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The Crisis in Soviet Ethnography[1]

by Valery A. Tishkov

The "crisis" in Soviet ethnography has to do not so much with the social conditions under which it operates as with the discipline itself. Self-satisfaction and intellectual isolationism are as much manifestations of this crisis as methodological *diktat* and political control. A broad modern redefinition of the discipline might help it to overcome its unattractive image and low status and reduce the risk of its marginalization. Steps in this direction might include a "repatriation" of ethnography through new emphasis on prolonged fieldwork, with a broadening of scientific interests, methodology, and conceptions of the *genre* of ethnographic writing and a change in direction away from the structures of power towards dialogue with the object of study, an ethnography of the scientific community, and a new interpretation of ethnicity.

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It is a sad fact that six years of political liberalization and ideological emancipation in and after the Soviet Union have so far only created the preconditions for change in the social sciences. The recalcitrance of the subjects of our discipline and especially ethnic violence and the politicization of ethnicity in our country have highlighted unexpected discrepancies in our interpretations of past experience and posed a challenge to the academic community, but the depth of these discrepancies and the response to this challenge are both still far from being understood. It is becoming increasingly clear that without a rigorous critical analysis of the past, a detailed discussion of the present, and the creation of an agenda for the future our discipline will not be able to sort itself out.

The "crisis" in Soviet ethnography has to do not so much with the social conditions under which our science now operates as with the discipline itself, including its central authoritative body, the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It would be an oversimplification, as well as moral self-indulgence, to assess with uncompromising repugnance the pressures that have operated on the discipline from outside (particularly the former ideological and political régime and the general state of the Soviet social sciences) without applying the same strict criteria to oneself, one's colleagues, and the discipline as a whole.

Observing the general erosion of morals, lack of professionalism, and internal constraints that have become second nature to Soviet people, one understands how difficult it is, even within the intelligentsia, to take the discussion beyond dismissive criticism of superiors and procedures—much less to speak of repentance and regeneration within the Academy of Sciences, where complacency and conservatism, bureaucratic hierarchy, strict corporate solidarity, scientific time-serving, and barely concealed idleness remain firmly in place. Some of my colleagues obviously consider it most important at present to talk about continuity and the achievements of Soviet ethnography; they view the reinterpretations that are now under way as marking "a complex time, a time of overthrowing authorities and attempting to sever generational bonds, scientific traditions, and contacts" (Dzharyglasinova 1991:175). This conservative reaction is, of course, not the only way of dealing with change: when, for example, our American colleagues, once or twice a decade, completely revise their discipline's dominant theoretical paradigms and that same "overthrow of authorities" takes place, diametrically opposed approaches peacefully coexist, and the authorities being challenged do not carry these conflicts over into the sphere of professional and personal relationships. Indeed, it is generally understood that changes in a science are a prerequisite for its development: the faster and more completely they are accomplished the better.

This ethos, which is especially firmly established in modern social sciences, rests not only on a more highly developed civic culture and a strong attachment to academic freedom but also on a new post-modernist epistemology. As Geertz (1988:4–5) puts it,

1. Translated by Sarah Wright, with advice from Tamara Dragadze, Stephen P. Dunn, Yuri Slezkine, and Katherine Verdery.

> Perhaps ethnographers should be believed for the extensiveness of their descriptions, but this does not seem to be the way it works.
>
> Just why the idea persists that it does work is difficult to say. Perhaps old-fashioned notions about how "findings" are "established" in the harder sciences has something to do with it. In any case, the main alternative to this sort of factualist theory of how anthropological works convince, namely that they do so through the force of their theoretical arguments, is no more plausible. Malinowski's theoretical apparatus, once a proud tower indeed, lies largely in ruins, but he remains the ethnographer's ethnographer. The rather passé quality that Mead's psychological, culture-and-personality speculations now seem to have . . . doesn't seem to detract very much from the cogency of her observations, unmatched by any of the rest of us, concerning what the Balinese are like. Some, at least, of Lévi-Strauss's work will survive the dissolution of structuralism. . . . People will read *The Nuer* even if, as it has tended to, segmentary theory hardens into a dogma.
>
> The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their *capacity to convince us* [my emphasis] that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly "been there." And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in.

Modern sophisticated forms of relativism, along with an understanding of the high degree of situatedness inherent in ethnographic description, free scholars from the totalitarian claims of objectivist positivism and create an atmosphere of free choice in the academic world in place of the ideology summed up by the phrases "as is well known" and "the correct point of view."

A different scientific ethos has prevailed in the Soviet social sciences. It has been conditioned not just by the requirement that everyone subscribe to a single universal or "eternal" methodology but also by the internal hierarchy of the scientific community. In general, the power attached to an academic administrative position continues to be linked to scientific authority, and this power, held by a narrow élite within the profession that lives in exceptional intellectual (and often also worldly) comfort, remains inviolable for decades. The loss of a position is usually viewed as the loss of scientific leadership; doubts cast on the scientific acceptability of a particular hypothesis are taken by its author as an attack on the very foundations of his or her life—as personally directed malevolence. This system is not merely foisted on us from above and from outside but willingly (in a number of cases eagerly) supported by ordinary research staff, who delegate intellectual authority on theoretical issues, as well as on the choice of research area and the organization of work, to their leaders, in so doing avoiding some of the effort and responsibility incumbent on every active scientist. Of course, for a number of reasons (natural ability being principal among them) not every member of the profession can or should be a leader. In world ethnology fewer than a hundred names can be assigned to this category. But it is hard to reconcile oneself to the fact that in the Soviet Union a disproportionately small number of theoreticians—fewer than ten—have had their names in lights. During the 1980s practically all the articles in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* cited the same author on their first pages (and never mentioned, for example, Foucault, Barth, Geertz, Wolf, or Gellner at all).

Self-satisfaction and intellectual isolationism are just as much manifestations of the crisis in our discipline as methodological *diktat*, political control, and other restrictions, but they are far harder to recognize as such. It is in fact difficult to recognize that there *is* a crisis, rather than just a "time of troubles," and to confront this crisis not as a tragedy but as a challenge. The eminent French historian Fernand Braudel (1978) considered crisis the normal condition of science and argued that a science that is not experiencing crisis is in a condition of stagnation. Gurevich's (1991:35) observation that the crisis in modern historiography essentially consists of the breakdown of traditional stereotypes and fixed schemes—the maturing of a profound transformation in research methods and scientific approaches—seems to me applicable to contemporary Russian ethnology as well:

> At the centre of the crisis stands the historian himself: he needs to change his methodological and epistemological principles and orientations. Reaching these new positions is not all that easy, but the extent to which our profession will free itself from the burden of the past and respond to the fundamental questions of the person standing at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries depends upon his choice.

It is of course hard for those who have for decades been reared solely on the Soviet literature about ethnogenesis and ethnic history—compiling ethnographic atlases and maps—to reject positivist postulates in Hegelian-Marxist packaging, including heavily deterministic and primordial views of social phenomena. These postulates, which concern the existence of a scientific reflection of objective reality, including such labels as "socio-economic formations" and "ethnoses" (and "subethnoses," "superethnoses," or "metaethnoses"), have been fundamental to their thinking. It is difficult for them to adopt the alternative position that both "ethnoses" and "socio-economic formations" are mental constructs or ideal types used for systematizing particular material—in other words, things that exist exclusively in the minds of historians, sociologists, and ethnographers.

In my view, cultural diversity exists as a continuum of different objective elements of society and culture which tend towards structure and self-organization, and in time, on this basis, ethnicity takes shape and is pro-

jected in metaphorical form onto both the past and the future members of a particular group. Taking this metaphor as a taxonomic given, romantic positivists within Soviet academia, and after them other intellectuals and politicians, have retrospectively imposed it on various kinds of past formations. They have made ethnogenetic studies going back to Upper Paleolithic times and speculation on the depth of the historical roots of Soviet ethnonations central themes of academic and public discourse and are now desperately attempting to apply the metaphor to the present cultural and political landscape, with its complex (and sometimes cruel) manifestations of ethnicity. Soviet scholars, armed with this terminology, attempt (in an edifying manner, of course) to identify among, say, the Mordva[2] the ethnos, the subethnos, and the ethnographic group and to identify who have the right to consider themselves what. Following Bromley (1989:10), who has censured "attempts to consider certain subethnoses as ethno-peoples" ("with such an approach a country could have several hundred distinct peoples"), Mokshin (1991:91) concludes that "recent attempts by some authors to consider the Erzya and the Moksha, at this stage in their historical development, as distinct ethno-peoples are without sufficient foundation. Not only are they unscientific, they are politically harmful, since they confuse the public, especially the Erzya and the Moksha, by changing their ethnic reference points." This statement raises many questions. What is "scientific"? For whom are these attempts "politically harmful"? What does "confuse" mean when the "reference points" have been set by the same intellectuals? There might seem to be more sense in the humorous definitions "a nation is a tribe with an army" and "a dialect is the same as a language but without an army." In other words, those who have power (political, intellectual, military, or administrative) are an "ethnos" and those who do not are an "ethnographic group." In this connection, it can scarcely be denied that our academic language contains a fair amount of politicized scholasticism.

Besides the inadequacy of its basic terminology, the discipline is confronted by a no less serious crisis of self-definition. For obvious reasons, a question mark now hangs, for many scholars, over the two terms of the usual label "Soviet ethnography." Who are we, and what should we be called in present circumstances? First, with regard to the name of the discipline, it seems to me that the necessity for change here is dictated by factors both internal and external and not simply by eagerness for reform along Western lines. Neither ethnology nor socio-cultural anthropology is new to our country. The history of the destruction of the Department of Ethnology at the Moscow State University and the fate of the author of the first textbook with the title *Ethnology*, P. F. Preobrazhensky, have recently been outlined by Markov and Solovei (1990). In the 1930s, after the Marxist purge of the humanities, ethnography was relegated to the status of a historical subdiscipline, and so it remains to this day. But ethnology and anthropology do have distinct subject matter: the study of peoples and cultures, their interrelationships, and the analysis of that most complex social phenomenon, ethnicity; they also have a distinctive method: ethnography, in the form, primarily, of fieldwork and analysis of ethnographic artifacts. Therefore there are sufficient grounds for ethnology to be belatedly established in our country as a social science, independent at all levels, from the training of students to the granting of professional degrees. We need a discipline with broader horizons than the ingroup description of mainly material culture that is characteristic of Soviet ethnographic texts.

Further, a broad, modern redefinition of the discipline and its expansion without loss of quality within the social sciences (which is a necessary condition for survival and the maintenance of status and authority in the scientific community) could at least assist in overcoming two negative tendencies. One of these is the rather unattractive image of the discipline both among the younger generation (impeding the intake of the most able students and the creation of greater competition) and among those in charge of higher education (limiting the expansion of specialist training and the material provision for it). If there were some dozen independent departments in Soviet higher-educational institutions, the situation might be improved somewhat: the intake into the profession would then be larger and better educated than that which today falls to the lot of the four or five ethnographic chairs in departments of history after the best students have scattered among what they regard as the more prestigious specializations. The image and status of traditional ethnography current in the higher-educational institutions and the chance recruitment of specialists from other disciplines will obviously not be of much assistance in radically changing the quantitative and qualitative status of our profession.

The other negative tendency is only just becoming visible but should be carefully monitored. It is marginalization—being pushed to the edge of the intellectual labour market in the humanities. This may be a paradoxical result of what, on the whole, seems a beneficial process, the growth of interest in ethnicity among members of other disciplines: political scientists, legal experts, sociologists, and philosophers, not to mention the huge numbers of specialists on "the Marxist-Leninist theory of nations" who formerly worked in Party establishments. A garrulous army of specialists in "interna-

2. According to the *Grand Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 16 (1974), "Mordva—nation, comprising indigenous population of Mordovian ASSR [Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic]; besides, considerable groups of M. live in . . . [here other locations are listed]. M. is divided into two main groups, M. Erzya and M. Moksha." Thus by definition only 365,000 of the 1,263,000 ethnic Mordva were assigned to the "Mordovian nation" because the rest of them lived in other administrative regions of the Soviet Union, and only 35% of the Mordovian Republic's population could be considered indigenous (there being 607,000 Russians and 45,000 Tatars and others living in its territory). The paradox of this definition of "nation" is that it is in fact neither a type of ethnic entity nor a shared citizenship but only part of a group chosen to serve as justification for the existence of the Mordovian Republic as a "national" (read "ethnic") state.

tional (in the Soviet context "interethnic") relations," "ethnic conflict," and so on, has unexpectedly emerged in the last two or three years, and its members are today busily seeking the limelight. They are already setting themselves up as scientific subdivisions and departments of "natiology," "conflictology," ethnopolitical centres, and so on, often without any command of the basic knowledge, theory, and method of this very complex discipline. In time, those who do have a command of this knowledge may find themselves in the position of outsiders when it comes to grants, publishing opportunities, and international scientific contacts.

