

## Teaching leadership in the Russian Federation: Looking through the post-Soviet lens

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*This paper addresses the Fulbright experience of an American faculty member in Eastern Siberia, Russian Federation. Both course content and teaching method are contrasted with what is traditional and customary in that region. The author regularly kept a journal, enabling thoughtful post-experience reflection. Continued emphasis on the “collective”, as well as a Russian colleague’s identification of “the gap between what and how” in post-Soviet culture, helped the author to focus both academic and practical challenges facing students and faculty.*

Leadership, teaching, cross-cultural, Russian, Fulbright Scholarship

### INTRODUCTION

On May 15, 2003 I received official notification of my Fulbright appointment to the Russian Federation. I had requested an assignment with East-Siberian State Technological University (ESSTU) in Ulan Ude of the Buryat Republic. Buryatia is one of Russia’s semi-autonomous republics with its own regional government. It is bordered on the south by Mongolia and on the west by Lake Baikal, the largest body of fresh water in the world. The lake is home to many species found nowhere else and is revered there as the birthplace of the world.

Ulan Ude was off-limits to foreigners during Soviet days (Thomas, 2001). Even today, the trans-Baikal region of Siberia, though a tremendous potential tourist attraction, remains just that—a ‘potential’ attraction. For this reason, the region has maintained a great deal of its traditional culture, and social and organisational practices. It presents, therefore, superb conditions for examining citizens’ post-Soviet views on organisational practice. Views here, in contrast to those in western Russia’s large cities, have not been highly influenced by the West but have evolved more slowly, retaining more Russian and Siberian, rather than European, culture.

This paper focuses on my experiences teaching organisational courses while on the Fulbright Scholarship. I taught continuous courses throughout the semester at two different universities and spoke as a guest or conducted intermittent seminars at two high schools, an English language school and one other university. The content of these courses centered on what it takes to build an organisation that provides quality service and various leadership approaches effective in such an organisation.

Quality service and the notion of leadership as something which can be learned are still novel ideas in the post-Soviet environment (for example, Kets De Vries, 2000; Taplin, 1998). Employing my own and my students’ cultural lenses, I had a critical encounter with the leadership and service quality material that I simply do not get when teaching from a Western perspective to mostly North American students here in Wisconsin.

## METHOD

This paper draws on the journal kept throughout our stay; it takes a qualitative approach to examining the juxtaposition of well-accepted service quality and leadership material presented in an environment where it is certainly new, if not perceived as downright odd (e.g., Barner-Barry and Hody, 1995; Puffer, 1996). I made a deliberate point of writing extensively in my journal at least twice a week, “to catch the process as it occurs” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 6) and capture details while still fresh. Further, in qualitative style, I made every effort to “try to understand people from their own frame of reference” (p. 6), often asking students and friends questions to help me fully comprehend their perspective. Of necessity, this paper is presented in the first person as these crosscultural reflections are grounded in first-hand experience.

Living in two different homestay situations, one with a college teacher and her two-year-old son, the other with business owners and a college and high school student, further helped me “to study the reality of everyday life” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 11). This broad context of living in the situation, becoming intimately familiar with my post-Soviet environment, further enriched my experience and authenticated the cross-cultural perspective I gained on Western approaches to service quality and leadership. I was left with a perspective stated by Margaret Mead as quoted in Kets de Vries (2001): “As the traveller who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinise more steadily . . . our own” (p. 225).

## SETTING

Ulan Ude is a city of 350,000 and the capital of the Buryat Republic. Estimates are that about 30 per cent of this population is Buryat, one of the largest indigenous populations remaining in Russia, (Bashkuev, 1995) and nearly all of the remaining 70 per cent is ethnic Russian (Imithenov and Egorov, 2001). A small number of Mongolians, Koreans, and people from such newly independent states as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also reside in Buryatia. Many of the Russians are descendants of people exiled here by Stalin and the Czars before him (e.g., Ginzberg, 1982 (1979); Kennan, 1958 (1891); Lincoln, 1994).

Ulan Ude and the whole of Buryatia are hidden treasures. Off-limits to foreigners until the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ulan Ude is home to a world-class ballet, two professional Buryat dance and vocal troupes, four large theatres, as well as numerous smaller ones, and six universities (Imithenov and Egorov, 2001; Pantaeveva, 1998). The region hosts an exotic mix of Asian and Caucasian peoples, and several contrasting religions including Russian Orthodox, Judaism, Buddhism and Shamanism (Reid, 2002). The natural beauty of the region is unsurpassed. The rolling steppes in the south, rugged and impassable Sayanna range and the gorgeous and pristine Lake Baikal in the west, and more roadless wilderness to the north, make Buryatia a visual paradise.

I discovered all of this only because I had been introduced to the region by my daughter. I met her when she was seven months old, one of Russia’s tens of thousands of children living in its orphanages. I first travelled to Buryatia in January 1998. We went back for two weeks in May of 2001 and 2002, and our semester in the fall of 2003 further deepened my understanding of, and appreciation for, the region.

