positive emotions are registered here, they have nothing to do with the human body. Soviet citizens were expected to be motivated in their endeavors by a sheer enthusiasm for a collectively approved goal. Heroism Soviet style consisted in the overcoming human nature and acting as if body did not matter, as was the case with the famous war veteran pilot who took to the air to pursue enemy airplanes after losing his legs in a battle. A common scene in Soviet war movies featured a proud soldier or resistance fighter refusing to give out state secrets while tortured by fascists.

To be sure, the body stripped of its natural functions, immune to pleasures, and desensitized to pain, was only a cultural metaphor. People never stopped eating, imbibing, defecating, copulating, just as they continued to love and dream and think silly thoughts. It is amazing, Pasternak once said, that amidst all this madness, people still could have normal dreams.

Death as silence. A voiceless individual was much less of a threat to the state than the one who did not surrender this party-given gift. A careless joke, a complaint about working conditions, an approving reference to genetics -- any statement that did not meet with official approval could

cost an individual his voice. And when the party wanted to silence individuals permanently, it deprived them of their body, as well. A dead body is a silent body. In Soviet society, death commonly appeared as the ultimate form of censorship imposed on the discursively incorrect citizens. Any strong voice that stood out from the chorus and sang an unfamiliar tune was in danger. That is, unless this voice belonged to the beloved leader, like Lenin or Stalin, in which case death was but a temporary impairment to be rectified by the advancement of Soviet science. There are more than just ideological-propaganda reasons why the bodies of the deceased leaders in the Soviet Union were preserved in the best possible conditions. This practice goes back to the early Bolsheviks who, like the pre-revolutionary *skoptsy* and visionaries like Federov, entertained serious hopes that one day the mortal comrades could be brought back to life. The mausoleum on the Red Square in Moscow where the bodies of Lenin and Stalin were placed after their death is a monument to this quest for immortality.

As to the rank and file builders of communism, they had to face death on their own, unaided by official guidelines about its meaning or prospects of life after death. The nearly total absence of grieving rituals or even simple explanations pertaining to death in official Soviet culture is stunning. The political leaders did not fair much better in this department: they repeatedly revealed themselves unprepared for death, leaving the nation without a clue about its future and setting in motion protracted fights between potential successors for the leadership mantle.

Age as power. Consider the ageless portraits of Soviet leaders. The authorities detested aging as a natural biological process immune to cultural manipulations. Determined efforts to overcome aging were mounted in the 20s, when a surgical procedure for rejuvenating testicles became popular among some bolsheviks, but the efforts apparently failed. Ever since, bolsheviks chose to ignore aging as a phenomenon worthy of serious attention. Childhood, youth, old age -- these natural stages in the human life cycle were virtually unknown to Soviet ideologists and, for a long time, down-played by scientists. Nobody outlawed age differences, but the latter had not been given a positive account as distinct stages in personal growth. Childhood and youth had value as transitory periods allowing humans to practice their future roles as adult citizens. Age-specific subcultures had been suppressed. Soviet youth had significantly less peer-group interactions than their counterparts in the West, and whatever experience they had was frowned upon by adults. For a long time, the country had no discernable youth fashion or holidays geared for children. Medical facilities for children were inadequate and counseling

agencies nonexistent. By the same token, the authorities made no concerted efforts to build facilities for elderly people, to insure handicapped people's access to public areas, etc. Adulthood emerged here as a supreme value and a power base. Whatever the age of Soviet leaders, however infirm they might appear, they were hailed as productive adults.

Gerontocracy is a pattern commonly found in non-democratic polities, but few modern societies pressed it as far as Soviet rulers. The latter continuously exhorted the younger generations to become more ideologically vigilant, economically efficient, and socially correct. In fact, most of the talk about the New Soviet Man was addressed by elderly leaders to the country's youth. Such officially approved organizations as the Oktobrists, the Young Pioneers, and the Young Communist League replicated the Communist party organization and adhered in their practices to adult values and tastes. Mandatory military service provided one official outlet where Soviet youth engaged in what seemed like age-specific activities, but its heavy ideological indoctrination, sadistic initiation rituals, and brutal disciplinary practices turned it into a powerful mechanism for instilling rigid collectivist principles in Soviet youth. In fact, the armed forces duplicated the age bias found in Soviet society at large, as senior conscripts were allowed to brutalize at will their junior comrades.