Thirdly, patriotism and respect for the scientific traditions of one's homeland notwithstanding, the full integration of Soviet scholars into the world anthropological community—overcoming their isolationism and provincialism—is very important. Scholars of world class and world renown (not, incidentally, always identical concepts) are, unfortunately, few in our discipline. There need to be many more of them to ensure our deserved status among the leading national schools. It is embarrassing to observe Soviet scholars continuing to arrange to give their reports at international scientific forums in symposia organized by their Western colleagues when in recent decades the major breakthrough in anthropology is undoubtedly linked with the ideas of such of our fellow countrymen as Propp, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Luria, and Chayanov.

The Repatriation of Ethnography

Without waiting for critics of my attempt to modernize the name of the discipline to keep their promise to explain what ethnography is, I want to express a few thoughts on the subject. I consider ethnography to be the practical professional basis of the discipline—the method of collecting knowledge and the most important way it can be textualized.

Field ethnography seems to have suffered least under the previous régime; the gathering of information and empirical material by experts continues to be Soviet ethnologists' strongest suit. But let us not delude ourselves: The ethnographic field available to us—its geographical range, the questions posed, its time-scale and methodology—is the result of a great many limitations, including direct bans on access to (often obscurely defined) "strategic regions," censorship and self-censorship both of subject matter and in the formulation of questions, inadequate funds for field trips, the limited physical capacities of members of a profession that is rapidly aging (because of the belated start of their own projects by younger specialists), and the lack of emphasis on prolonged fieldwork as an essential part of both professional training and the completion of research for monographs.

As a result, the present generation of Soviet scholars has far less experience of field ethnography than its foreign counterparts or its predecessors in its own country. In world anthropology, at least a year's fieldwork with a community or group is considered the norm for everyone from the postgraduate student to the leading professional. As for Soviet ethnography, at this moment no one among the several hundred academics and graduate students is actually living with a particular ethnic group. How is it that one of the basic forms of professional activity has come to be called a business trip (*komandirovka*) and always entails additional payment, the tradition of extended stays in the field having been forgotten despite the fact that this was how one learned the language of the people, penetrated their culture, and eventually experienced that happy and long-awaited moment when new material fell into one's hands?

Reading the works of Soviet ethnographers, one gets the impression that the peoples they study live in a climatic zone of eternal summer, for this is the dominant climate of the examples and descriptions. This summer ethnography results from the phenomenon of the "field season," which falls at the most favourable time of year; while this may be quite understandable for archaeological investigations, it is not at all so for ethnographic ones. Students are generally expected, following the rigid curriculum, to eke out their grants in the dormitories and to do a month's "practical work" in the summer vacation. Clearly, it is time that we and our colleagues in institutions of higher education seriously considered the question of the training of young professionals. We should require a prolonged period of fieldwork (six months for university students and not less than a year for a *kandidat* dissertation). The starting point for the choice of subject matter, the framing of questions, the construction of descriptions, the reporting of results, and the basis for assessing the quality and originality of the research should be original field material.

Recent decades have seen the emergence among those who call themselves ethnographers of specialists in secondary interpretation—scholastic theoreticians, compilers of other people's scientific research, critics, and "debunkers." These specialists have a unique ethnographic field under their very noses, but they do not want to, are afraid to, and often do not know how to do ethnography. Oblivious of their own decline into a state of "Sovacademic" lethargy, they will wait for years for the occasional new book acquisitions by the Moscow and St. Petersburg libraries dealing with questions of the early African state system, the linguistic situation in Haiti, Poles in Brazil, or the Puerto Rican family in New York, while at the same time indifferently walking past Meskheti-Turk pickets on the squares of the capital and never even thinking of flying to Baku or Nagorno-Karabakh for live interviews or of wandering with the Evenki reindeer breeders. These scientific studies represent the worst type of abstract historiography; they might qualify as second-hand sociocultural anthropology, but they are by no means ethnography. Rarefied and enlightened compilation can never replace first-hand ethnographic knowledge: no metatheoretical or critico-historiographic discussion can replace the mildly and modestly phrased theoretical notes made in the margins of actual field journals.

The "repatriation" of field ethnography can occur in

a number of ways. Soviet scholars have, happily, been limited by the financial poverty of the science and the vigilance of their leaders almost entirely to the expanses of their native land, and this huge multiethnic formation remains an inexhaustible reservoir of knowledge. The only Soviet anthropological work abroad has consisted of poorly planned and ineffectual collective expeditions to India, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Cuba. Not one monograph based on original ethnography giving a complete picture of the life of a community or aspects of the culture of a foreign people has been completed in recent decades.[3] Soviet researchers have in fact been cut off from the geography on the basis of which 20th-century world anthropology has developed. The foreign specializations of our scholars have been determined not by field opportunities but by the global claims of the initiators of collective superpublications—for which the list of contributors had to include a specialist on a particular ethnic group. The discipline still contains specialists who have, of necessity, assumed the unenviable task of up-dating obsolete reference books and rewriting the historical guidebook-style regional-studies sections of the multivolume series. There should, in principle, be no particular prestige attached to the global geography of the foreign studies concentrated exclusively at the Institute of Ethnology. It is possible for people to specialize only in Asia, Europe, or America and still as an institution make a significant contribution to world anthropology. In other words, it is the opportunities for fieldwork that should determine our geographic interests.

The geographical coverage within domestic field ethnography has yet to be analysed, but it is clear that each generation brings with it its own itinerary while retaining the traditional interest in the regions of Siberia, the North, the Caucasus, and Soviet Central Asia. For example, in the past few decades that part of Russia that is outside the black-earth region (the *rossisskoe nechernozem'e*), with socio-cultural systems which—however deformed—have shaped the lives of several generations, has dropped off the ethnographic agenda. There is clearly not enough fieldwork on the complex ethnic patchwork and modern intercultural relationships in the Volga region and South Russia. Not enough research is focussed on the country's ethnic enclaves and minorities or on the ethnic situation in cities and towns. Despite the fact that, in the second half of the 20th century, the city rather than the village has become the focal point for ethnicity—especially in its militant and politicized forms—urban anthropology is undeveloped and dependent on sociological methods. Similarly, political anthropology is dominated by current-affairs journalism and—by world standards—rather old-fashioned quantitative analysis of ethnic representation in power structures (see, e.g., Pain and Popov 1990; Krupnik 1990; Tishkov 1990, 1991). We have not yet properly analysed the most complex functions of ethnicity in these two spheres (the cities and the power structures) on the level of individual, social, political, and hedonist movitations. The question of why and how citizens of Moscow experience their Armenianness, Jewishness, or Russianness—of how, say, the Karabakh crisis "makes" these citizens Armenians or Azerbaidzhanis again—is of interest. Why is it that in parliaments and at mass meetings people parade their ethnicity, claiming to express the "interests of the nation," and the participants in these gatherings, acting in accordance with the logic of collective behaviour, follow these activists, often against their own interests and to the detriment of members of the group? Why is it that in some circumstances people of the same ethnicity, especially politicians and intellectuals, act like "Russian citizens" while in others they act like "spokesmen for autonomous regions"? We unfortunately take as the basis for sociological analyses surrogate census data on crude categories such as, say, "Muscovite Armenians—a dispersed group of a fairly well-developed ethnos" (Arutyunyan 1991), and I cannot avoid the impression that many of my colleagues conclude their research when it should be only beginning.

In many respects the former Soviet Union will remain an ethnographic Eldorado, even for domestic scholars—especially if there is a broadening of scientific interests, methodology, and concepts about the *genre* of ethnographic writing among them. The most widespread *genre* in world science is the single-author monograph on a particular community the detailed study of which reveals the socio-cultural mechanisms operating in the life of collectives and provides a profile of the whole ethnic group. In our discipline, there are very few such monographs, and for some reason there is no interest in such studies. Yet they have no less potential for theory, they lend humanity to scholarly texts, they foster more direct and more regular contacts between the ethnographer and the community under study, they aid the return of information acquired to those from whom it was obtained, and they encourage the application of scientific results. Paradoxically, one of the best works on the Soviet Union, the English anthropologist C. Humphrey's (1983) prize-winning book about a Buryat community, was not even reviewed in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* and remains unknown to Soviet specialists. This work gives one a complete picture of modern life in a Buryat village, the Karl Marx Sovkhoz (state farm), with its distorted and hard-to-classify culture—a result not only of social engineering but also of constant innovations which our successors in the 21st century will study as traditions.

We must, furthermore, recognize the ethical problems involved in conducting research—the behaviour of scholars during fieldwork and their relationships with the object of study. The question here is not so much one of new morals and responsibility—although these undoubtedly suffered under the immoral social régime—as one of reconsidering to whom the anthropologist is professionally responsible. Responsibility continues to be mainly associated with the structures of power—with the rationalization and humanization of the ad-

3. Except perhaps Zhukovskaya's (1988), based on fieldwork in Mongolia.

ministrative system (above all the political and state system) and advising the ruling élites on the conduct of "national policy." In recent years, our discipline has experienced an upsurge in political participation and activism. Despite signs which should be sobering, ethnologists increasingly wish to see themselves as closer to the world of grand policy, closer to those who control people's fate. The appetite of ethnologists for political engineering is whetted by the examples of colleagues in other disciplines—lawyers, sociologists, political scientists—and also by the understandable desire not to risk distancing themselves from what is still the only source of finance for science in our country, the state.

This desire to be close to power flies in the face of one important fact: our discipline is rapidly losing its anonymity. We can no longer proceed on the assumption that our accounts, reports, books, and articles will not be read by those about whom they are written. Lack of accountability to those studied is apparently becoming a thing of the past, and in this connection that traditional ethic of colonial anthropology, "improving government" (which has survived in Soviet anthropology until the present day), is being replaced by a different one that aims to strike a complex balance between at times contradictory aims and goals. How can we combine serving scientific truth, participating in politics, and not doing harm? What happens if the promulgation of "pure knowledge" is politically harmful to the group studied? Can an ethnologist studying another culture and people instigate revolutionary change? There are no simple answers to these questions. Furthermore, the subtler and more rigorous the analysis, the more vulnerable it is to criticism based on ethical norms, for it comes into conflict with everyday ways of thinking, political folklore, and the emotional mythologizing of the intellectuals who dominate the group studied. Recent examples include the tacit ban on S. P. Polyakov's (1989) work on the rôle of traditional structures in Soviet Central Asia, the negative reaction in Kazakhstan to an article by V. I. Kozlov (1988), and the displeasure among some Transcaucasian intellectuals at S. A. Arutyunov's (1990) appraisals of the situation in that region.

What is the best line to take? Some anthropologists suggest that the answer to the ethical problem lies in obtaining the subject's consent to and approval of everything done at all stages of the project; if this consent is lacking, the research should not start; if it is withdrawn, the research should be discontinued (Jorgensen 1971). But how, say, can one gain approval from the political élites of titular nationalities if one's analysis of their representation in the structures of power does not in any way lend legitimacy to their privileged position? It is no accident that the more academic studies are liberalized—the better able they become to reveal the mechanisms of social systems underlying the usual rationalizations—the more the work of ethnologists—especially of the "humanists" among them—is perceived by those studied as "potentially subversive." But "in the course of [study] we expose and implicitly criticize. We reveal the inner workings of a social system after peeling off the protective layer of rationalizations that conceals it" (Barrett 1988:236), and this means that the conclusions of the scholar will always be subject to a fair amount of hostility and misunderstanding. The unconditional requirement of subjects' approval and understanding would threaten our research with new oversimplifications reminiscent of the time when ethnosociological questionnaires had to be ratified by Communist party committees at both republic and provincial (*oblast*) levels.

While rejecting sycophancy and the opportunistic appeasement of our subject, we can and must create a new relationship of dialogue and partnership with it; this is far more important for the discipline than partnership with the authorities or our employers. And this new orientation and level of scholarly responsibility must be concerned, above all, in the words of Levin (1990), both with ceasing to "serve doctrines imposed from above" and with refusing to "raise up convenient ethnic postulates."

> Scholars should not misuse this knowledge to manipulate relationships between people, as was formerly the case with the social sciences. On the contrary, everything possible should be done to give people a clear picture of the diversity of the population of the country and the world, bearing in mind that, without an honest and accurate picture of one's national or other distinctiveness vis-à-vis a member of another group, we may have to fear an explosion of utterly horrendous behavior.