We arrived in Ulan Ude on August 28, spending one night in St. Petersburg en-route and another (unplanned) night in the Krasnoyarsk airport waiting for winds in Ulan Ude to die down. I began teaching on September 6.

## TEACHING LEADERSHIP THE AMERICAN WAY: METHODS AND MEANING

The Friday course with graduate students at ESSTU was the only one that met weekly throughout my stay. By mid-September I arranged three additional courses in which I met with the students once every other week, two at ESSTU and one at the private Humanities University. What follows in this first section are edited and elaborated accounts of key journal entries I kept on the Friday course, in which I taught leadership and service management. In this course I worked closely with my friend Bairma Tsibikdorzhieva who taught and worked in the International Relations Office at ESSTU.

### Our first meeting

**Sunday, September 8.** In class Friday, there was heated discussion among the students about the good old days of the Soviet Union and the shortages and standing in long lines to purchase items in post-Soviet days, specifically 1999- 2001. Twelve rubles were worth a dollar at the beginning of 1998; later that same year, with the ruble's devaluation, it took 24 to make a dollar. Everything jumped in price and for those who had savings, that nest egg was worth half what it had been. Then the ruble's value crept down to 30 per dollar.

Genia claims strongly that during the days of the Soviet Union things were much better than today; she holds Gorbachov responsible. Silent nods from Anna; strong words in Russian from polite Olyssia as she turns in her chair and speaks directly to Genia. Bairma explains to me later that Olyssia has said: "How can you say the times were better when my mother was unable even to buy a dress for her wedding! At least now you can buy a wedding dress!" But, in English, Genia insists that there were not then the children in orphanages and homeless in the street. "Did you see the people sitting on the street begging as you do now?" Her voice is strong and becoming loud. As for me, I think that there was less transparency then. I could be wrong.

They also talked about people not getting paid their salaries in 1999-2001. "It was very hard times," said Bairma. "I wonder how people got through such times, but I was here." She continued: "And I remember someone would call a relative and ask, 'Can I borrow from you for perhaps three month [sic]?' And this is when the politicians began to speak of small and mid-sized businesses, when the workers were not getting paid. But they still talk and it is still a project, nothing happens. Taxes are so high for these businesses that they stay in business maybe only one year." I learn that when Russians use the work *project*, they mean *plan*—that nothing has yet happened.

I told the students before we left class that I hope they have these candid discussions in their economics classes because that is where they really need to explore critically socialism and communism, capitalism and democracy. They look down, shake heads, smile resignedly and Bairma says, "But you remember our style of teaching does not allow for such."

"*Plocha*," I say. And in this case, I do believe it's bad. I try to reserve judgment on the Russian way but these educated young people need to participate in effective economic critique in order to reflect in an informed way on the republic's, and country's, economic situation and participate in moving it forward. Right now, this is what economic education needs to provide for these graduate students. The traditional lecture style of university education in Russia does a disservice to these bright inquisitive minds. If they are to live and work in a country which is inventing its own economic and political path, they need to grapple with the real strategic and leadership issues that path raises. But for now, I know that there is at least no hesitation on the part of these students to discuss difficult issues in *my* class.

### **The students**

The students are quick and bright with surprisingly good experience and summer jobs. They are anxious to discuss, and respond quickly to questions. Genia leads the conversation with her strong emotional arguments, yet she accepts confrontation from classmates. Her strong and opinionated mind is willing to learn; she wants to work in international ecotourism and has already spent a summer with Andrei Suknayev's volunteers who come from around the world to help build the Great Baikal trail around the lake. Anna is quiet and thoughtful but she too has had experience practising her English with Americans—students an English teacher brought to her village. Olyssia is reflective and insightful yet unsure of her English and mostly has a knowing look in her eyes as she sits there in the front row. Though they will all graduate in the coming May, she is the only one with definite career plans—to join the Russian Army. Maria is quiet next to Genia, her head often resting on Genia's shoulder. She would like to go into world trade and has just spent the summer working in the travel section for the city of Ulan Ude. Nastya is also outspoken, and she and Genia spar verbally later. Nastya has worked in the local aviation plant, still one of the city's largest employers, translating written documents from English to Russian. Selmack is a bright Buryat who hopes to make her profession in Russian trade relations with China and Mongolia; she studies Chinese in addition to English.

There are to be other students but it seems they may not come until near the end of the month. They are in villages with family and it is difficult for them to get here, the students explain. They will be one, two or perhaps three weeks late. No one knows for sure. There is a casual attitude toward attendance, even more so than in the States. This is something I do not understand until I become familiar with the grading scheme near the end of the semester. Course grades are generally comprised from a large course paper and an oral exam consisting of two or three questions. The course grades are highly subjective, require little if any rationale from the instructor (which is why it is possible to buy grades), and can theoretically, at least, be earned without attending class regularly.