Gender as maleness. Officially, Soviet ideology tended to minimize gender differences. Men and women were expected to subscribe to the same values and beliefs, have the same psychological qualities, and engage with the same enthusiasm in building a future society. In practice, however, gender-based inequality pervaded Soviet society. People in power were predominantly males. The dominant culture in society was produced by males and for males. Women labored as hard as men did, but they had to carry a double burden -- at work and at home. In a way, women were allowed to stay closer to nature than men, as they continued to give birth, care for children, prepare meals, and do other things in the natural life cycle that could not be abolished by official decrees. Women worked in agriculture, education, or as general practitioners in medicine, leaving to men the areas of cultural creativity, industrial production, and military service. Males' alienation from nature was self-imposed; they were perfectly happy to let women take care of such natural functions, while they concentrated on cultural pursuits. As a result, the cultural violence unleashed by bolsheviks consumed more men than women. It is this closeness to nature that helped women survive the madness of Soviet civilization better than their male counterparts.

## **The End of Stalinism and the Transformation of Soviet Psychology**

As an instrument of social change, violence was practiced since times immemorial by people subscribing to disparate ideological agendas. In recent times, the Nazis used it extensively to exterminate undesirable political (communist), racial (Jews and Gypsies), and sexual (homosexuals) groups. Those were narrowly targeted groups supposedly impeding the transition to a glorious state of the future. This very predictability of violence gave to the untargeted German citizens the sense of security. What made Stalin's terror different and profoundly affected the Soviet psyche was its randomness. Nobody was immune from purges; any person or group was a potential target and had to submit its share of sacrificial victims on the altar of power.

There was no way to predict who the next victim would be. Sometimes verbal violence preceded physical violence, as was the case with the political trials unleashed during the campaign of mass terror in 1936. Other times, verbal attacks hinting at incarceration and death failed to inflict the expected damage. Thus, the vociferous campaign against pedology and its practitioners ordered by Stalin in 1936 stopped short of arrests and executions. In still other cases, deadly violence was applied without any verbal warning. The person and whole ethnic groups could vanish one day from their homes and sometimes from the face of the earth, as did Jewish writers in the late 40s and Crimean tatars during the World War II, to name just a couple examples. It was the sheer randomness of violence that infused Soviet people with unimaginable horror and left an indelible mark on their psyche. If fear is an expectation of punishment and guilt is the internalization of this expectation, then the Soviet psyche was permanently afflicted with both. Most people knew that they could be punished and felt guilty ways before they were actually accused of any wrongdoing. Soviet propaganda, in turn, worked over time to ensure that every person remained vigilant and ready to meet his fate if need be. Big terror without systematic deception would be a mass murder. Propaganda without terror would amount to a massive lie. But deception and violence working in tandem created a new psychological reality in their victims. The two reinforced each other and supported the system, which would have collapsed without these props. And when the Soviet regime gave up on random terror and concentrated mostly on deception as an instrument of social control, it doomed itself to an imminent demise.

Changing adults' behavior is complicated business. Witness all the efforts to alter eating, drinking or sexual habits, which are met with only

marginal success. The chief stumbling block here is that humans are expected to change their mind-sets and behavior while their environment remains basically the same. Moving an obese person into a famine area would surely produce dramatic results in reducing the person's weight. Moreover, attitude and behavior modification accomplished in such a dramatic manner often meets with less psychological resistance than the change that is supposed to be entirely voluntary. If people in Stalin's Russia adapted to the ideological demands without much resistance and even felt nostalgic about Stalinism, it is in large measure because the psychological changes sought by the regime were reinforced by drastic environmental changes, the total mobilization of resources, and the massive use of violence.

Having renounced Stalinist methods, Soviet leaders had to place even greater emphasis on psychology, propaganda, and agitation. A slate of Stalin's successors, with the possible exception of Khrushchev, fancied themselves psychological wizards and touted their administrative and public relations skills as an asset in implementing the scaled down communist agenda. Brezhnev is reported to have bragged to his buddies that he might be weak in economics but that psychology and the art of governing were his strong suits. Chernenko, Brezhnev's successor, tried to reanimate the moribund Soviet society with yet another crack at "communist upbringing" and "instilling right values" in Soviet youth. Andropov, the ex-KGB chief, was a recognized master of deception. But the efforts to achieve change without violence, by relying chiefly on rhetoric and deception, proved to be a failure. When ideological vitriol and politically correct ranting are no longer followed by actions, punitive or otherwise, they lose their persuasive power and sooner or later start ringing hollow.