This change in direction, away from the structures of power and towards dialogue with the object of study, presents problems as complex as those previously created by the indifference and lack of receptivity of bureaucrats (who not only did not read scientific literature but could not even comprehend the "reports" that were composed for them from time to time). The new dialogue involves the political and intellectual élites of the societies studied, which have a fair degree of authority, their own "character" and particular interests, and an invariably egocentric mentality. On the one hand, these élites are characterized by a preoccupation with their "younger brother" status in the wider political, cultural, and scientific world (how much longer can all theorizing be confined to Moscow?), immersion in the problems of their own people, and possession of cultural knowledge that is primarily "from within." On the other, they are characterized by a yearning for prestige, by self-satisfaction, and by an extreme susceptibility to offence. The milieu of ineffectual and uncompetitive human relationships created by the Soviet régime has allowed these élites to flourish as a symbol of the success of "Leninist national policy"—a policy that includes the robbery and oppression of their kinsmen. The parade of leather coats and Marlboro cigarettes on Shota Rustaveli Prospect, the nervous reaction to Astaf'ev's (1986) "Gudgeon" in Georgia, and the threats of court action against

"calls for women to be forcibly sterilized" (which Soviet Central Asian politicians and scholars infer from any reference to the problem of the high birth rate and birth control in their region) are just a few ways in which the "character" of such national élites manifests itself. It should not, however, be forgotten that in many regions—from the Baltic and the Transcaucasus to Buryatia and Yakutia—there are strong traditions, long-standing or recently established, of training in the humanities which have produced, among others, outstanding anthropologists. In time, I am sure, the less numerous groups will also produce specialists like the Nanai ethnographer E. A. Gaer who will have a strong claim to status not only in terms of political representation but also in terms of the scientific interpretation of their culture.

Finally, another type of ethnographic "subject" has appeared on the horizon in the form of the foreign anthropologist. Foreign anthropologists are increasingly gaining long-awaited access to field research in our country. By my reckoning, the number of American anthropology students currently specializing in the Soviet Union exceeds the analogous figure in all our higher-educational institutions. Our foreign colleagues, particularly those of the Anglo-American school, are distinguished by a sense of initiative, a high degree of professionalism and a thorough methodological background, and the ability to work rapidly and to present research results (on my desk are more than a dozen thick books on nationalities problems in the U.S.S.R. published in the West in the last two or three years alone). In relation to this trend, two factors are worthy of note. One is psychological and is epitomized by the expression "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country": in the "centre" and the republics, the rôle of the neoprophet on various questions is now being assumed by the foreign specialist. The other is purely material: our Western colleagues are possessed of means, equipment, and external contacts that, accustomed to business trips without perks, we find it hard to compete with. It is also important that Western anthropologists, having learned from the mistakes of the past, when some were driven out of a number of countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia and even from native communities in the U.S.A. and Canada, know how to be tactful and to return hospitality. The contrast between their behaviour and the previously tolerated "elder brother" approach of scholars from the capital will immediately be pointed up whenever there is the slightest occasion for it.

There is some cause for optimism about future access to the key ethnographic resources of this Eldorado. It is still blessed with one great advantage: the numerous fine students who have emerged from the Moscow and Leningrad schools and are now working in the republics. They can help to suggest how we can stop playing the "elder brother." What is disturbing is that they are part of the older generation, and the pool of young talent in Soviet ethnology is extremely small.

The Ethnography of the Scientific Community

The body of our science is sick with several ailments at once. The most serious and least perceptible of these is the absence of introspection and self-analysis—of what I would call an ethnography of the scientific community. The totality of our past experience of self-analysis amounts to various selective, complimentary reviews (or rather annotations) of publications by colleagues, coupled with occasional polemical outbursts in which serious doubts about one another are expressed out of the blue. Little has changed in recent years apart from the addition of some rather offensive and not entirely justified reproofs from outside the discipline: Tenishev and Bystrov (1989) have accused the Institute of Ethnography of collusion with the Central Statistical Board of the U.S.S.R. in connection with the preparation and execution of a nationwide census. The philologist Ochirova (1990) has launched a scathing attack on Yu. V. Bromley and all other Soviet ethnographers as principally responsible for nationality problems. Vitriolic accusations that scholars have invented problems and thus provoked conflict between nations have appeared in the press. Even a former general secretary of the Communist party, Mikhail Gorbachev, has described ethnographic works as toasts to "fraternity and friendship of peoples."

But the question of introspection is far deeper and more serious than this. It has three levels: (1) the system, pattern, and ethics of relationships within the academic community, (2) the position of the scholar within the community and within his/her own work, and (3) textual criticism. The first two levels have never been acceptable subjects for discussion, and without real criticism of the science "scientific criticism" has been like discoursing on the virtues of newborn babies immaculately conceived. Some attempts at critical "contextual" analysis—at least of a socio-political nature—of the works of Soviet ethnographers have been made by foreign colleagues. Thus, for example, that consistent critic of Soviet ethnos theory, the Africanist anthropologist Skalník (1986), has—somewhat naively—linked Bromley's research interests and formulations with that academician's exclusive access to Shirokogorov's texts and his conclusions with the Party's aim of constructing "a new historical community of people—the Soviet people." At the same time, however, he has made a convincing case, with special reference to South Africa, for the impossibility of general application of Bromley's basic postulates. Szporluk (1989) has presented a simplified but interesting analysis of modern Soviet writers' particular stances on national problems and their apparent connection to their different political orientations and views about the restructuring of the state. And the French ethnologist Levin (1990) has reproached the discipline for backwardness and useless obsession with the problem of ethnogenesis. In our own critical notes one can now begin to observe at least elements of a sort of contextual analysis that goes beyond the usual discus-

sions comparing the opinions and arguments presented in the texts themselves. Thus, for example, Arutyunov (1990:23) has attempted to explain my position on the question of the restructuring of the state by reference to my specialization in American studies and my Russian ethnic origin.

Some of the questions which have not yet even been raised within our discipline are the following: To what extent does the distorted age-sex structure of the profession (the disproportionate number of females and the late onset of scholarly careers) influence not only the overall effectiveness of scientific work but also the choice of themes, the posing of questions, the research style, and the manner in which results are formulated? Do conformism/impartiality, sentimental credulity/rigorous scepticism, global theorizing/cautious descriptiveness, and many other oppositions in the research process have any correlation with the sex and age of the researcher? A second, no less important question concerns the ethnic and political engagement of the scholar. The whole history of Soviet ethnography demonstrates the futility of any claim to de-ideologized objectivity in social scientific studies. It is clear that every scholar operates within a certain realm of power and writes from a certain position that can also be used for political ends. That the literary and research styles of Soviet specialists and the nature of their conclusions are often frankly politicized is another matter. Adopting what I would call the "statist approach," our writers are inclined—especially at international gatherings—to present their results as constituting a kind of general, official position rather than as personal points of view. Expressions along the lines of "scholars must," "are called on to," "are obliged to promote," "help," "facilitate the resolution," "perfection," "harmonization," "implementation of . . .," and so on, abound in their texts. This statist approach often replaces the identification of writers' own methodological and theoretical positions and of their original contributions (both of which are commonly accepted desiderata in scientific literature). Recently, politicization has begun to manifest itself in the exacting tones of "taking a position," identifying one's "side of the barricade," that is, conducting oneself "politically correctly"—laying one's cards on the table so that it is clear whom one is for and whom one is against (see Perepelkin and Shkaratan 1989:46).[4] An even stronger form of engagement by scholars is direct solidarity with national movements, which then dictate the attitude to the opinions they express. In every republic there is, to all intents and purposes, only one permissible point of view regarding the most acute problems, and those who think otherwise risk being declared "enemies of the people" or "agents of the Kremlin."

Until recently, the educated strata—particularly scholars in the humanities—subordinated truth to the demands of politicians and state ideology and could only dream of the luxury of finally attaining the "ivory tower" of academic freedom. The powerful movement towards intellectualism among the new political leaders has had a pleasantly enervating effect on academics, mixed with an understandable sense of civic concern and fellow feeling. Never having tasted genuine academic freedom, never having jettisoned their arrogant pretension to the "scientific management of society," never having cured themselves of a passion for social engineering, and, most important, never having succeeded in purging their intellects of the twisted postulates of the "one true teaching" or at least in leavening it with more recent humanistic learning, intellectuals have freely taken upon themselves the rôle of new spiritual leaders, often combining this mission with the work of the professional politician.[5]

Still captives of the class-struggle mentality, they have accepted the dictatorship of the nationalist paradigm which had previously lain dormant within Marxist-Leninist doctrine and articulated it in such a way as to make it appear to the masses as both the means and the end of democratization. Incantations from the tribunes of party congresses and parliaments in the press to the effect that "nations are an eternal category" (B. I. Oleinik) or that "it is better to die than to live until the moment when your native tongue disappears" (V. Bykov) have proved very popular with the voting public. How is it that the people's deputies of Georgia openly and unanimously elected as president of the republic the philologist and historian Z. Gamsakhurdia, who charmingly explained to the inhabitants of Georgia that they should be thinking primarily not about the advantages of the Black Sea coast and the climate or about prices on the Union markets but about the fact that "the bridge over the river Besleti, near Sukhumi [capital of Abkhazia], even today preserves an ancient Georgian inscription," that the Abkhazians and the Georgians were "bound together by the Vepkhistqaosani culture and the ancient Georgian temples, decorated with Georgian inscriptions, which even today stand in Abkhazia, impressing visitors with their beauty" (*Sovetskaya Kultura,* March 30, 1991)? The ethnographer and Orientalist V. Ardzinba carved out an attractive political career for himself as president of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia, elegantly formulating enthusiastic Abkhazian nationalist postulates in response to the fundamentalist nationalism of the Georgian leader. As one of the leaders of the group of people's deputies in the parliament of the Soviet Union, he energetically advocated the right to autonomy both of "national states" and of "subjects of the federation" and opposed the "500 days"

4. Our Western colleagues have already experienced the phenomenon of political correctness—arguments about this elegant form of academic totalitarianism have not yet abated on university campuses, as I witnessed in December 1990 during a discussion in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

5. Since writing this I have lost my "purity" and moral standing for this kind of judgement by accepting President Yeltsin's invitation to become Minister for Nationalities and a member of the Russian government while remaining Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. My critics are welcome to analyse this move; at least I am not incapable of self-reflection.

democratic programme because it did not envisage a national (read ethnic) basis for economic reform.

Under certain social and historical conditions, nationalism can be spellbinding and powerfully mobilizing, but it is not the leaders and intellectuals who, after watching a television programme, reading a newspaper, or squabbling over coffee, point rifles at each other across that same Sukhumi bridge. The poorly planned Karabakh movement resulted in 600,000 refugees and several thousand dead, and none of these victims can have attached the required historical and emotional meaning to the last words of an old Armenian woman who died in hospital: "And Karabakh will all the same be ours." In contrast, among those of our academic colleagues who were active in mobilizing participants for this movement, a former research student of our institute became mayor of Yerevan and a senior researcher became a deputy to two parliaments.[6]

I do not wish to cast doubt on the sincerity and selflessness of the leaders of national movements and of scholar-politicians. Rather, I want to remind those of my colleagues who have today chosen political activism and state activities instead of academic studies of certain precepts of the ethical code of the professional ethnographer: In reporting data on a people, (1) do not harm it, (2) do not formulate a problem where the people itself does not see one, and (3) do not take on the function of the people yourself. There are limits to knowledge and to the involvement of the scholar in so-called action or applied anthropology. In our social scientific tradition up till now, arrogance and messianism have been rife.

A New Interpretation of Ethnicity

As a result of a fairly long period of obsession with method and metatheoretical constructions, our discipline adopted a model of the language used within it as a constantly evolving form of closed, specialized communication. This language, with its terms and concepts, became the subject of ethnographic description, to the detriment of adequate description of the realities of the world and its cultures. The more our language became its own subject, the less it was able to express anything different. The more scholars were preoccupied with their own internal communication, with mutual explanations, the less they had to say about the world they studied.

Discussion of ethnomethodology and the deconstruction of our ethnographic constructs is probably premature for this generation of Russian scholars. Perhaps at some time in the future we will be able to regard ethnography as a jointly created text consisting of fragments of discursive practice aimed at creating in the minds of both reader and author the desired fantasy about a hypothetical world with some aesthetic integrity and therapeutic effect. All that can be said at the moment is that, despite positive changes, the Soviet social sciences and social and political practice remain in many respects within the theoretical paradigm of positivist sociology. This approach involves a less complex image of the actor and an oversimplified model of behaviour. As Barrett (1988:6) has pointed out, "Positivism has indirectly provided ideological support for the power elite, which maintains its position partly by camouflaging the degree of contradiction in society." The research and orientation of ethnologists are characterized by an exaggerated claim to a demystified mirroring of perceived realities, disregarding the complexity of the discursiveness of knowledge, the relationship between words, concepts, and things, and the whole area of the irrational and the subjective. It is this claim that underlies the longstanding aim of assuming the "scientific management of society" and accounts for the messianic character of social science research and the conduct of scholars. At the same time, there is insufficient understanding that, in modern society, science and scholars can "create" their subject, exerting a huge transformative influence on its character and behaviour in the process.