When the rest of the students come in subsequent weeks I learn they are Katya, Boyanna, Andrei, Lana and Natalia. Katya's home is in Chita Oblast to the east; she has also worked with Suknayev's international trail-building group. Shy Boyanna has worked with a local tourist company as a travel agent. Withdrawn Andrei is a manager in his family's renovation business but does not project the decisiveness and extroversion we often associate with managers in the West. I will learn that for Russian citizens, hiring someone in the family is a greater priority than hiring the right person for the job. This is due, at least in part, to decades of mistrust in non-family members. Lana speaks the most fluent English and wears beautiful fur coats along with Katya; the others wear long wool. She has officially changed her name to this more American version of her given Russian name. Finally there is Natalia, Lana's friend, nearly always by her side, whether in class, on the street or in the Project Harmony computer lab.

### **Soviet context**

The strong feelings of the students that things were better in Soviet days stay with me, I say to Bairma after class, "What we read in the States is that the Soviet Union was bankrupt when Gorbachev began making the transition to capitalism and democracy—that the soviet system could not have continued as it was because it had no money."

"Hmm," she furrows her brow in quiet surprise and disapproval. She says Gorbachov is understood as an independent actor, independence generally being frowned on in this communal society. He was free to make a choice for change, or not. He made the choice for change and most of these young people think he made the wrong choice and the country is worse off for it.

As we continue our after-class discussion at a nearby café over beet salad and a meat patty with mashed potatoes, Bairma asks “And what is this *entrepreneur*? Why not *businessman*?” I have used the word in class this morning in reference to Andrei Suknayevev.

We discuss the orientation of the entrepreneur, the approach to the world—risk-taking, experimentation, trying any number of new things, starting a business but perhaps choosing someone else to manage it in the long term. She understands—“It is a mentality,” she says. Exactly—and a mentality that could get one imprisoned or killed here in the not-too-distant past. For until 1991 it was a crime to even own a business here, never mind the brutally enforced cultural bias against the entrepreneurial orientation of experimentation and risk-taking, of standing out from the group. This is a culture of risk-aversion, and understandably so. Over the coming months I will learn more from my students about how this culture negatively impacts on service quality and the emergence of leadership here.

### Pedagogy

Besides encouraging and integrating student discussion and analysis of course material, I brought in practitioners as guest speakers. I understood neither of these approaches were common practice in Russian universities; straight lecture is the norm and colleagues here have advised me this is what students need. There is a rift in Russia between academia and industry that is much greater than that in the States, edging into mistrust. This does nothing to help either industry or academia move forward on Russia’s new path toward its own form of democracy and capitalism.

Both speakers were excellent and student discussion during and after their visits was pointed and provocative. On October 4 Andrei Sukhayev of the Great Baikal Trail came in and in November my new friend Gelya, came to discuss her small tourism firm Ethno-Tour. Through these speakers we addressed service quality, entrepreneurship and leadership.

**Saturday, October 5.** Friday Andrei Suknayevev came into class; he was engaging, relaxed and informative as he discussed his business, its beginnings, mission and activities.

One of Andrei’s ventures is to bring volunteers from around the world each summer to help him achieve his dream of building a trail to national standards around Lake Baikal. More information is available online at <http://baikal.eastsib.ru/fgbt/>. They work from several camps spread around the lake, building sections of trail from those locations. He addresses community-building in host villages, team development among volunteers, being a role model as he engages in all aspects of trail building himself, and responding to the varied needs and expectations of a large number of workers—local community members, international volunteers and Great Baikal Trail employees. The students are focused during his presentation and full of comments and questions when he opens the floor. They function well in this environment.

**Tuesday, November 25.** Gelya spoke in class on Friday about her tourism business. I had purchased Gelya’s services myself and so already knew that in her little seasonal business, she provided tourists with an authentic Buryat meal in her *yrta*, accompanied by a thorough explanation of this traditional dwelling’s uses and construction, as well as a discussion of Buryat culture and history. She serves people from around the world during March through November, typically hosting groups as large as eight, five times a week and sometimes two in one day. She has one partner, her cousin. Beyond that she has contacts to bring in Buryat musicians and dancers if people wish, and her brother sometimes provides transportation.

We learned that she has an extremely successful little business faced with great opportunities for expansion. With no web presence, she is entirely dependent on local travel agents, as well as one in the United Kingdom and one in Irkutsk—a city of 500,000 in the neighbouring region. Students

identified opportunities for direct sales and marketing through her own web site, increased access by regularly providing a driver to her *yurta*, and helping tourists locate Buryat mementos by providing a network of personal souvenir shoppers. Growing a small business is difficult here, however, as people are not inclined to hire outside of the family; the history of mistrust is too strong.