This is what happened in the post-Stalinist era, when the level of verbal violence visibly escalated but the authorities' ability to move people around vastly diminished. Beginning the late 50s, the monolithic psychological culture began to give way to the one dominated by double-think. In public, people still had to convey their enthusiasm for socialism, appear to be hard working, show moral fiber, exhibit genderless qualities, etc. But in private life, they could think and behave pretty much as they pleased, as long as they did not let their private actions spill over into the public arena. The opposition between nature and culture transformed itself into the opposition between the public and the private. Culture reigned over the public sphere, nature took over private life. In contrast to the public sphere where transactions grew excessively formal and ritualized, private life promoted unusually close emotional ties, which flourished

undisturbed by envy and competition under the conditions of forced egalitarianism. Emotional bonding, personal commitment, aversion to cold calculations, the penchant for improvisation, and life-long friendships grew especially prominent among the intelligentsia. In private settings, Soviets often seemed to have preferred singing to speaking, perhaps because music entailed a strong nondiscursive element. These characteristics would be strikingly apparent to Western visitors, who learned to appreciate the company of intellectuals and emotional intimacy of the vast interpersonal networks that sprang to life in post-Stalinist Russia .

But there was a price to be paid for these seemingly congenial and nonutilitarian personal bonds. The gap between word and deed, a deep contempt for the system and a forced public silence bred hypocrisy and encouraged self-hatred. When the gap would become intolerable and the person dared to voice his dissent in public, the authorities moved to silence the nonconformist. Even if the person did not resemble a new Soviet man in his private life, he still had to pretend to be one in his public appearances. The handful of dissidents who openly dared to challenge the Soviet system found this out the hard way. After denouncing Stalin's violence, Khrushchev and his successors did not shy away from the old punitive ways, even though they hesitated to practice violence on a mass scale and never dared to reintroduce random terror. From that point on, only public dissent would be a punishable offence.

Psychology was fully institutionalized as an independent academic discipline in post-Stalin's Russia . The first psychology departments were established in the Moscow and Leningrad State Universities in 1964, a generation before the first sociology department was created in 1986. The discipline's premises remained more or less unchanged. "Our entire nature might be constructed," wrote Aleksey Leontiev, a leading psychologist of the this period, "and this is especially true about the psychological nature of man." [38] In his early research, Leontiev tried to show that humans can be taught to discriminate colors by touch. His findings were never confirmed, but Leontiev remained convinced throughout his life that human nature was an infinitely malleable social construct that could be made and remade at will. Another prominent Soviet thinker, Evald Ilienkov, expressed similar convictions that the human psyche could be shaped according to an ideological blueprint. He sought to prove his thesis through a study of congenitally blind-deaf-mute individuals, whose progress he guided and monitored for a number of years. The results seemed impressive: several of his subjects enrolled into the Moscow State University and successfully completed their undergraduate education. "In spite of the obstacles that seemed insurmountable -- the complete and

innate absence of both vision and hearing -- it was shown possible to . . . shape a highly sophisticated human psyche." [39] His sensational theories fell apart, however, when his subjects confessed that their defects were not congenital but acquired between the ages of four and six. [40]

A more sinister role in shoring up the official lies was accorded to Soviet psychiatry. Its chief exponent, Dr. Snezhnevsky, came up with an idea that political dissent in Soviet society was usually an indication of psychiatric abnormalities. He discerned the early signs of schizophrenia in the patients who "develop an odd . . . interest in abstract problems and harbor naive ideas about their resolution. In particular, [such patients] spend much time reading philosophical, psychological, sociological, and aesthetics treatises." [41] This doctrine rationalized the psychiatric abuses in the Soviet Union, the long-standing practice of institutionalizing political dissidents, labor organizers, religious activists, and simply independently minded people who refused to acknowledge the party line and dared to voice unauthorized views in public. Consciousness that failed to acknowledge Soviet reality in all its official glory was pronounced delusory and subjected to medical treatment. The plight of dissidents committed to psychiatric facilities was in many ways worse than that of dissidents thrown to prisons, for as patients in psychiatric wards dissidents were isolated from normal human beings and had to endure the application of mind-altering drugs. They could also be kept in mental asylums indefinitely. There was a way for a patient to get out of the psychiatric prison: he had to renounce incorrect views and embrace the official line. Again, the healthy psyche was equated with discursiveness, the ability to spout right verbiage, the eagerness with which one was willing to present ideologically correct precepts as personal convictions.