This tendency to reify social phenomena is most apparent in the treatment of ethnicity and the ethnocultural community. Here the postulates of the politicized "Marxist-Leninist theory of nations," based on Stalin's strict interpretation of the muddled reasoning of V. I. Lenin and its more recent scholastic modifications, continue to prevail. These postulates are very much at variance with the theoretical constructs of modern world science and difficult to reconcile with the knowledge accumulated in recent decades in foreign ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology and—most important—with late-20th-century social practice. On this score, I will again quote Levin (1990:242), many of whose views I share:

> The "ethnicist" view of culture—the view that its origin is exclusively national or classist—is part of a still widespread ideology which has come down to us from the pre-scientific past. The idea that the earth is today populated by such-and-such races, nations, or, to use a more archaic but fashionable term, ethnoses, that each nation as a hypostasis is endowed with its own language, particular psyche, and, hence, distinctive culture, inimitable folklore, altogether genuine and unique art, and many other virtues, that because of its invariably great past and remarkable roots it is entitled to an equally outstanding and, of course, collective future for its progeny, for which it (the progeny) requires a strongly protected reserve, that is, an impermeable state and, consequently, a "sacred" border, and other popular postulates which go to make up ethnicism are hollow knowledge—knowledge acquired at school which has been rejected by the foremost scholars.

6. The tragic news has just reached Moscow that a former graduate student in our institute, the intelligent and gifted Armenian ethnographer G. Mkrchyan, elected last January as chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, has been killed in his home. This shows how fragile is the boundary between intellectual and rank-and-file participant in historical drama.

In the Soviet social sciences, ethnicity is viewed as absolutely "natural," an "independent variable" and a primary cause of phenomena. The emergence and existence of ethnic groups is a crude social fact, and such groups are even classified as "ethnosocial organisms"[7] or "biosocial communities."[8] The ethnonation, with its "objective" physical characteristics (territory, common economy, language, etc.), is considered the highest type of ethnic community; it is understood by both scholars and politicians as a kind of archetype or supreme substance possessing statehood and providing the basis for social structure, including economics, politics, and culture. This classic credo of nationalism in its ethnic variant[9] is deeply embedded in both Soviet communist doctrine and state-judicial practice, with their cultures of intolerance, exclusivity, rejection of compromise, and absolute state bureaucratic control in the organization of the life of society.

The reason for the "compromise" between these two opposing and historically ill-founded doctrines can be found in the political strategy of the Bolsheviks, who needed to secure power in the conditions of and within the borders of the former empire, with its multiethnic population. However, under totalitarian conditions (in the period before the democratization which began in the second half of the 1980s), ethnonationalism—a cornerstone of policy and of the structure of the state—was merely declarative, without a trace of responsibility for its implementation. For some decades in the U.S.S.R., the scientific basis of nationalities policy and the development of the "theory of nations" by hundreds of candidates for academic degrees and privileged appointments both in the centre and in the republics was similarly declarative (there was no requirement that it be checked against social practice). At the same time, with the active participation of academic science in Soviet reality, "socialist nations" were being constructed as ethnonations; the practice of "socialist" federalism was worked out on the basis of the ethnic principle of the state system. A huge contribution was made to the construction of social practice "according to theory" not only by academics but by broader sections of the intelligentsia, including some from the large and powerful intellectual élite which has been created in recent decades within the titular nationalities.

Despite the broadening of scientific contacts and the weakening of ideological dogmatism which began in the mid-1980s, Soviet science has remained true to the positivist sociology of the previous century, with its primordialist interpretation of the ethnic element. Among the axioms of this approach is the conviction that culturally distinctive communities universally demonstrate an essential consciousness of their own identity. This identity involves a traditional loyalty which gives rise to the sentiments on which ethnic self-awareness and the definition of group membership are based. Self-awareness provides the basis for collective action and intergroup relationships, which in turn are accompanied by a natural striving for self-determination. This fetishized phenomenon is conceived on the group level in terms of clearly defined, bordered spatial structures and on the individual level in terms of mutally exclusive ethnic loyalty without any possibility of its absence, mutability, or plurality (including vertical or hierarchical plurality). Many investigators of modern ethnic processes have based their work on the racist state practice of recording nationality according to the bloodline of one parent.

In recent times, some of those writing on nationalities problems have demonstrated a more subtle, neo-Weberian approach incorporating elements of constructivism. In this approach, ethnic consciousness is a universal potentiality that is realized only by being "constructed" under certain conditions—a reaction on the part of culturally distinct communities to a threat to their existence, integrity, or interests (see Guseinov and Dragunskii 1990, Prazauskas 1991). From this point of view, ethnicity is an immanent potential which becomes manifest in response to external pressures, either when the group feels the threat of losing previously acquired privileges or to redress the previous denial of such privileges. Hence the naturalness and even inevitability of ethnonationalism, even in its "nation-building" form.

These postulates are today considered by the majority of Western anthropologists to be a remnant of the sociology of the past, and one rarely encounters the opinion that ethnic identity is incorporated in the concept of self or that ethnic group-consciousness and interethnic conflict at the individual or group level are endemic in people and society or that "the phenomenon of nationalism is historically natural and even inevitable" (see, e.g., Gordon 1978). In post-modernist anthropology, ethnicity is understood as a very complex phenomenon, both in its function of self-organizing preservation (providing the individual and the group with a certain social refuge in the face of outside challenges) and as the means for goal attainment. As for ethno-peoples, these communities formed in space and time neither had in the past nor—quite clearly—have in the present any firm geographical, political, and cultural-psychological demarcations (see Barth 1969, Nash 1990, Handler 1988, Geertz 1988). Neither was there any kind of ideal state of their culture: tradition always coexisted with innovation. In

7. See practically all Soviet writing on ethnography, history, and archaeology, not to mention that mountain of priceless human endeavour, the books and dissertations on nationalities policy of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

8. See the works of L. N. Gumilev, although—by reason of the substitution of colourful rhetoric and literary fantasy for analysis, not to mention the fairly heavy element of social racism in his reasoning—they can hardly be classed as scientific.

9. There is a vast literature on nationalism, beginning with the classic works of Emerson, Deutsch, Schaefer, Hayes, and others. Ethnicity as an integral component of nationalism began to be analysed in detail in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the works of Connor, Smith, Snyder, and Anderson (for an overview, see Ma 1990). Perhaps the most common way of defining nationalism is as "collective opposition to an alien government"; ethnonationalism can be defined as an ideology and political practice including the demand of ethnic groups for political recognition, political autonomy, or independence.

myths and in individual consciousness, cultural and linguistic identity was more often associated with an equally powerful consciousness of belonging to kin, religious, and regional communities. Incidentally, ethnic boundaries remain extremely shaky among a number of peoples today. New identities based on cultural, regional, or historical traditions are re-emerging in the public arena in Russia and other republics.

The most important (and, in present conditions, usually the sole) determinant of belonging to an ethnic group is the feeling of group loyalty—so-called national consciousness or membership in a nation. Nationalism and national identity are imaginary constructs which came into existence at a certain historical moment and have changed over time but have come to acquire a deep emotional legitimacy. A nation is itself not a type of ethnic community but the way in which the group defines itself; it is, in Ernest Renan's words, "an eternally repeated plebiscite" on belonging to a group and readiness to subordinate oneself to its interests. Nations are "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983), cultural artefacts created by intellectuals (particularly writers, historians, and ethnographers) and politicians. And this history of creations as an integral part of ethnohistories, especially crucial for the Soviet period, has yet to be written.

In the course of the modernization of the U.S.S.R.—including urbanization, the achievement of universal literacy, and the creation of prestigious ethnic élites from the intelligentsia and the upper reaches of the Party bureaucracy—coercive nation building began to take place (and continues, for example, among the Gagauz, the Gypsies, the Siberian Tatars, the Ruthenians, and the numerically small peoples of the North). The idea of the nation has been sown across a broad spectrum of politico-ideological systems and has come to dominate a broad social space. In a society of universal literacy and mass communication, politicians, writers, and academics (in the U.S.S.R., a disproportionately large section of society, with high prestige and connections with the centres of power) have "educated" their fellow citizens about group loyalty. Developing language and literature, writing histories, and using elements of traditional culture as "raw material for the elaboration of ethnic (national) myths" (Gitelman 1991:34), intellectuals have "explained" the nature of every group's ancient roots and rights to territory and defined the special "national character" of each.

Soviet ethnonationalism was and is both a result of and a reaction to the extremely state-regulated, hierarchical structure of ethnicity, in which citizens have been classifed as "nations," "peoples" (*narodnosti*), and "national groups" according to their accidentally acquired statuses and the boundaries of administrative structures. It is painful to record, but, however superficially current-affairs journalism and political folklore may have treated our past experience, interethnic hostility and bloody conflict and the processes by which the republics of the U.S.S.R. became sovereign and the union disintegrated are a result not only of the ill-founded social experiment conducted under the communists but also of conscious efforts not just at "rapprochement" but at the "development of socialist nations."

It now appears that the so-called theory of nations and the broader nationalist paradigm were not so much a reflection of social practice as the reverse: social practice is itself the result of ideological discourse and academic theories. The nationalism of the Soviet social sciences and of political folklore seems to be a form of therapeutic poeticization. It is poetry not in the textual sense but in the sense of its true content and functions, which in its disjunction from everyday speech seems to evoke the memory of the ethos of a particular community and in so doing invites the listener to act in accordance with this ethos (see Clifford and Marcus 1986). This is therapy for the massive trauma suffered by individuals and groups of the Tsarist and Soviet empires.

This mythologizing, irrational aspect of interethnic relationships has been virtually ignored by Soviet scholars, either because of their total ethnic engagement (particularly in the republics) or because of the politicized delusion that the democratization and break-up of the imperial, totalitarian structures can be accomplished via the recognition of the rights of nations (or, in the Soviet version, ethnonations) to self-determination through an (unrealizable) ethnic demarcation of administrative and state structures and the establishment of power within the framework of the newly emergent states by titular ("indigenous") nations.

The vast majority of Soviet social scientists continue to uphold the ideology of ethnic nationalism: along with sociologists and, particularly, ethnographers, historians write about the "formation and development of nations," and lawyers and jurists substantiate "national" (read "ethnic") statehood and special "ethnic law." In their phraseology and practice, Soviet politicians remain nationalists right across the spectrum from Gorbachev and Yeltsin to Landsbergis and Kravchuk, tending towards Stalin's definition of nations and the "Leninist principles of national policy." A departure from this paradigm in the direction of general self-determination for citizens ("civil nationalism") is observable only in a very few cases of intellectual and political activities. General democratic principles have been weakly expressed in the text of a number of declarations of sovereignty (Russian, Ukrainian, Kirghiz, and Kazakh) only side by side with the phraseology of ethnonationalism.

It would, however, be incorrect to treat ethnonationalism as a kind of social anomaly, particularly in its widespread "nation-building" form (i.e., in the creation of nation-"states"). The striving of ethnic groups—even if they *are* "imagined communities"—to acquire "their own" statehood, with consolidated structures and fixed territory, is an objective reality. Their aim is to facilitate competition for access to power and resources, to preserve cultural distinctiveness, and, to an even greater extent, to escape from subordinate status. It is also axiomatic that sovereign states and intrastate administrative structures most often emerge around a certain dominant ethnic component; a common language and

culture facilitate the everyday activities of social institutions (economic links, state administration, and interpersonal relationships).

But the commonly held belief, constructed by politicians and intellectuals, that territory and statehood can belong to an ethnos and that its representatives have a right to special status and laws in civic communities is a tragic mistake. Even if, in the course of the disintegration of the Soviet empire, one of the titular nationalities were to succeed in thoroughly "purging" the present territory of the former union republic in the name of the creation of a "mononation," minorities would always strive for self-determination in order to survive "on territory not their own." The idea of nations will nevertheless continue to be a powerful construct in the minds and actions of members of polyethnic societies until such time as favourable material conditions have been attained which people will be able to share, in a less unpleasant way, with "the other" and a democracy has been created in which groups and individuals will be able to vindicate their status and interests without maintaining rulers who are exclusively related to them by blood and in which citizens will have the opportunity to create and possess a sense of worth which they will value above group loyalty, with its self-sacrificial simplicity and diminished personal responsibility. As one researcher has put it, "Ethnicity is a reservoir for turbulence in a world where power, wealth, and dignity are unevenly and illegitimately distributed within and among nations" (Nash 1989:127).

In addition to the various socio-political causes there is and will continue to be a deep emotional and psychological basis for conflicting ethnicity and ethnonationalism. As does that social microcosm, the family, the ethnic group provides the individual with yet one more source of comfort and security in a huge country in which inequality, rivalry, and other external demands induce people to organize and structure themselves, sometimes through membership in imagined or half-imagined communities. This feeling of security is probably the most important factor in cementing ethnic groups and communities together. It is no accident that in the U.S.S.R. human solidarity on an ethnic basis permeated not only the republics and regions striving for normal social improvement but also poorly equipped towns, crude military barracks, and poverty-stricken student hostels.