Gelya also discussed the difficulty of growing a business based in a village. In Ahtsagaht, a village about one hour from Ulan Ude where Gelya had brought Zoia and me for a weekend to visit the Buryat temple, ride horseback and walk through the woods to the sacred and medicinal spring called an *arshan*. The horse-owner Erdem wants to go into business and provide horseback riding to tourists. The other “settlers”, as she called them, are suspicious of foreigners. The family that provided the *banya* (Russian-style sauna) for Zoia and me, does not wish to provide this service on a regular basis because they have several small children to tend to. Most village residents are not on the lookout for personal capitalist ventures; they have their *izba*, the traditional Siberian wooden dwelling, and garden and cow, and need or want little else.

In spite of the difficulties Gelya raised, however, the students were inspired to explore their own small business ideas during our remaining class time. Katya and Genia began hatching a plan to use Katya’s flat in the city and Genia’s *dacha* (cabin usually with garden) in the country to provide housing and outings for tourists. Others saw individual opportunities to provide personal shopping help for tourists, perhaps posting notices at local hotels.

Gelya started her business for personal reasons—a friend from Moscow planned to visit and wanted Gelya to find authentic Buryat outings for her. When she found none, she decided to start her own. She was living proof for the students that a soft-spoken single woman of modest means with no grand strategic plan or capitalist goals could start a small tourism business and be successful. The excitement they walked out of the classroom with that day could never have come from a faculty lecture, but only from this quiet Buryat woman who had done it herself.

## Values

**Sunday, October 19.** Values discussion in Friday’s class—what was really interesting was the values that they said have changed since Soviet days. First we identified what they value as individuals, then what society values and then what Soviet society valued.

They put security in all three columns, saying it is valued by them as individuals, by society and by the former Soviet society as well. They feel less secure financially now and in terms of employment because of the unstable economy. In turn, they feel less physically secure because of increased crime due to the unstable economy. They feel less freedom because of this sense of insecurity.

This deduction, feeling less freedom today than in Soviet times, makes perfect sense when laid out in this domino-like effect, but is absolutely contrary to my naïve assumption. Of course one would feel more freedom today, I thought. But they identified what I would simply have called freedom, as ‘freedom of choice’. This, they said, is a new value that has come along with democracy and capitalism. But capitalism remains more an idea than a reality. They are also not sure the extent to which their country has achieved democracy but see themselves on the road toward it. Autonomy and independence, like capitalism and democracy, are fine ideas but without financial security are more dream than daily life.

When we talked about the values of excellent American service firms analysed by Berry (1999), they understood immediately what these values meant and why they would positively impact an organisation. Values are a key component of contemporary approaches to leadership (e.g., Allen et

al., 1998; Kidder, 1995). Those identified in Berry include joy, integrity, innovation, teamwork, autonomy, respect and social profit.

First, **Integrity**. “Does this mean ‘entirety’ or ‘honesty’,” asks Bairma.

“Both,” I am able to say.

Students at home never give me this lead-in. We discuss the root of this word, which implies entirety or oneness—a singleness of focus and values, an integration of ideals and action. If I am trustworthy and respectful with my family and have integrity, then I will be trustworthy and respectful with my colleagues as well, I explain. And, yes, it also means ‘honesty’, ‘truthfulness’, ‘candour’, ‘transparency’—‘*glasnost*’ or ‘openness’. While this has been a Russian Federation ideal since Gorbachev, integrity, whether as honesty and openness or as consistent values, remains more national ideal than reality. In terms of organisations, these students are not sure it is even held as an ideal. They still feel their organisations and politicians do not tell them the truth, that there is an official version of reality in their country, quite unlike the reality they know and live from day to day. The first speaks of democracy and economic opportunity, the other of an overwhelmingly apathetic electorate, economic depression and a huge black market.

**Joy**. “Why is joy important in an organisation?” I ask.

“Because if you are happy then you will be happy to the customer,” responds Boyanna.

It’s obvious to them, yet their laughter when I introduce this workplace value reflects what it is here—laughable. Work is pain and drudgery, unlike the fun valued and portrayed in the Southwest Airlines case *Nuts!* (Freiberg and Freiberg, 1996). The Soviet Union depended upon the forced hard labour of millions of its citizens. Yes, work was pain and drudgery and one only hoped to live through it to old age. Yet there is also a deep current in Russian tradition of great pride in work—in scientific, literary and artistic achievements. Still, there has been little tangible reward in the past for quality work and these students see none today either. The concept of work as a source of intrinsic joy is confusing to them, betrayed by the lost look in their eyes when I suggest it. Yes, it would be a good thing to be joyful at work but the oxymoron is too great.

**Innovation**. This value is especially difficult to understand in this culture—bewildering, in fact. The students did not identify creativity or innovation as a value they hold. How does one come up with new ideas they wonder. If you’ve never seen something, how can you think it up?

**Respect** as we understand it in the West is in nearly complete contrast to socialist culture—respect for individual rights, boundaries, goals and ownership. I told the story of Zoia’s toys; they understood completely, yet smiled at my American perspective. The story goes like this:

When we returned from our weekend in Ahtsagaht, Dundop, the two-year-old son of our homestay host, and his little friend were playing wildly with Zoia’s windup froggie toy. I only recently bought it for her at the central market. She cried to see froggie so abused but the mothers continued to let their children play with what they knew was Zoia’s toy. Zoia was afraid they would break it. They did; I fixed it after dinner.

