

BEHAVIOR AND PERESTROIKA

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The field of behavior analysis progressively has expanded its horizons. In the 1930s and 40s, it focused on molecular responses of birds and small mammals. The 1950s and 60s witnessed an expansion to consideration of primate behavior, including that of humans. The 1970s and 80s experienced the behavioral community psychology emphasis, which investigated behavior and its controlling contingencies within the context of the social network that characterizes communities. As the 1990s begin, behavior analysis has matured to the point where it can go beyond Skinner's early discussions of large scale social processes (1953, 1971), and consider, in increasingly sophisticated manners, the contingencies that societies impose on their members and the functional relationship of these contingencies to the behavior of their constituents.

The interest in behavior analysis on a societal level has been manifested in two directions. Some writers have developed cogent theoretical perspectives and general analyses. Malagodi (1986), Malott (1988), Segal (1987), and Glenn (1986, 1988) exemplify this focus. Glenn, in particular, has been working systematically to integrate behavioral theory with cultural materialism, an anthropological perspective developed by Harris (1979). Other writers, observing the actual developments in the world, have been drawn to the widespread social, political, and economic modifications that have been implemented by various socialist countries. Lamal, for example, analyzed the contingencies extant in China (1984) and I have focused on Hungary (Rakos, 1988a) and on socialism in general (Rakos, 1988b, 1989, in press), prompting lively debate with Ulman (1988, 1989). The two articles in this section continue this latter emphasis by presenting behavior analyses of Soviet society before, and then under, the perestroika (economic restructuring) that was implemented in the mid 1980s.

Mikhail Gorbachev's foreign and domestic policy initiatives have captured the imagination and admiration of statesmen and women, and of ordinary citizens, throughout the world. The Soviet Union is, of course, the most important socialist player in global political and economic maneuvers, though China will no doubt

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eventually achieve parity. The prominence of the Soviet Union, combined with its "evil empire" perception and its historically rigid adherence to ideologically "correct" doctrine, provided the establishing operations necessary to make Gorbachev's initiatives powerful discriminative stimuli for political analyses. Thus, we are all familiar, to some extent, with the general thrust of perestroika; but behavior analysts should devote particular efforts to scientifically analyzing and understanding the program, for it represents a large scale, naturalistic experiment in the relation between environmental engineering of individual behavior and the products of that behavior.

Gorbachev (1987) and his chief economic advisor Aganbegyan (1988) candidly have discussed the problems caused by the perestroika system. In the first article, Lamal provides an incisive analysis of the situation, employing the concept of the metacontingency as well as contingencies of reinforcement. The metacontingency is "the unit of analysis encompassing a cultural practice, in all its variations, and the aggregate outcome of all the current variations" (Glenn, 1988, p. 168). A cultural practice is comprised of the interlocking behavioral contingencies for a large number of individuals. Behavioral contingencies (i.e., contingencies of reinforcement) shape the behavior of individuals, while metacontingencies select the interlocking behavioral contingencies. And as Glenn further (1988) observes,

"(b)ecause a cultural outcome is a joint function of the behavior of many people, the outcome may be poorly correlated with the behavior of many of the people engaged in the practice. A cultural practice may produce increasingly ineffective outcomes but continue occurring because the behavior of its individual participants is maintained by stable *behavioral* contingencies" (p. 170).

This is precisely what occurred in the pre-perestroika Soviet Union. Lamal identifies three primary, but ultimately ineffective, metacontingencies that led to the development of stable interlocking behavioral contingencies that were inconsistent with the actual goals of the metacontingencies. First, the economy was controlled centrally. Second, the primary goal of society was increased production. And third, power was to be reserved for the *nomenklatura*, the elite of the Communist Party and the government. Lamal's analysis provides important insights into the conditions controlling behavior in the pre-perestroika Soviet Union. What is so interesting about perestroika, in this context, is the establishment by Gorbachev and his advisors of only one dominant metacontingency as the means to alter the relevant interlocking behavioral contingencies of individuals to produce the desired aggregate outcome. It is in this sense, I believe, that Gorbachev (1987) refers to perestroika as a revolution of equal importance to the 1917 October Revolution that initially established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As I describe in the second article in this section, this metacontingency emerges as a recurring theme in Aganbegyan's (1988) economic analysis of perestroika: Soviet society must be

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reorganized in such a manner so as to *increase the efficiency of material production* while maintaining the essential element of a socialist society, the public ownership of natural resources and the means of production. More recently, the Soviet Union has come to believe that the achievement of economic efficiency requires the introduction of a limited amount of private ownership (Singer, 1990). The cultural outcome of economic efficiency requires dramatic changes in the behavior of Soviet citizens. These behavior changes are partly a function of the contingencies inherent in what is widely termed "market socialism" (e.g., Nove, 1983), but even more fundamentally, are related to the perestroika policies of glasnost (openness) and international cooperation.

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