The world experience of the past few decades—including the recent events in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.—shows that ethnicity, as consciously used by intellectuals in radical political discourse, is becoming a call to action: to self-organization for political and economic ends. Striving for sovereignty leads to struggle, either within the framework of the existing state or against the state itself. Such struggle or conflict in modern societies can encompass the economic, the political, or the cultural sphere or all of them at once. It can take forms ranging from the literary-romantic and the nostalgically rhetorical to brutal partisan struggle or even civil war. And here the Soviet ethnologist is faced with perhaps the most important question: What is the intellectual's role in militant practice? It was once put to the eminent French philosopher and anthropologist Michel Foucault (1980:62), and he replied:

> The intellectual no longer has to play the role of an advisor. The project, tactics and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is to provide instruments of analysis, and at present this is the historian's essential role. What's effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years. In other words, a topological and geological survey of the battlefield—that is the intellectual's role. But as for saying, "Here is what you must do!", certainly not.

Difficult times, difficult questions—what kind of answers can we find, even if only for ourselves?

Comments

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The Soviet Union disintegrated primarily because of powerful national movements within the former empire, so it is no wonder that Soviet ethnography is in a state of crisis. And though the Russian version of Tishkov's article ("Soviet Ethnography: Overcoming the Crisis") sounds rather optimistic, the English title is more appropriate.

Tishkov rightly begins with the name of the discipline, "ethnography," and its recent renaming as "ethnology," at least in the new name for the Moscow Institute of Ethnography. He says that the change "is dictated by factors both internal and external and not simply by eagerness for reform along Western lines," but I feel that there is another reason too, perhaps an unconscious one: to get rid of the ill-fated name by magic and thus overcome the crisis. More than that, I think that the problem lies in the *ethnos* rather than in the *graphein.* Soviet ethnography, constructing abstract realities on the basis of this root, eventually arrived at the concept of the "ethnophor," that is, man, but this man has little to do with the *anthropos* of Western anthropology. Soviet ethnography created noble constructions based on Lenin's principle of *nations'* rights and took no notice of the way in which whole ethnoses were being expelled from their native lands and deprived of any kind of *human* rights. I think that the real way to overcome the crisis would be orientation towards humankind in both policy and ethnography.

Tishkov observes the strange global geography of the foreign departments of the Moscow Institute. One can compare this global geography with the globe depicted on the coat of arms of the former Soviet Union, a symbol of its expansionist dreams. (By the way, the Institute could have served as a model for the whole of Soviet society.)

Tishkov also discusses the striking regularity with which ethnographers are becoming involved in national-political movements. One can observe a kind of irony in this passage, which he concludes with some useful precepts from the ethical code of the professional ethnographer. I hope that these will be his own key precepts as Russia's minister of nationalities. The fact that ethnographers are regularly involved in political life nowadays reminds me of the dramatic fate of the ancient historiographer Metrodorus, who thought that the historian should use his professional knowledge to construct an ideal present (Stepanian 1991) (not, as with the Marxist historians, an ideal future). Now that ethnic factors are in the forefront in the collapsed Soviet empire, the anthropologist is in a sense taking the place of the ancient historiographer and trying to use his ethnographic knowledge to save the dramatic situation. Of course, this is an image of the ideal anthropologist-politician.

Tishkov ends his article with Foucault's assertion that the intellectual must never say, "Here is what you must do." I think that today the anthropologist, on the basis of his professional knowledge, must say in critical situations, "Here is what you must *not* do."

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Although Tishkov's article is written with passion, it does not, in my opinion, wholly live up to its title. He devotes the greater part of it to a consideration of problems of ethnicity and nationalism and to open or implicit criticism of his colleagues. This is understandable: he is too close to his material, which is to some extent his "property." Furthermore, it has to do with part of the system that we used to call the U.S.S.R. and is now more appropriately designated "Soviet cultural space," whatever its frontiers may be, and it focuses on the rebellion of its author, who, as he puts it, is one of those people who has suddenly discovered "unexpected discrepancies in our interpretations of past experience." Say what one will, the position makes it difficult to remain an impartial observer of what is happening either in field ethnography or in hard-headed theory.

For some reason Tishkov does not date the beginning of the crisis in Soviet ethnology, although elsewhere, in commenting on "the conditions and tendencies of the development of anthropology in the United States," he manages to spot symptoms of the discipline's "sickness" on the other side of the Atlantic at the beginning of the 1960s (Tishkov 1989:6). From my point of view, the crisis in Soviet ethnography also dates to that period, the discipline having failed to grasp the opportunities presented by the temporary liberalism of the Khrushchev era from which other sciences were able to benefit. It was precisely then that we were able to see how very suitable the term "Soviet ethnography" was: it attributed far less importance to man (*anthropos*) than to the ethnic mass (*ethnos*) which it held so dear, behaving all the while like a well-trained secretary who keeps her eyes fixed on her boss so that she can write down (*graphein*) all his orders (Chichlo 1984, 1985).

It is difficult to agree with Tishkov that "field ethnography seems to have suffered least under the previous régime," the more so in that he himself refers to "a great many limitations," principally "censorship and self-censorship both of subject matter and in the formulation of questions." It is clear that the result of these and other such limitations has been to deprive us forever of invaluable descriptions of Russian village life during collectivisation, of the Kirghiz aul, or of Chukchi reindeer breeders' encampments of the kind produced by Margaret Mead in Bali. Worst of all, the descriptions we have are very often untrustworthy when we know, for example, that they were written by ethnographers who promoted atheism or collaborated with the security forces (as did A. N. Lipski, director of the museum of Abakan until his death, who made use of his revolver in "investigating" the Nanai in the 1930s). One might well ask whether field ethnography is compatible with the duties that until recently were assigned to it: the replacement of the existing institutions of many societies by establishing the ritual of Soviet power (Chichlo 1991) for the development of its "new man."

Tishkov is right in deploring the low esteem in which Soviet ethnology is held. We need look no farther than the comment in *Izvestija* (March 23, 1992) on the presence of an anthropologist among some Tatars from the Crimea who had set up their tents in the centre of Kiev while demanding recognition of their rights: "It is better not to rely on the concrete results from this sort of research, because recent history has not given us occasion to derive any good from it." While I am wholly at variance with the tone of this response, I do understand the reasons for it, because Soviet ethnography has for a long time certainly contributed to the stupefaction of society (Chichlo 1990*a*). I think that the discipline's rejection by its country can be explained by the fact that it has been terribly withdrawn from real life, quite simply outside its time. Correcting one of Tishkov's theses a bit, I would say that what Soviet ethnology has been cut off from is the passionate debates among the various schools of thought "on the basis of which 20th-century world anthropology has developed." Soviet ethnography is still that old maid, with her provincial manners, who so avidly drank in every word uttered by her favourite professors: Tylor, Bachofen, Lubbock, and Morgan. While keeping her eyes directed firmly heavenwards—that is, on Marx—she lingered in her "ethnographic Eldorado," in her Victorian-Brezhnev-style hobnailed boots, until she tripped over the threshold of the 20th

century and woke up to find young people of every age and both sexes: anthropologists in jeans.

It seems to me that Tishkov, who treats Soviet ethnology so harshly despite his desire to run it, makes a most interesting remark when he says that the various social sciences and intellectual forces of the U.S.S.R. have made "a huge contribution" to "the construction of social practice" and to the implementation of the idea of the "socialist nations" and of "'socialist' federalism." For my part, having become interested in Sovietology after the break-up of the U.S.S.R., when no one could accuse me of being anti-Soviet, I suddenly understood why Soviet ethnology had concerned itself primarily and so very persistently with the origin of primitive societies. I realised that the theory propounded by orthodox Soviet ethnologists whereby the first primitive societies were considered to be groups based exclusively on blood ties was applied in the U.S.S.R. in the form of the "fraternity and equality of primitive clans," meaning "of national territories" (this is Morgan's Utopia, which has been rightly criticised by Turner [1969]). It is as though the U.S.S.R. had, with the assistance of its ethnographers, returned to the primitive stage, although of course at a higher level (Chichlo 1992).

It is true that this process was modified under the influence of Russian ideas. This is why the various territories were arranged in hierarchical order within the whole so as to constitute an original structure, that of a *matriochka*. We may also recall how, at the dawn of *perestroika*, when the leaders of the Baltic republics proposed changing this structure, Julian Bromley, the former director of the Institute of Ethnography, intervened against the idea of a confederation. Being a good "secretary," he understood Gorbachev's intentions and intervened to maintain the old form of the state—the "national" form that was "socialist through its content" (Chichlo 1990*b*). Everyone knows what happened next.[1]

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Tishkov's article—fresh, honest, exhilarating, and touching—can hardly fail to move. The courageousness of its expression is the more telling because of his position as director of his institute. Given its still strong hierarchical structure, he has unchallengeable authority, but now his subordinates can be vociferous and less welcoming than the readers of CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY.

The rapprochement with the international academic community is heartening; how refreshing to learn he shares the *cri de coeur* which some of us Western observers have experienced for decades! For example, we have bemoaned the waste of talent on scholasticism dictated by government decree and practical limitations and the general paucity of fieldwork experience (despite extremely impressive exceptions). And how colourfully he echoes our frustrations at the pre-established rules of argument which made intellectual exchange resemble pre-Reformation theological discourse!

Yet this article fills me with immense sadness. The crisis has allegedly arisen from the illusions and uncompromising dogmas of the past, but a more honourable record emerges if one recognises that the discipline cannot be separated from the society and structures within which it existed. Although nothing can justify the instances of personal deceit and brutality, there were many imaginative attempts by ethnographers to eschew compromise with Communist party falsehoods. Also, detached critical discussion, even at one's own expense, was not a luxury Soviet scholars could easily afford. Teachers denounced by their students did not defend their views over a beer and a cozy pipe, and until a few years ago anonymous letters remained a threat. Furthermore, British-style extensive participant observation among Soviet peoples was not only difficult but mostly useless, since it was virtually impossible to publish even the slightest observation without criticising the state or compromising the villagers studied. How often the words "a thing of the past" or "almost obsolete" had to accompany a description of religious ritual, especially if one was a Central Asian ethnographer trying not only to counter patronising attitudes among the Moscow political elite but to deflect the local police! Tishkov admires Western fieldwork in the former U.S.S.R., but the difficulties were immense; many of my own fieldwork notes were confiscated, presumably by the KGB, and after returning to England I felt it necessary to refrain from publishing for eight whole years to protect the village I had studied in Soviet Georgia. Caroline Humphrey, whose work Tishkov rightly praises, had to overcome severe limitations on her allowed time in Buryatia—which in itself demonstrates that there can be no fieldwork dogma.

The problem with the idea of a crisis, however, stems not so much from Tishkov's understanding that the discipline should be a "science" (as opposed to an "interpretive art," as Evans-Pritchard might have argued) or that it should study "cultures and peoples" (as opposed to "man in society" or some other more sociological definition) or even that it should be "useful" as from his assumption that it should specialise in the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflict even though the former is illusory and the latter wicked. The previous director, J. V. Bromley, used all his authority to try to impose on his institute the exclusive study of ethnos theory and practice. Luckily, many escaped his strictures and demonstrated that the study of kinship, for example, could be profound and achieve world renown without necessarily being a function of the study of his brand of ethnos theory. Nor can one exclude from the discipline Kabo's excellent documentary work on the Tasmanians and Kubbel's on early African states. It may be the institute's studies of anthropological topics such as kinship or religion that prove most enduring. In today's world, however, with pressure both West and East to be "useful,"

1. Translated by Sarah Hanbury Tenison.

there is little inclination to study nationalism, and Tishkov, with his evident intellectual honesty, will inevitably have to undertake the painful examination of postcolonial contexts.

His discussion of conduct in the republics employs ethnic discourse which is perhaps misplaced, such as his comments on "our" trained ethnographers. As a parallel, Jomo Kenyatta would hardly be considered "ours" even though he studied anthropology in Great Britain, and his espousal of the Mau Mau war against British colonialism could hardly be labelled "ethnic conflict." Right up to December 1991 it was hard for liberal Russians such as Tishkov not to hope for a de-ethnicised and harmonious country with Soviet citizenship providing the primary political loyalty as American did in the United States. It was painful for them to accept that, just as Angolans and Mozambicans did not want to be Portuguese, the majority in the Soviet republics, mainly acquired through military conquest, wanted nothing but their own citizenship. The latter have been enraged by some Moscow ethnographers' assumption of the right to encourage a Bantustan mentality based on ethnic identity in Soviet republics to which they themselves did not belong—to override the internationally recognised conventions of common citizenship within sovereign states.

Tishkov's quote from Foucault of course elicits admiration of his realism in relinquishing the prestige of claiming privileged anthropological knowledge, and one can but guess at the difficulties he will encounter as newly appointed minister for nationality affairs if he hopes to rely on his judgements merely as a citizen and not as a professor of considerable distinction.

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Tishkov's critical review of the present state of Soviet (or, now, post-Soviet) sociocultural anthropology contains a good deal of useful information, but I find myself out of sympathy with the author's theoretical approach and unable to understand certain key points.