A couple of days earlier, Zoia told me that her friend Gera has been taking her toys from her at the *detski sod* (kindergarten). I recalled an adoption agency staffer telling us on our first visit to Buryatia that she would like to give each of the children in the orphanages she visited a picture of themselves but it would surely be taken away because they are not to have anything that is just theirs—everything is communal.

This cultural norm, called collectivism by Hofstede (e.g., 1993) and laterally extended groups by Adler (2001), naturally applies to children’s toys and our living

arrangements as well. Why does this take me by surprise when I teach cultural concepts in my classes? It surprises me because theory in action, especially in action which personally affects, is a whole different class of information.

While on the one hand, our homestay host said on the first day we visited her flat, “This will be your room,” it is only partly our room. There is no lock on the door so it is impossible to keep her two-year-old son out, and he is into everything. When we are physically here occupying the room, it is mostly ours. When we are not here it is not ours. Yesterday when we returned Zoia’s puzzle was moved off the table and the table moved over to one of the big chairs; our things also moved off the bed. Now this is fine really, but it is evidence of the free use of this room in our absence. It is not our room but communal space.

On the other hand, also on our first visit, our homestay host said, “Everything here you can use.” That is the other side. I use her washing tubs and clothes line, she offers me the buckwheat she cooked last night, and I can work on the computer too if I wish but choose to use my own. Perhaps it is the permission-giving that, when it is absent, is assumed by the communal society to be there and assumed by the individualistic society not to be there. She has given permission; we have not. Zoia says so often now, “Teach me something.” As we reflect together on our experience, today this is what I teach her.

The students smile and nod at the story. They can see their culture through my eyes and readily understand the conflict I present. Zoia expects people to respect her rights of ownership; when this does not happen she feels disrespected as a person. My students understand this, it is just not part of their world. Respect of ownership and the other’s individual self, is not relevant here.

**Excellence** as continuous improvement—they understood what it means, to not rest in being the best. Their examples were of internet and TV shopping as continuous improvement in the retail industry. In services, excellence means always looking for what the customer might want next, not only delivering well what the customer wants now. This is especially relevant here as people learn about services available in the West and the quality of those services. These students recognise that their expectations are rising slightly as they become exposed to possibilities of different and better service. Yet while they understand the concept of continuous improvement, it is not a practice here; there is no incentive for improvement. I think personal pride should be enough; maybe it is not. These students think it is not.

These classroom encounters enable me to see this material, which I’ve taught for several years, in a new light. These values no longer seem obvious or simple. There are layers of cultural and historical implication to them. Excellence is providing quality service, but it is also determining what quality service to offer next and that means innovation. The possibility of innovation rests largely in one’s experience of joy or satisfaction in work. As we invest in our work, taking risk, continuously improving, gaining satisfaction, we are able to experience integrity with ourselves and our environment. Such integrity leads to self-respect, a prerequisite for respecting others. Integrity, joy, innovation, respect, continuous improvement—these values are interdependent in ways I had not thought through until now, until I evaluated them in a foreign context. That interdependence means they will likely be practised as a package or rejected as a package. There is little possibility for the former in this still strongly Soviet environment.

**Teamwork:** an area in which I indicated a collective society may have an advantage but they were not sure. Lana cited the members of the United States Olympic men’s basketball ‘Dream Team’—each understood their individual role on the team, played it, and then the team worked as one, she said. The students pointed out the interdependence between respect and individuality, and



teamwork—another relationship between these values that I had not considered. They say, “yes”, they work in groups here but no one takes individual responsibility, so everyone waits for everyone else, there is no action and the team is unproductive. For effective teamwork there must first be individual responsibility, they maintain, and respect for one another as individuals.

We ended with **Social Profit**. Investing in the social aspects of the business, in the community and workers, is actually very easy for them to understand—from a Soviet point of view. After all, this is exactly what the youth group, Komsomol, taught young people in Soviet days—to engage together in community efforts helping comrades in need. But in a capitalist environment? Like joy, social profit is an odd notion. Why would anyone in business for themselves give money away they wonder. Yet here is a country in which government is not able to provide the benefits and support it used to, or that people think it should. To provide a solid social infrastructure, investment by business and volunteerism by individuals is critical. They understand this, but how ever would it come to be? In their minds, social profit is in direct conflict with their path toward capitalism.

### Adopting Values That Support Excellence

**Saturday, October 25.** In class Friday we revisited the values from Berry (1998) and I asked, “If we analysed excellent service firms in Russia, what values would we find in there?”