Wearing pious masks in public and cursing the regime in private would become a norm. Pervasive double-think could not help leaving its mark on the Soviet psyche. One of its insidious consequences was alcoholism that afflicted high-brow intellectuals and common folk alike. In the intoxicated state, Soviet citizens could transcend the fundamental duality of their being and achieve the unity of mind and action which the mendacious realities of everyday life denied them in their sober moments. This was also a way, however fleeting, to break through culture and reach out to nature inside and outside oneself.

By the early 80s, the New Soviet Man's existence was as threadbare as that of the senile Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, whose barely functioning body was kept alive by valiant efforts of doctors and faith healers. A cultural construct that came to life in extreme historical



conditions and required mass terror to prop it up, the New Soviet Man transpired as a pathetic monster whom nobody took seriously any longer, not even experts from the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, who kept themselves busy propagating the familiar nonsense but for all practical purposes ceased agitating the populace. Soviet citizens contemptuously referred to the New Soviet Man as "Sovok" -- a little shovel handy for collecting dust or absorbing ideological garbage. Such was the ignominious end of the communist superman -- Homo Sovieticus -- that Trotsky and his comrades dreamed about at the dawn of Soviet civilization.

### **Conclusion: the Unbearable Lightness of Human Nature**

Among the causes contributing to the demise of the Soviet empire one has to count the psychological crisis that gripped Soviet society in the early 70s and wore it down through the 80s. Apathy, cynicism, and alcoholism had as much to do with the collapse of the Soviet regime as the falling prices on world oil markets and corruption among Soviet officials. Mikhail Gorbachev set out to lead the country out of its malaise and managed to breath some new life into old political forms. But in the end, perestroika failed to deliver on its promise, and not just because its architect was too slow to jettison obsolete ideological schemes, but also because he underestimated the depth of anger that enveloped Soviet society after its cherished myths were exposed.

There were people who found postcommunist reality to their liking, but most cringed. The deadlocked political process, the wavering economic reforms, and the mounting chaos in daily life left many feeling nostalgic for the certainties of the bygone era. The break-up of the Soviet empire had a particularly strong effect on the Russian psyche. Even people detesting communism were troubled by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the nation's loss of its superpower status. From the psychological viewpoint, ex-Soviets found most upsetting the diminished sense of security and the sudden loss of personal identity. However arduous life was under the ancien regime, it accorded the individual a place in the social system, guaranteed employment, minimal standards of living, free health care, a chance to get ahead for those willing to play by the rules, and the sense that one belonged to a great nation. With wild capitalism replacing cradle-to-grave security, many people were frightened by the revolutionary forces they helped unleash. Blue and white color workers now faced unemployment; intellectuals found their spiritual bonds threatened by inequality; artists lamented the lost state subsidies for art; the once pampered military forces saw their prestige take a nose-dive;

collective farmers felt reluctant to strike on their own as private producers; and nearly everybody felt the void inside. To fill this void, some turned to the discrete pleasures of private enterprise, others sought refuge in nationalism and religion, still others vowed to bring back the good old days of socialism and restore the Soviet empire to its glory days. Everyone has to master the difficult art of private living, with all its headaches, uncertainties, and opportunities. But identities, like new shoes, do not always fit. People are still groping for a self they could be proud of or at least comfortable with. Hopes are riding high for a miraculous cure that could deliver the country from its present morass and reinvest personal life with meaning. One indication that people are vying for a quick fix is the spreading hatred toward minorities who are blamed for current problems. Another -- the proliferation of psychics and future tellers in Russian society. Anatoly Kashpirovsky, an immensely popular faith healer who made his name during the late perestroika era, was invited by Vladimir Zhirinovsky to run as a representative of his so-called "Liberal Democratic" party. Kashpirovsky agreed and was elected to the Russian Parliament. More sound liberals gathered around Yeltsin yearn for a miracle of their own -- the miracle of a free market. Yet the liberal idea that the free market would speedily transform the Soviet psyche into something more benign proved to be as misplaced as the radical claim that the socialist economy would deliver a new man. Which brings us back to the question of human nature in its relation to culture.