Like many Soviet intellectuals (and probably also many rank-and-file Soviet citizens), Tishkov considerably idealizes the Western, and particularly the American, intellectual-academic milieu. In my opinion, to the extent to which Western academic discourse is better-mannered and (at least on the surface) less coercive than the Soviet version, this is true because Western discourse deals largely, most of the time, with things which, by common consent, don't really matter except in the academic context. Where this isn't so, things can get pretty rough: a recent (March 24, 1992) *New York Times* reports that the head of the department of black studies at a major East Coast institution was purged from his position by the board of trustees for making statements which were perceived as embodying black racism. By contrast with Western social scientists, our Soviet colleagues deal on a routine basis with matters which obviously vitally affect the future well-being and even existence of their own society, so they can be forgiven for generating some extra polemical heat. And, in the West just as in the former Soviet Union, anyone who wants to get ahead in the academic game had better first of all be a good boy or (especially) girl.

Tishkov seems to think that Western social scientists change their paradigms as readily as they change their socks, but many American anthropologists—and not only rebels or outsiders like me—know better. The fact is that in order to get a dissertation accepted by a department or a theoretical article accepted by a major journal, you have to find slightly different words in which to dress up the same old tired paradigm which everyone has been mouthing since Lévi-Strauss walked out of the Reagan Brazilian jungles. There are exceptions, of course, most of which occur when someone imports a concept or a set of concepts from a neighboring field—economics, political science, literary theory, or psychology. But even in these cases the resulting changes are matters more of verbal form than of substance. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the upholders of various versions of the dominant paradigm get along amicably: after all, they all feed from the same trough.

Tishkov is quite rough on the "Leninist theory of nations"—not only its practical results (about which I would agree with him) but also its philosophical underpinnings and intellectual usefulness. I could not undertake a detailed critique of Tishkov's position here even if, at this moment, I fully understood his argumentation. I will merely record two opinions. First, in the Slavic area, where it was developed, and in some other places, such as the Transcaucasus, the Leninist theory of ethnicity accounts quite well for the observed historical facts, while elsewhere it is considerably less successful. Secondly, what Tishkov calls "ethnonationalism" seems to me to be the original and most widespread form of nationalistic feeling, however retrograde Tishkov or anyone else may think it is in the present state of the world. In contrast, nonethnic, territorial nationalism of the type which arguably exists in the United States, which Tishkov seems to consider both currently the dominant type and relatively benign, requires special and quite unusual conditions for its development and is therefore unlikely ever to become dominant on a world scale.

Tishkov's sarcastic remarks about Georgian nationalism strike precisely the wrong note for the context in which they appear. I'm sure that Tishkov regards himself as a Russian patriot (I've never met a Russian who didn't, if permitted to define patriotism in his/her own terms), and what's sauce for the Russian goose should certainly be sauce for the Georgian gander.

Insofar as there is a specific crisis in post-Soviet sociocultural anthropology, distinct from the crisis in the same field anywhere else and from the permanent crisis which is a precondition of intellectual progress and growth, it derives from, and is a part of, the general crisis

of post-Soviet society and hence can be overcome only through general measures and processes of recovery and renewal, which Tishkov doesn't bother to discuss.

Finally, I don't think that the fall of the Soviet empire has discredited Marxism as a master hypothesis or an analytical tool. It has certainly discredited traditional Soviet dialectical materialism, which nobody has taken seriously for years anyway, but only a new master hypothesis can supersede one which, as an American presidential spokesman once said, has become "inoperative." No such new master hypothesis is even on the horizon.

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I have been arguing for several years (Khazanov 1988, 1990, 1992) that Soviet anthropology is in deep crisis, and far from all Soviet anthropologists have agreed with me. Therefore, I can only welcome Tishkov's article. At last someone in the Soviet anthropological establishment has had the courage to admit the obvious truth. The fact that this article is being published not in a Soviet journal but in CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY is, apparently, an invitation to a dialogue, and this again can only be welcomed. In this spirit of belated but still refreshing "openness" I would like to make some critical remarks.

The article does not always demonstrate a clear understanding of contemporary Soviet society. On the one hand, that society is in the early posttotalitarian stage, which is unique and extremely interesting for research; on the other hand, it is in a period of decolonization, and here the Soviet/Russian experience deserves to be compared with the experience of the Western colonial powers. I am dissatisfied with Tishkov's explanation of ethnic nationalism in the former Soviet Union. He tends to consider it as simply the result of the deficiencies of Soviet nationality policy and the selfish interests of non-Russian political and cultural elites. This is certainly not enough. It is true that by making ethnic affiliation ascriptive, by directly connecting ethnicity with territory and ethnic status with the degree of ethnoterritorial autonomy, and by making cultural autonomy dependent on the latter Soviet nationality policy has not helped to break down the barriers between ethnicity and nation. Other factors, however, such as center-periphery opposition, ethnic stratification and ethnic competition, underdevelopment, and differential inclusion in the modernization process, should also be taken into account. Among other things, these factors involve the same "law of colonial ingratitude" that has been studied in the case of the former Western colonies. Under the circumstances, an upsurge of ethnic nationalism is an inevitable concomitant of Soviet colonialism and of the dissolution of the Soviet empire, particularly when for many millions of people civil society and its fundamental rules are still abstract and alien concepts and the only common political language remains that of ethnicity.

I am a little surprised that, while devoting so much space in his article to the condemnation of ethnic nationalism in non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union, Tishkov has forgotten to add that it exists, sometimes in very extreme forms, in Russia itself and that not all anthropologists in Moscow and St. Petersburg are immune to it. Instead, Tishkov mentions his colleague V. Kozlov as an alleged victim of hostility in some non-Russian republics. Assuming that Tishkov has read Kozlov's recent publications, I wonder whether he is really surprised by this; he may recall, for example, Kozlov's anger when during his fieldwork in their republic he met with some Azerbaidzanis who were unable to communicate with him in good Russian.

The "elder-brother complex" mentioned by Tishkov certainly deserves more attention. (Perhaps it might be recalled here that in the Soviet Union the Russian people was officially called the "elder brother" of all the other peoples.) Tishkov complains that Western anthropologists may have an advantage in undertaking field research in the non-Russian republics because, among other things, they know "how to be tactful and to return hospitality." He also hopes that "the numerous fine students who have emerged from the Moscow and Leningrad schools and are now working in the republics" can suggest how we (i.e., anthropologists in the Russian centers) "can stop playing the elder brother." This hope seems to me naive. The point is not the good manners of Western anthropologists but their self-critical concern about the past relationship of anthropology and colonialism. There is only one way to overcome the elder-brother complex: to stop considering oneself the elder brother. I think that the best lesson in this respect will come from the changing situation in the former Soviet Union.

If the elder-brother complex had been overcome, Tishkov would not be so irritated by "the parade of leather coats and Marlboro cigarettes on Shota Rustavely Prospect [the central avenue of the capital of Georgia]." Instead, as an anthropologist, he would understand it in the context of Georgian culture, with its proclivity for conspicuous consumption. He would also not be surprised at the anger of much of the Georgian intelligentsia over a chauvinistic story by a Russian writer which is insulting to Georgians and has been condemned as such not only by them but by many Russian intellectuals. Maybe he would even recall that it was not only the non-Russian elites in the country who "oppressed their kinsmen."

Another interesting question is whether an anthropologist or any other intellectual should be directly involved in the political process. I think that this is a matter of individual choice and, of course, of the consequences of this choice. In any case, Tishkov's position on this issue is hardly consistent. It seems that he is not particularly pleased with a situation in which one anthropologist (incidentally, a very popular and very liberal one) became a member of the Soviet and Russian parliaments, another was elected mayor of Yerevan, and a third was elected speaker of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia. I wonder whether this is worse than his own

involvement in the political process as a delegate to the last Communist party congress, during which he actively participated in a hapless attempt to develop a Soviet nationality policy to prevent the dissolution of the Soviet empire.

All in all, saying that Soviet anthropology is in crisis is not enough. The problem is how to overcome this crisis. It seems to me that in order to do so Soviet anthropology must first of all cease to be Soviet and begin to study post-Soviet society *sine ira et studio*. In this respect not only dialogue but also cooperation between post-Soviet and Western anthropologists may be very fruitful, on both the theoretical and the ethnographic level, particularly if this cooperation is not considered on the Soviet side as an opportunity to obtain sponsored invitations to the West. The doors should be open to everyone. I hope that Tishkov shares my opinion.

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The development of Soviet ethnography (ethnology) has not gone as well as we would have wished, and although it has achieved quite a few successes, especially in creating multivolume works such as the *Narody Mira* series and generalizing monographs such as *Etnicheskie protsessy v sovremennom mire* (Ethnic Processes in the Contemporary World), signs of a crisis have lately begun to appear in it—as, incidentally, in the other social sciences. Tishkov's article, devoted to an analysis of the causes of the crisis in Soviet ethnography and to the possible ways of overcoming it, seems to me timely and important. However, I view the causes of this crisis differently from Tishkov and therefore see different means of overcoming it.

Tishkov considers the long-term retention of certain inaccurate conceptions in Soviet ethnography, supported by the authority or administrative status of particular theorists, to be a major cause of the crisis in the field. By contrast, he says, in American science such authorities are cleared out of the way once or twice a decade on the principle of the "slash-and-burn system," and supposedly the theorists themselves are pleased with this. Both of these positions strike me as somewhat abstract and not entirely persuasive because of the significant differences in the organization of scientific work between the U.S.S.R. and the United States. The vast majority of scholars in the field of ethnography (cultural anthropology) in the United States are professors and instructors in the corresponding divisions and departments of universities and colleges. In each of these, the number of scholars is relatively small and the range of personal scientific interests may be quite varied, and communication among those with similar interests takes place chiefly through publications or at interuniversity symposia or conferences. In the Soviet Union, ethnographers were concentrated in large research institutes under the Academies of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the union republics or in large divisions of those institutes and were grouped in sections according to subject matter, and this made possible almost daily communication among those with similar interests and prevented the appearance or spread of the lightweight conceptions which turned up in the United States some years later and were eliminated by the "slash-and-burn system."

The insufficiently high scientific level of Soviet ethnography is to be explained by the violence done to it, as to the other social sciences, over many years by Marxist-Leninist ideology and oversimplified historical-materialist models and by the efforts of Party bureaucrats to turn it into a handmaiden of politics. Tishkov's article says essentially nothing about this, but in fact overcoming the flaws resulting from this circumstance is a very difficult task. The almost total abandonment of historical materialism by scholars which has been observed lately has led to a "methodological vacuum" in which it is very difficult to work, and to fill it will require special discussions and large-scale monographic studies. A reevaluation of certain concepts and authorities will probably take place in the course of this process.

Tishkov considers the inadequate development of field research a second important reason for the crisis in Soviet ethnography; in this connection, he proposes that such research be expanded and that undergraduate and graduate students be sent on extended field trips—the former for six months, the latter for a year. Without at all denying the importance of field research, I must note that its development in recent times on Soviet territory was quite satisfactory. If a "crisis" is observed in this area, it is for the most part reducible to inadequate interpretation of data gathered under field conditions, which has resulted in a clear dominance of the descriptive mode over the analytical one in publications. The suggestion that field research be broadened and extended in duration without a clear determination of its specific tasks can only exacerbate this "crisis." We must also take into account the increased material difficulties of conducting field research due to the economic crisis and the difficulties caused by local interethnic conflict and the achievement of sovereignty by the non-Russian republics. As a consequence of these, the task becomes organizing better cooperation between the scholarly personnel of the central institutions under the jurisdiction of the Academy of Sciences, on the one hand, and local ethnographers and students of local lore, on the other.

As for the question Tishkov raises of the politicization of Soviet ethnography and the participation of ethnographers in the political life of the country during *perestroika* and the major socioeconomic reforms, the meaning of "crisis" in this connection is not entirely clear to me. If it refers to the participation of professional ethnographers in the central organs of power, this was in fact incomparably less than that of economists—but then the prestige of ethnography was not as severely undermined as that of economics. If instead it

refers to the powerful upsurge of nationalistic movements, then the role of ethnographers (particularly those from the non-Russian republics) in the, so to speak, ideological preparation of these movements was of some importance. It may be that we should relate Tishkov's words about the need for "repentance" precisely to this.[1]

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Tishkov's article is one of a series of recent publications by Russian scholars on the present state of ethnology and anthropology in this country. Its style is vivid and emotional, and it contains a number of bitter and uncompromising statements many of which seem highly relevant. Nevertheless, its most striking feature is the author's paradoxical way of thinking. He proposes a thesis which he almost unexceptionably denies elsewhere with an antithesis that in turn excludes a productive synthesis.

For example, Tishkov is obviously right in denouncing the notorious domination of Soviet science in recent decades by a particular theoretical framework, in contrast to the situation in Western anthropology, where different approaches constructively coexist. But elsewhere he would have us believe that there is a single "Anglo-American school" of contemporary social anthropology with a unified methodological background. Certain postulates advocated by Soviet ethnographers are allegedly wrong because they are not accepted by "the majority of Western anthropologists." But is the reliability of a theoretical concept really established by majority vote? Is this not a reflection of an outdated belief explicitly rejected by Tishkov himself? It cannot be suggested that we could overcome the "crisis" of Soviet ethnology merely by replacing quotations from Marx with quotations from Geertz or someone else. We have recently come to recognise that phrases such as "as is well known" and "it is common knowledge" do not represent real arguments.