The students were stumped. I recalled “the gap between what and how” that Valentina Makhrova, the Foreign Languages Department Chair at Buryat State, named the day before. There is no idea how to get from here to there, for example, from fear of standing out, so prevalent in Soviet days, to innovation. I led a seminar at Buryat State on the Greenleaf servant leadership article (1991). Valentina said they had just been told to institute computer-based distance learning at the University with no idea how to do it or where to get the resources. She explains that in this system there is plenty of being told ‘what’ but a void in being told ‘how’. Traditionally a Russian would expect to be told both what and how, not to be engaged in collaborative management or their own independent thought.

Here too among my students there is the same gap; these students understand what innovation is but not how to get there. I suggest rewards for innovation and ask for examples of cost-free rewards they would value.

“Development and possibility for promotion,” says Anya, and I recall my Ph.D. thesis research (1995) in which American women too said exactly this. We discuss professional development through job enrichment and the reward of telling people they have done well. But these sound mostly hollow in the depressed economy here. I can not help but recall Maslow’s hierarchy (e.g., Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy, 1999); they are supporting his theory that until certain physiological conditions are met, other forms of motivation do not work. Right now, money talks here and not much else.

As noted previously, ‘joy’ as a workplace value is too much for them to accept. As a bridge, I suggest this value in Russia is perhaps ‘warmth’—the warmth that Russians express in their homes could be extended to the workplace. The students smile and nod, indicating they are acutely aware of the contrasts in their national culture—the hospitality and generosity displayed in private homes, contrasting with the cool and somber tone of public life. Then Bairma reminds us of organisational protocol—simply taking the warmth from home is not appropriate because then we see things like I did at a recent conference. After his opening comments at dinner, a university rector grabbed the faculty member standing nearby and gave her a big sloppy kiss. What may fit instead is warmth in the context of organisational protocol, as Bairma suggested.

I tell them of the huge training effort that has occurred in the States in the last 20 years to help men understand what is appropriate protocol with women at work; that it is exactly this kind of long-term training effort that will be needed here for organisations to become more joyful and innovative; that effective democracy and free enterprise require not just a national cultural change, but a change in the culture of a critical mass—hundreds, perhaps thousands—of organisations; that this starts in kindergarten. I tell the story of my realisation this very morning when we had a hard time finding Zoia's mittens.

I am angry with Zoia for not keeping track of her things; I know the teachers will think me a bad mom if she shows up not dressed for the weather. As we are walking out the door I say to our homestay host, "In Russia when a child does not take responsibility for their things, it's Mommy's fault. In the States when a child does not take responsibility for their things, it's at least partly the child's issue." This was one of Zoia's American kindergarten learning goals. The children did not just bring their things to school, they put those things in the appropriate place—the science table, the homework basket, the library book crate, the gym shoe box. This was **their** job.

The students smile and nod. They understand their culture and are coming to understand mine, but still is this *gap between what and how*.

### Assessing Leadership Models

I bring charismatic leadership forward to explore further this idea of the 'gap between what and how'. This is part of what envisioning, enabling and energising (Nadler and Tushman, 1990) are about—closing that gap. One needs to articulate the vision clearly and enthusiastically so others can join in it and then help to provide the resources and show the path to get there. Part of energising is being on the path **with** the followers. The charismatic leader here must close the gap between what to do and how to do it.

I then asked them to examine charismatic leadership (e.g., Nadler and Tushman, 1990) and trait theory (e.g., Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991) and determine which of the qualities in each approach they were good at and which they would like to improve. Genia and Katya decided to indicate not only what **they** think they are good at but also what **the other** thinks they are good at. In both cases when their friend shared what she thought the other was good at, the other denied it. I applauded them on their choice of method and indicated that in the States I often give this as an assignment—ask someone who knows you well what you are good at, and then own it.

"It's yours," I said. "Claim it." They giggled, then nodded, trying on this perspective, sitting taller in their chairs.

Nearly all of them say they are bad at leadership motivation as identified in trait theory (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991), that is, they do not **want** to be leaders. (This is just like the two young teachers in the Buryat State faculty seminar. When Valentina said they would be the formal leaders one day, "No!" they exclaimed, and shrunk back into their chairs). So I distinguished personal leadership motivation for one's own gain from socialised leadership motivation for others' gain. The students could relate to socialised motivation, where one desires to be a leader for the good of others. This, of course, fits with the collectivist cultural quality. But still they note that they would not want the responsibility.

"When you are a leader you are responsible for others," said one. They're not going to take that on. I want to disagree, for in my democratic ideal the team is collectively responsible; informed followers share in the decision-making and responsibility (Rost, 1991). But leadership here in

Russia is not a team activity and would not become one for some time. So, yes, I have to admit to myself, when you are a leader, especially here in Russia, you are responsible for others.

“But who if not you?” I ask them. They are quiet.

### TEACHING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INDIVIDUAL ACTION

**Sunday, November 2.** Tuesday I spoke to Yulia’s social work class about services available to young children with special needs, from the perspective of a parent of such a child. I talked about our Birth to Three program in which physical and speech therapists came to our home, first to teach Zoia and me ways to move her toward sitting and standing, and later to assess and help develop her language skills. Then I explained the special school-based program for four-year-olds which continued to address language and physical development. Some students day-dreamed, others looked just as overheated as I was, having dressed for a winter day but now sitting in a stuffy overheated classroom in which no one dared open a window for fear of encountering the outside air they believe carries illness. Some asked questions: who pays for this, how did you find out about the services, why did your child need this help?

