

Cognitive
Development

Its Cultural and
Social Foundations

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Foreword

MICHAEL COLE

In order to appreciate this remarkable book more fully, the reader may find it helpful to have some idea of the intellectual and social climate at the time when Alexander Luria, still a young man, set out for Central Asia. In 1921 he completed his undergraduate work at the university in his native town of Kazan. After graduating from the humanities faculty (there was still no psychology department as such at the time), Luria entered the Kazan medical school. His interest in psychology interrupted his medical studies, however, and in 1923 he accepted a position at the Institute of Psychology at Moscow University.

Luria arrived at the institute during a period of great ferment. In psychology, as in many areas of Russian intellectual life, there were many different ideas about how things should change following the revolution. The prerevolutionary director of the institute, G. T. Chelpanov, had been replaced by K. N. Kornilov, who undertook to remold psychology along Marxist lines. But there was no firm agreement on exactly what a Marxist psychology should look like.

Kornilov himself tried to set up guidelines for a Marxist psychology in his *Textbook of Psychology from the Standpoint of Materialism*, first published in 1926 and later reprinted several times. His major theme was the inadequacy of the phenomenological psychology then holding sway in Russia and in Europe generally. In his emphasis on