Tishkov is a dedicated opponent of the ethnos theory that flourished in Soviet ethnology from the late 1960s on. He proposes a "new interpretation of ethnicity" (new to his Soviet colleagues, or new in a broader sense?), but again it is an extremely confusing one. He uses the terms "people," "ethnos," and "ethnic group" as synonyms: A "people" is characterized by its culture and has a particular "profile." In a sense, an "ethnic group" is like "that social microcosm, the family." An ethnographer normally lives with a particular "ethnic group." The ethnographer's ethics includes such precepts as not harming a people, not formulating a problem where the people itself does not see one, and not taking on the function of the people oneself. But at the same time he shares Levin's rejection of the idea that the world is populated by "ethnoses" (= "peoples") and goes on to suggest that they are merely mental constructs or ideal types existing exclusively in the minds of scholars. Are not these various statements incompatible? And if, as Tishkov would have it, the distinctive subject matter of ethnology is "peoples" and cultures, do such studies have anything in common with the reality around us? These questions may be difficult for Tishkov's future disciples to answer without further clarification of the theory by its main proponent.

Tishkov speaks at length of the intellectuals in Russia who have freely taken on the role of spiritual leaders and professional politicians and criticizes colleagues whose professional responsibility is "mainly associated with the structures of power"—"advising the ruling élites on the conduct of 'national policy.'" Without casting doubt on the sincerity and selflessness of such "scholar-politicians," Tishkov is critical of an ethnographer who became president of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia, a former research student of our institute who is now mayor of Yerevan, and a senior research fellow elected deputy to two parliaments. Quoting Foucault, he says that intellectuals cannot be advisers. But can he really refrain from giving the government suggestions with regard to the national situation now that he has accepted the post of minister of national affairs? Or (improbably) has he decided to stop being an intellectual?

Even to call the state of Soviet ethnology a "crisis" is misleading. On the one hand, "crisis" has an obvious negative connotation, but on the other it is "the normal condition of science." According to this logic, it is Western anthropology, which is not in crisis, that is in a condition of stagnation. Etymologically, a "crisis" is a sudden aggravation in the state of a disease. What is happening in Russian ethnology today is, on the contrary, a process of recovery substantiated by the democratic reforms in this country. The process is slow, gradual, and unfinished, but it is inevitable.

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It is very painful and difficult to deal with what is going on now in Russian (formerly Soviet) anthropology (formerly ethnography, now ethnology—still a highly debatable term for the great majority of scholars in this country). Russian researchers who once suffered political pressure are now in a very vulnerable position because of economic difficulties. Which is better? Both are worse, as they joke in Odessa. I agree with Tishkov with respect to many of the points he puts forward. The discipline is indeed in danger of marginalization, which is a paradox given the expansion of ethnic sentiment and consciousness all over the country. There are many factors that contribute to this very complicated situation, some of which he has mentioned. It is not easy to understand the problem, especially for the outsider, because one needs to know the history of academic studies in this country and the peculiarities of the educational pro-

1. Translated by Stephen Dunn.

cess, research strategies, the mentality of scholars, and the like—all of them clues to the development and maintenance of distinct traditions that scholars are unwilling to give up. Soviet science in general and ethnography in particular have suffered not a few pogroms (see, e.g., Slezkine 1991) that have contributed to what I would call negative selection. To put it another way, the more able the student, the more independence he or she wanted to maintain, the more difficult it was for him or her to be employed at the Academy of Sciences, to achieve promotions and salary increases, to publish original papers, and so on. This is surely one of the main reasons for the scarcity of well-trained and gifted theoreticians in our discipline.

In general, the problem of the status of theory in this country is a special one. Tishkov mentions it among many others, but it is worth discussing much more extensively because the relation between theory and empiricism is likely to be of interest to a more general audience. Theory plays a special role under any totalitarian regime, since it is involved in the development and maintenance of the ruling group's ideology. This was the case, for example, in Nazi Germany, where even prehistoric archaeology was highly involved (Klejn 1984, Arnold and Hassmann 1991), and it was the case in the U.S.S.R. At the same time, one should not oversimplify the situation, because theory has not had the same status in different periods.

Soviet ethnography was long considered to be based on Marxist-Leninist methodology, and all Soviet scholars were treated as Marxists. In fact this was a rather formal identification; Marxist methodology demands some kind of theoretical study, and the great majority of Soviet anthropologists were (and still are) quite innocent of theory, description being the main result of their academic activity. Many of them thought in terms of no theory at all, whereas others were consciously nontheoretical because they identified theory with Marxism and Marxism with official Soviet bureaucratic ideology. This may come as a surprise to Western scholars who expect Russian anthropologists to present their ideas in Marxist terms (see, e.g., Smith 1991:73).

Besides, the situation of Marxism itself in recent decades was more complicated than it seemed at first glance. There was no single Marxism in this country. What could be observed in fact was the rather rigid orthodox Marxism of the Soviet bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the less orthodox Marxism of academics, on the other. There was also no uniform Marxism among the latter; it was more orthodox among those dealing with modern societies and processes (since political pressure and censorship were more severe in this field) and less so with respect to studies of precapitalist or prehistoric societies. Prehistoric studies probably suffered least from political pressure and offered the scholar substantial freedom for creative theoretical activity, although also within limits. Moreover, even from the Marxist position it was possible to develop different approaches and to discuss various problems with different ideas in mind. This resulted in not a few useful discussions and the development of new theoretical approaches during the past two decades or so. But once again, it was only theoreticians who were involved in these activities, and they were not numerous and were regarded with suspicion by most empiricists. Not many scholars read the original papers of Marx and Engels as opposed to quotations from their works. Needless to say, more often than not those who are now criticizing Marxism are unfamiliar with Marx's original texts. Many scholars occupied themselves with so-called criticism of "bourgeois theories," being quite ignorant of the theories in question, and now not a few writers (and sometimes the *very same* ones) are criticizing Marxism though completely incompetent in the subject.

Theory was developed in the past two or three decades mainly in two fields of Soviet anthropology: ethnic problems (resulting in ethnos theory) and prehistory. Special theoretical groups or even departments were responsible for these activities. This may seem strange to Western anthropologists, for whom ethnographic field research and theoretical study of the results are one continuous process. In this country the student is stimulated to think primarily in terms of local or regional ethnography rather than in terms of problems, and the majority of the departments in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (formerly the Institute of Ethnography) are still organized on this regional principle (Russian peoples, Caucasian peoples, Northern peoples, and so on). In speaking of scholars with foreign specialization, Tishkov mentions their role in preparing obsolete reference books, but many who specialized in domestic ethnography also played this role. To put it differently, there were and still are well-informed experts on various peoples, regions, and countries who could and can supply less-informed persons (state officials among them) with valuable data that are badly needed for a great variety of purposes. Indeed, as a product of the colonial era, Euro-American anthropology also played this role from the very beginning. Both Western and Soviet experts have served their politicians and governments to a certain extent in some periods. That those politicians were able to use the data for their own ends, sometimes harmful to the peoples involved, is quite another matter. This became evident to Western anthropologists several decades ago when several dramatic cases caused them to begin to discuss their own political role and relationships with government agencies. Some very interesting and useful statements on ethics were adopted as a result (Fluehr-Lobban 1991).

Regrettably, we have had nothing like this among Russian academics. Tishkov is probably the first in this country to point to important ethical issues. Such discussion is much needed here, because mistrust of Russian ethnographers, especially those from Moscow or St. Petersburg, is on the increase, and they are sometimes treated as undesirable agents from the center and suspected of clandestine activities. An increase in anti-Russian sentiment is another serious obstacle to field studies in remote ethnic regions. The ethnographers of the Russian Academy of Sciences are becoming victims of contemporary political struggle in this respect as well. Tishkov justifiably points to the questionable role of na-

tional intellectual elites in the context of modern ethnopolitical conflict (although one must be very cautious here, because not a few intellectuals there are trying not to become involved in "nationalistic games" and suffer a great deal in the local environment). However, it is obvious to any anthropologist that study of these elites from an unfriendly position is liable to aggravate interethnic conflict and close the door to the region in question both to the researcher involved and to his colleagues. What and how should a scholar study under these unfortunate circumstances? And what form should he or she choose for the publication of the results of the study? These questions are very painful given the increase in violence in the territory of the former U.S.S.R. and elsewhere.

The prevailing region- or people-oriented studies of the great majority of Russian students have not stimulated many of them to develop any kind of theory, and the few attempts at this have been highly vulnerable to criticism because of the lack of training and experience in theory construction of their authors. It was precisely because of this that the special theoretical groups or departments in the former Institute of Ethnography were established. Their members engaged in comparative anthropology, attempting to combine ethnographic data and also data from other disciplines to develop various theoretical approaches and to discuss important problems, They did not limit themselves to the data of domestic ethnography alone but included fresh materials obtained by foreign colleagues. This was an important and sometimes the only way for most Russian ethnographers to become familiar with advances in Western scholarship, because the majority of Russian ethnographers, especially those of the older generation, had little or no competence in foreign languages. It is for this reason that Western concepts and the history of Western ethnological ideas and theories are better-known in this country than Russian/Soviet ideas and advances are abroad.

Of course, this arrangement had its disadvantages. First, some theoreticians would represent Western concepts rather tendentiously, in distorted form (sometimes consciously but sometimes because of limited language competence), to demonstrate their loyalty to the regime for the sake of their academic careers. In the past two decades, however, this has in general not been strictly required, although it has still been necessary to take the existence of censorship into consideration. Many scholars have tried to present an objective overview of Western theoretical approaches and concepts and to criticize them constructively. Second, as is pointed out by Tishkov, many theoreticians had had no fieldwork experience, and this meant that they sometimes made rather uncritical use of ethnographic information. However, the problem of the reliability of field data has almost never been discussed among Russian/Soviet ethnographers (but see Pimenov 1990). For example, the ideas of interpretive anthropology (after Geertz) are little known in this country. One more disadvantage, especially in terms of modern studies dealing primarily with ethnos theory, is their tendency toward a scholasticism expressed in the development of very rigid and complex classificatory schemes at the expense of the detailed analysis of real processes and, especially, cause-and-effect relationships. This, by the way, is one of the reasons Russian/Soviet ethnographers were unprepared to respond to the challenge of the explosion of modern ethnicity.

At the same time, I cannot agree with Tishkov's wholly negative evaluation of Soviet theoretical activity. In fact, whereas in talking in terms of "scholastic theoreticians" and "compilers" he rejects comparative studies in principle, it is reasonable to ask whether it is possible to study broad regional or global problems on the basis of one's own field experience alone. For instance, is it enough to use one's own data from Sarawak (Needham 1976) to refute the concepts developed by other students with data from very different regions? Extensive comparative studies and the development of theoretical approaches and methodology relevant to explanations of regional and global processes both past and present are much needed. For instance, the Kossinian bias characteristic of Soviet archaeology in recent decades (Klejn 1974) has resulted in a nationalistic tendency in the popular field of ethnogenetic and ethnohistorical studies that contributes to interethnic tensions (Kohl 1991). Theoretical intervention, for example, along the lines of ethnoarchaeology (Shnirelman 1984) or linguoarchaeology (Militarev, Pejros, and Shnirelman 1988) might be very helpful here. In fact this problem has much broader implications; it involves evaluation and reevaluation of the relationships between theory and empirical activity itself, especially with respect to the specific traditions of various national anthropological schools.

Finally, I cannot disagree with Tishkov that considerable change is needed in Russian scholarship, but I can understand the concern of some of my colleagues with regard to the danger of the loss of scholarly traditions and the breaking of links between the generations. Russia has had ample experience of the voluntary destruction of the products of many generations, and this experience has taught us that it is more difficult to build from scratch than to make gradual changes using the best resources available. One of the important characteristics of Soviet ethnography has been its historical approach—its inclination to treat the phenomenon in question in a historical context. This approach still seems valuable despite its traditionality. Needless to say, it remains deeply imbedded in Russian anthropology, which is treated as a historical discipline. It is worth mentioning that a shift to historicism has been under way in Western anthropology for a decade or so. This is not, of course, to say that the historical approach should be developed at the expense of other valuable approaches. An overemphasis on the historical approach resulted in the underdevelopment of synchronic approaches such as functionalism and structuralism, and this is one of the shortcomings of Russian scholarship today.

Theory suffered heavy losses in the *perestroika* period, when all the groups or departments responsible for theo-

retical activity in the former Institute of Ethnography were dismantled. (The regional departments were retained and continue to conduct their empirical studies.) It is evident from this that theoretical studies are rather risky for their practitioners and especially vulnerable in times of political transformation, and this is another of the reasons theoretical studies are not very popular among Russian scholars. The situation is paradoxical in that the renaming of the institute as one of "ethnology" occurred at the same time. Thus, deprived of its still rather poor theoretical foundations, Russian ethnography (or ethnology?) has to start over again from the very beginning. Will it be for the last time?