Near the end of class a student asked, “Is it your aim to develop a program for the disabled here in Russia?”

While this question shocked me in a way, it also came as no surprise. I’d been told that Russians had become used to Americans coming here and setting up American systems. Then the Russians, with little management know-how or understanding of the systems, would watch them fail or turn them into one more black market opportunity. Yet some Americans still came for this purpose and some Russians still anticipated being rescued.

I rarely lecture in my classes at home. By ‘lecture’ I mean pontificate, advise, admonish young people from the wise professor stance. But I was coming to realise that this was at least somewhat expected here. I’d watched Bairma do this with a group of social work students two years ago when they sat silent and timid in a session I attended. Suddenly Bairma was speaking strongly and pointing her finger at them. With my limited Russian I knew she was telling them in no uncertain terms that what she and I were doing in writing a grant proposal in English was their job. “Do you know English?” she asked them in Russian. To shy nods she asked even more sternly, “Do you want to practise your English?” Then she lectured them for several minutes in this direct, parental, almost shaming tone. As I responded to the question about my goal here, I heard myself doing the same thing.

“No that’s your job,” I said. “This is **your** Russia. You have to decide what you want it to look like. And if you think it needs a program for the disabled, then build one. If you think it needs programs for children or the elderly, then start them. That’s why you’re here studying in this program isn’t it?” There was chuckling, nervous glancing—at the floor and one another.

“There’s no one else but you,” I continued. “You are the new generation—the one that is going to have to make a difference. I cannot do that. No one from the outside can. You’ve got children in orphanages, old men, women and kids living on the streets, lots of people who need to be cared for. How is that going to happen?” No response.

Thursday morning in the faculty seminar at Buryat State I relayed the question the student asked, and my dismay at having been asked. The faculty had read the Greenleaf (1991) servant leadership essay in which he addresses independent action and initiative as central to servant leadership and community. We are still punished for it, they said, meaning independent action and initiative.

“It is a remnant of the Soviet era, of the levelling,” said a large British-accented woman.

“I think there are also other reasons,” said Valentina, the department chair. “It is cold here; if you are alone you die.”

“No, it is the levelling,” said the other woman firmly. They do not look at each other in this exchange. They can disagree if they look at me or at the air in front of them. So remains the culture—where disagreement with a colleague is intensely uncomfortable, and it’s not only students who find that taking personal responsibility and initiating individual action have not replaced this Soviet holdover.

**Thursday, November 6.** In one of my every-other-week courses I had also assigned the Greenleaf (1991) servant leadership essay. Only two of the students read it. I asked these two young men how it felt to take responsible independent action, which I had indicated was one of the qualities identified in the essay as essential to effective community and leadership. One of the two students said he felt like a white sheep among black.

“Are you proud?” I asked, assuming, of course, that they would be.

“No!” he responded immediately and emphatically. He then started speaking in Russian as he tried to determine how to express his thoughts in English. I heard a telltale word.

“Did I hear the word *collectiva*?” I asked.

He and several others smiled, cast each other sideways glances, murmured, “Yes.”

I suspected where we were headed with this—that being a white sheep among black was bad, not good—cause for embarrassment, not pride. He worked to express himself in a combination of Russian and English, explaining exactly this.

“OK, is this what I’m hearing?” I asked, “that you’d rather not have done your homework so you could be part of the *collectiva* than to have done the responsible thing by preparing for class?”

He nodded and chuckled along with his classmates. So I drew the collective on the board with one person stepping out and showed how rather than alienating that person (or pulling the person back in to the *status quo* through peer pressure as Bairma pointed out later), the collective could shift its direction and follow this new idea. They watch, listen, nod. While class started with me being perturbed with them for not preparing, we engaged together on this contrast between the pressure of the *collectiva*, and the necessity of responsible independent action.

### ACHIEVING A VISION—IN MOVIES OR ON THE GROUND

**Sunday, November 30.** I was a guest in two classes, one at a private Language Institute and one at ESSTU. In both, the students talked about what they know of the United States—from American movies and TV.

I laugh and explain, “But that is only part reality.”

“Why?” they ask, surprised. “Russian movies are not this way.” And I remember the honest-to-the-point-of-depressing Russian movies I’ve seen and realise this is true. Russian movies are all painful reality. So why is it this way, I wonder, why is there this difference in our movies?

“I think it has always been this way in the States,” I say, recalling an ‘Anthropology of Films’ course I took years ago. “American television and movies often depict part reality and part myth—a vision of a perfect world by American standards, what **could** be.”