In the previous sections, I examined the blueprints for the New Soviet Man, the techniques used to implement it, and the outcome of efforts to engineer a communist social species. The Soviet experiment was based on the assumption that human nature was flexible, malleable, passive -- that it was shaped anew in each historical era according to specific cultural blueprints. Indeed, human behavior could be influenced by social forces and changed on a mass scale, provided the efforts are reenforced by the total control over society and its members. But all such efforts are predicated on the willingness to use both violence and deception. As soon as the powers begin to let up on violence, humans recoil from extremes and revert to more common attitudes and actions. Even under extreme conditions, people are likely to change their habits rather than their motifs, their ideological verbiage rather than their bodily functions, their cultural forms rather than their natural desires. What Soviet experience appears to teach us is that revolutions against human nature are doomed. Culture might disguise nature but it could not abolish it altogether. This is not to gainsay that sex, gender, family, and work patterns bear a distinct historical and cultural mark, only that the variability in these patterns is limited by the universalities of human nature. For all the resources that

the Soviet regime put into modifying human conduct, it had very little to show for its efforts. Soviet citizens emerged from the historical experiment that began in October of 1917 demoralized, but they have not lost their ability to love, to laugh, to kibitz, to hope. With time, they will form new habits to satisfy their basic needs. I do not know how the Russian psyche will evolve in the next few decades, but I am convinced that the Russian citizens will resist the temptation to succumb to yet another overarching ideological blueprint for a happy future.

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25. Among these institutions were the Advanced Studies in Pedology, the Advanced Studies in Psychology, the Central Institute for People Education Organizers, the Academy for Social Training, the Pedagogical Institute of Child Deficiency, the Institute of Psychology of the First Moscow University, the State Moscow Institute for Psychoneurology, the Central Institute for Pedology, the State Institute for Medical Psychology, the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology and Children Psychoneurology at the Neurological Institute, Medico-Pedagogical Clinic, the Central Psychological Laboratory for the Special Learning Schools, the Experimental Laboratory of Psychology of General Headquarters, the Central Institute of Labor, Laboratory of Industrial Psychotechnique of the Ministry of Labor, the Central Institute for Humanitarian Pedagogic, the Museum of Preschool Education, and the Institute for Social Psychology.
26. For more information see *Pedagogicheskaya Moskva. Spravochnik-kalendar for 1923* (Moscow: Krasnaya Moskva, 1923), p.435; A. Etkind. *Eros nevozmozhnogo*, op. cit.
27. Fritz Hayek. *The Political Order of a Free People* (London: Routledge, 1979).
28. C. Levi-Strauss. *Anthropologie Structural* (Paris, 1958).
29. Lev Vygotsky, "Istoricheskii Smysl Psikhologicheskogo Krizisa" in *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol 1 (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1982, pp. 2-3).
30. A. B. Zalkind. " O metodologii tselostnogo izucheniia v pedologii." *Pedologia* (1931, pp. 2-3).
31. Lev Trotsky. " O culture buduschego," in *Sochinenia*, Vol. 1 (Moskva,

1927), p. 460. See also "Trotsky and Psychoanalysis," *Partisan Review* no. 2 (1994), pp. 303-308.

32 . See A. Etkind. *Eros nevozmozhnogo*, op. cit.

33. Stalin interest in psychology was noted by Westerner observers. See Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin and the Uses of Psychology* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1955).

34. The main features of totalitarian consciousness are discussed in Leonid Gozman and Alexander M. Etkind. *The Psychology of Post-Totalitarianism in Russia*. Translated by Roger Clarke. (London: Center for Research into Communist Economics, 1992).

35. Iosif V. *Stalin. Marksizm i Problemy Iazykoznania* (Moscow, 1949), p.66.

36. Pierre Bourdieu. *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

37. George Brandes made a similar observation in 1887, pointing out that "with the exception of the advocates, no man in Russia has the talent of speaking, not the courage to try." See G. Brandes. *Impressions of Russia*, p. 60, op. cit.

38. Aleksey N. Leontiev. *Izbrannye psichologicheskie proizvedeniia*. (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1983) v.1, p.139.

39. Evald Ilienkov (1977). Stanovlenie lichnosti: k itogam nauchnogo experimenta. *Kommunist*, no. 2 (1977, p.69).

40. *Slepoglaxonemota: istoricheskie i metodologicheskie aspecty* (Moscow, 1989), p.93.

41. A. Snezhnevsky, "Skitsofreniia. Formy i techenie." *Bolshaia meditsinskaia entsiklopediia*, Vol. 31 (Moskva, 1963) p. 267.

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