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Valery Tishkov took over the directorship of the Institute of Ethnography of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences from Academician Yu. V. Bromley in March 1989. Bromley had been at the helm for no fewer than 23 years. He was the first ethnographer to become a full member of the academy, and one might speculate that this not only conferred new prestige on the discipline that he so jealously guarded with his definition of ethnography as a science of ethnoses but also was an expression of the appreciation of the ruling circles of the U.S.S.R. for the services it provided, especially in the field of ideology. This is not, however, the place for an evaluation of Bromley's work, which has been attempted elsewhere (e.g., Khazanov 1990; Skalník 1986, 1988, 1990; but cf. Gellner 1980, 1988; Dragadze 1980, 1990).

Tishkov is the apparently first ethnographer to grasp and admit a deep crisis in his discipline. In this paper, obviously written for the home audience and slightly dated, he attempts to look at the causes of the crisis and perhaps some solutions for it. His predecessor conducted no such analysis when he took over from Tolstov in 1966, and therefore it is necessary to examine the whole Soviet period to see when ideology took over, what followed from this, what causes practitioners to defend discredited practices and value armchair activity over long-term fieldwork. Ironically, ever since the suppression of the Ethnological Faculty of Moscow University in the late 1920s the discipline's name has been "ethnography," even though what it did all those years was produce fairly ethnological reconstructions of the Marxist model of primitive society ("the primeval communal order") and, later, provide theoretical support for the state's policy of merging nations into a "supraethnic category of Soviet people." Now, when Tishkov calls for a return to the true meaning of ethnography as anthropological fieldwork and its written results, his institute has been renamed the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, indirectly encouraging those armchair ethnologists to continue doing what they have done for the past 60 years! It is true that social science in the U.S.S.R. and its satellites was in the firm grip of Marxist-Leninist ideology, but the name "ethnography" does not mean that no theoretical work was done. On the contrary, too much theory was produced by too many people without reference to fieldwork results (ethnographies by Western anthropologists were routinely "rechewed" by Soviet armchair theorists and used for their Marxist arguments). What was missing was the link between theory and fieldwork that is typical of good Western anthropology. Soviet field ethnography was as a rule theoretically sterile, often dull positivist stuff devoid of life and spirit. It is also ironic and tragic that the principles of Malinowskian field anthropology so forcefully rejected by Soviet ethnographers at the height of the Stalinist era (Potekhin 1951) are only now being rediscovered and, typically, adopted uncritically. The self-criticism so characteristic of Western anthropology is only beginning to take shape in its Soviet counterpart.

Tishkov's article is very welcome for providing a better understanding of the vicissitudes of the discipline in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Apparently written just before the final breakdown of the Soviet Union, it is nevertheless very useful. In Central Europe too there is a struggle going on for a genuine critical anthropology which would transcend the existing sterile, positivist ethnography. To rename ethnography "ethnology" in the 1990s seems anachronistic, but it is done precisely to mask the impotence of a discipline that has survived for decades isolated from the international intellectual scene and relegated to an appendage of the grand ideological construct of the "historical sciences." What the ethnographers of the former Soviet Union and of Central Europe will have to do is to look into the mirror of world anthropology and decide freely what they will have to change. I believe that the change will have to be more than cosmetic.

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In an impassioned and eloquent appeal, Tishkov attempts to persuade his Commonwealth colleagues to abandon the old ways in favor of the American practices that he knows so well—from fieldwork requirements, periodic housecleanings, and departmental structure to a "more highly developed civic culture," an "attachment to academic freedom," and a "new post-modernist epistemology." It is on this latter score that I have some doubts, and it is on these doubts—to the exclusion of the paper's many strengths—that I will concentrate.

While objecting repeatedly to the "totalitarian claims of objectivist positivism" and even expressing a hope that someday "we will be able to regard our ethnography as a jointly created text consisting of fragments of discursive practice," Tishkov devotes most of his paper to a critique of those scholars and pseudoscholars whom he accuses of having "abandoned the truth" and turned their backs on the "adequate description of the realities of the world and its cultures" in order to tell the old rulers what they wanted to hear and, now that those rulers and their class ideology are out of the way, to herd the emerging mass audiences into the pitfalls of

nationalism. In other words, Tiskhov's political and above all moral crusade against the "erosion of morals, self-centredness, . . . and internal constraints" of post-Soviet intellectuals and "the immoral social régime" and "distorted culture" that shaped them is undermined by his own enthusiasm for the "sophisticated forms of relativism," "situatedness," and "the complexity of the dialogic nature of knowledge" that he finds in Western postmodernism and recommends as the future of "ethnology" in the Commonwealth.

Indeed, the implication of Tishkov's paradox is that ethnology in the Commonwealth has no future of any kind—for if ethnicity is invented and constructed (as per Anderson and Hobsbawm), if all the inventing and constructing is done by self-serving elites, and if these inventions and constructions are contrary to people's "own interests," then ethnicity is a form of false consciousness. At the same time, Tishkov seems to follow Bromley and other former Soviet theorists in implying that ethnicity is the main subject of ethnology: hence the proposed new name of the discipline, the suggestion of "the ethnic patchwork," "ethnic enclaves," and urban ethnicity as the primary topics for young scholars, and the endorsement of the study of particular communities "and therefore the whole ethnic group" as the most appropriate anthropological genre. Thus, ethnology is the study of ideal constructs cynically created by bureaucratic states and "self-satisfied" intellectuals. The "adequate description of the realities of the world and its cultures" is somebody else's job.

The world outside academe suffers from the same tension. Objecting to the charge that scholars have "provoked ethnic conflict," Tishkov goes on to accuse irresponsible Moscow anthropologists and "prestige-hungry" non-Russian scholars-turned-politicians of further befuddling the already confused populace and ultimately causing bloodshed in the Caucasus and elsewhere. He also maintains, however, that national and other myths provide people with a "social refuge" and a means of political mobilization (while continuing to insist that all such myths are created by elites). In this context Foucault's words seem just as unconvincing as when they were first uttered. How can intellectuals claim to be geologists surveying the battlefield if, according to Tishkov, it is they who came up with the battle cry, the battle plan, and the battle-axes and are thus responsible for the war to begin with?

Again, the main issue is apparently not who created the various ideal constructs but just how close to the ideal (and hence to reality) these constructs are. There is no doubt that, postmodernist rhetoric notwithstanding, Tishkov regards the myth of autonomous individuals and "general self-determination for citizens" as less mythical (and less perverse) than the myths of class solidarity and national unity. He looks forward to the day when "citizens will have the opportunity to create and possess a sense of worth which they will value above group loyalty, with its self-sacrificial simplicity and diminished personal responsibility." Forgetting his own assertion about the "emotional legitimacy" of group loyalties and their utility as props and "social shelters," Tishkov proclaims the slogan of national self-determination a "politicized delusion" and suggests "citizens' self-determination" as a real alternative.

Although it may be desirable, it is hardly real. For the past 100 years, the only badge of legitimacy available to new states has been the notion of national liberation, no matter how inapplicable according to existing definitions of "nation." Tishkov considers Baltic self-determination more promising than many others, yet its rhetorical raison d'être is clearly ethnic: those Russians who become Estonian citizens (not very many, according to the current law) will be "minorities" in the Estonian state—not just citizens on a piece of land whose borders, history, and official language are not sanctified by ethnicity or administrative tradition. Perhaps even more important, the same is true of Estonians in the Russian state, which—even when it is being described as a country of Russian peoples (*rossiiane* as opposed to *russkie*)—is inextricably bound up with the sacred symbols of ethnic Russianness, from Pushkin to Kutuzov, only in the Russian case we have inherited them ready-made and can take them more or less for granted; somebody else was present at the embarrassing spectacle of mass canonization.

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Valery Tishkov is one of a handful of Soviet[1] anthropologists[2] who have been working diligently to align their discipline more fully with Western anthropology. Since he became director of his country's most prestigious and influential ethnographic institution, he has been doing this from a uniquely visible place and (as is clear from this paper) with tremendous verve, courage, and intelligence. I offer the following observations in a spirit of sympathy and admiration for his efforts.

Talk of "crisis," which permeates this article, usually accompanies a strong claim to be redefining something; here it is a move to control a discipline's definition, part of an effort to reconfigure the grounds on which scientific authority can be claimed and augmented. Tishkov is making this move in an unusually open moment,[3] when Soviet anthropology has excellent prospects for repositioning in the field of disciplines. These prospects

1. I use the term "Soviet" to refer to people working or events occurring within the confines of the Soviet Union before its collapse and having significance beyond the boundaries of a single republic, such as "Russia."

2. The terms "anthropology," "ethnography," and "ethnology" have complex and contradictory definitions in the Soviet context and are not entirely congruent with those prevailing in Anglo-American anthropology. I use these terms here more or less as American anthropologists would, while acknowledging that my practice does not conform to current (and problematic) "Soviet" practice.

3. Broadly defined by the opening inaugurated by *perestroika* and the retirement and death of Academician Yu. V. Bromley, who had headed the Moscow Ethnography Institute for many years and had established both the definition of its object of study and the relevance of ethnography to nationalities policy in the Soviet Union.

are conditioned, however, by its relation to "ethnicity" and by the central role of ethnic conflict in current politics.[4]

As Tishkov's own language suggests, he sees his task very much in these terms: he is concerned with his discipline's marginalization and questions its self-definition. He shows great familiarity with the issues being posed in Western anthropology (informed by reflexivity and postmodernism), polemically turning them upon his own discipline. His strategy to shift the grounds for claiming and building ethnographic authority includes (1) repositioning anthropology in relation to political power and making it more responsive to the people it studies than to the center, (2) an insistence on long-term fieldwork, which has not been the norm, (3) an implicit plea that anthropologists stop further constructing national identities and playing demagogically into the hands of already constructed national sentiments, and (4) an appeal for more thoroughgoing linkage with international anthropological networks and literatures.

What might one observe about this program? First, and obviously, its central points depend on the politics set by Gorbachev and by Yeltsin, emphasizing a Western orientation and a democratization/decentralization conducive to making anthropology more responsible to its research subjects. This same politics, however, enables a democratization based in nationalist demagogy while undermining the state funding upon which Soviet anthropology has relied; thus the politics of reform has ambivalent consequences, which the paper understates, for Tishkov's program. He does not tell us how anthropology might be funded so as to reduce its "power-centric" character or raise the dilemmas attendant upon one obvious source of funding: contract research for the various nationalities/ethnic groups now asserting themselves. These are practically the only people who might have an interest in funding ethnographic research, and to serve them would not create distance from political power.

The limited possible audience for Soviet anthropology results from its historical role in studying (and helping to construct) ethnic phenomena. Tishkov paradoxically reinforces this narrowness by continuing to define anthropology as the study of ethnicity (distinguishing it from ethnology, which studies peoples and cultures) even while urging anthropologists to stop "constructing ethnicity." Few American anthropologists would define our aim as the study of ethnicity; his maintaining that definition may restrict his discipline's fundability even as it continues the construction of ethnicity he sees as having been so pernicious.[5]

Perhaps Tishkov is a bit unfair to those scholars who have helped to construct ethnic identities. Subordinate nationalisms were essential in breaking apart the Soviet monolith and furthering the decentralization that, as I noted above, is one condition of his own program. That these nationalisms now threaten the integrity of republics like Tishkov's native Russia is no reason to deny their crucial role in definitively precluding the restoration of the *status quo ante* (not even a right-wing coup could now reconstitute the old Soviet Union). Tishkov might moderate his criticism of the colleagues who helped to produce the situation within which his redefinition of anthropology makes sense, even if they also make his work more difficult.

As to his advocating international linkages (interestingly reminiscent of the former dissidents' strategy of consolidating their internal position by gaining international allies), one might ask whether "Western" definitions of anthropology actually suit the countries of the former Soviet Union. This question parallels Third World ones of whether borrowing intellectual forms from "imperialist" settings is the best way to build viable intellectual communities in nonimperialist ones (leaving aside the possibility that internationalization may be seen as proof of ongoing *Russian* imperialism). The question of funding that I raised earlier is not irrelevant here: internationalizing Soviet anthropology may bring more money from abroad for conferences and lectures, but it may not create a mandate adequate to securing anthropology an important place with those who will provide funds in the new republics. I fear that Tishkov's proposed redefinition of Soviet anthropology—much as it is to *my* taste—may make it nonviable in its local setting. I hope I'm wrong.

4. Hence Tishkov's reference to "a garrulous army of experts in ethnic conflict" who are not trained as anthropologists but seek to usurp their place.

5. Indeed, given Tishkov's sophisticated understanding of ethnicity as construct, it is surprising that he defines anthropology in this way.

[Tishkov's reply had not arrived by press time and will therefore appear in a later issue.—EDITOR.]

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