As I think about this emphasis in the United States I realise it reflects a deep cultural contrast. While movies in the United States may not be a perfect vision of the future, they are a vision—

they are someone's vision—the producer, writer, actor . . . . Somebody dares to **have** a vision, though it may, in fact, run counter to reality. It may even be laughable. In contrast, I recall the movie our homestay family saw last weekend. The missing father came back into his children's lives, took them to an island for a short holiday and wound up falling or jumping from a tall building. He dies and the children go back to live with their mother. What's that about? Hope, joy, love, die and the survivors go back to their *normalna* daily routine? There is much of this in Russia's history.

This week in class as I discussed leadership I began to realise that a couple of the key barriers to effective charismatic leadership here are the challenges to envisioning and enabling (Nadler and Tushman, 1990). What **is** the vision of this huge country undergoing this great change? Yesterday on our bus tour to Russian Orthodox monasteries the young woman Yanna referred to Russia as an **emerging** democracy. Yes, it truly is still just emerging, and the socialist or capitalist economy is also only emerging.

This emerging nature of the political and economic goals here creates a significant leadership challenge. First, it is difficult to have a vision at all about something so complex and dynamic. Secondly, Russians are simply not used to having, or being able to have, a vision. There have been so many barriers—political, educational, historical, cultural. The message has been: one person here has a vision and you'd better **not** have your own.

Last night on Russian 'Survivors' the college student in our homestay explained they have two voting rituals—not just to vote a person out, but first to vote on **how** they will vote a person out. A black stone means the voter wants to choose a person to decide for the group; a white stone means the voter wants to decide directly. If there are more black stones, they decide **who** they want to decide for the group. Last night I began watching as they were revealing the votes for the person who would decide. The elderly white-haired gentleman was chosen, and he decided to eliminate the young woman. This is painful for me as a woman and as an American who believes in **direct** democracy.

I recall the response of the Humanities College students to my question, "What is leadership?" Their answers: a person having control over some part of your life; someone who has priority, takes care of you, knows more than others. No one offered words even remotely close to 'enabling' or 'empowering'. I introduced transformational leadership (e.g., Burns, 1978) as a relationship between leaders and followers in which they heighten one another's sense of morality and motivation. This concept of followers taking such responsibility and engaging in a partnering relationship with the leader, rather than following top down authoritarian command, is so novel here, and scary too.

The highlight of this day's teaching was the Thanksgiving party the students hosted that night. They are hosting an American party for us every other week as part of their curricula. One student used my sister's recipe for pumpkin bars. They tasted so fresh and moist—still warm from the oven and made with fresh pumpkin. Another baked a pumpkin pie—thick buttery crust topped with homemade pumpkin jam and then meringue. A baked chicken replaced the turkey.

As part of our keeping the holiday, I asked the students to each say one thing they were thankful for. This was my own small effort at enabling these students. Zoia and I both started in order to give an example. Then one of the teachers burst forward with three or four examples. When she finished I turned to the student next to me and asked her to say what she was thankful for. She asked what I wanted her to do. Then the other teacher offered her contribution, followed by that of one student. Then another student invited everyone to eat.

“No!” I heard myself exclaiming. I was not going to let this pass; I needed them to take individual responsibility at least for this small thing, to claim their role as a part of this course. So I explained again what I wanted, they asked again, I explained a fourth time and finally the students went around the circle and each said what they were thankful for. Then they all said the same thing—“family.” This is true, I believe, as far as it goes, but having forced them to speak I could not force them to think for themselves. Did they really not understand that I intended to hear from all of them, or were they so shocked at my insistence that they each needed to participate, that they assumed I could not mean what I was saying—that this was one more Potemkin village? They can imagine I would ask their teachers to participate, but not them.

### FINAL NOTES

**Wednesday, December 3.** In class this week I showed Joel Barker’s *Paradigms* videotape which I purchased dubbed in Russian to make sure any audience here would understand it. I noted that in the United States we saw Gorbachev as a ‘paradigm pioneer’, one who stepped out ahead, grounded in his intuition and values. One of the two teachers in the classroom agreed, exclaiming she recalled being overjoyed when she watched his election acceptance speech, crying because finally someone was going to open things up and tell the truth—*glasnost*. It was a time of great energy and commitment. Literature never before available could be read here for the first time; people were doing that and gathering to discuss it. There was great enthusiasm for a new way of being. But now things are hard, people do not have money for clothing or, in some cases, food.

I recounted the observation of the college student in our homestay—“Everything is about money today in Russia.” The teacher agreed.

“How does it change,” I asked her.

“Someone with great energy and commitment can move it forward.” Just as in Soviet days, this bright accomplished educator who sat in on most of my classes still saw the change coming from ‘someone’—not from her or her students.

Later that week, when taking the tram downtown, my Zoia turned to me and said, “Mommy, I do not want to leave.” This from a child who had cried herself to sleep two months earlier over missing her friends, cousins and toys.

“Why not?”

“Because I will miss my friends here.”

Yes, and so would I miss my friends and my work as well. I did not know if I had made a difference here but I was sure this place and its people had imprinted on me.

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