

Luria in Personal Context: Reconciling Contradictions

*Life flashes by in a succession of boring days.
It's a long time since I've written any tales.
I look around me and feel awful.
Life without tales is a stupid joke.*

—A. R. Luria, 14 July, 1923

It should be clear to the reader that writing his autobiography was an extremely complex task for Alexander Romanovich. He could not write truthfully about the linkages between his personal experience and his scientific work without severe reprisals from the State. As a matter of life long habit, he effaced himself among his peers, attributing his achievements to his good luck in working with people of greater talent. It is our belief that he firmly detested the cult of personality to which his country was inclined, and firmly believed that the facts of his personal life were of fleeting interest in comparison with the scientific ideas to which they contributed.

But it is one thing to argue that personality should not be used as an explanation of scientific progress and another to so thoroughly efface oneself that the efficacy of individual agency is totally eliminated. While respecting his preference for self-effacement, in this final section we add to the limited material that Michael Cole was able to obtain in the late 1970's when Russia

was still part of the Soviet Union and its citizens had to report all of their conversations with him to the secret police or face reprisals themselves.

We present this additional set of considerations in terms of a set of contrasts which appear to capture important aspects of Alexander Romanovich's personal context.

Luria was born, lived, and died in a country where people were accustomed to express their most important thoughts in Aesopian language, often in the form of brief, funny, stories, packed with concealed meaning—the ubiquitous Russian anecdotes. Such anecdotes were usually told at the kitchen table, far from the omnihearing telephone. In trying to characterize the personal life of Alexander Romanovich, we begin in this tradition.

Alexander Romanovich loved the bitter irony in a joke popular during those times: "What is happiness? It is to live in the Soviet Union. And what is misfortune? It is to have such happiness." He perfectly understood that his own life was full of such paradoxes.

CLEVERNESS, HONESTY, AND COMMUNISM

In the Soviet era there was a saying: One might choose only two out of three things: to be clever, honest, or to be a member of the Party. That is, if you are clever and honest, you can't be a Communist; if you are a Communist, you are either honest but stupid, or clever but dishonest. Alexander Romanovich managed to combine all three of these qualities.

As he notes in the initial chapter of his autobiography, Alexander Romanovich was not a political person. Despite the high level of his social participation and his activism as a young man, he did not join the Communist Party until the German invasion of Russia, a time when many people joined the Party as an act of national solidarity.

Elkhonon Goldberg in his book, *The Executive Brain*, dedicated to his teacher, remarks several times about the paradoxical situation that Luria found himself in:

Coming from the westernmost edge of the Soviet empire, from the Baltic city of Riga, I grew up in a "European" environment. Unlike the families of my Moscow friends, my parents' generation did not grow up under the Soviets. I had some sense of "European" culture and "European" identity. Among my professors at the University of Moscow, Luria was one of the very few recognizably "European," and this was one of the things that drew me to him

As a multilingual, multitalented man of the world, Alexander Romanovich was completely at home with Western civilization. But he was also a Soviet man used to making compromises in order to survive. I suspected that in the deepest recesses of his being there was a visceral fear of brutal, physical repression. It seemed that this latent fear—the glue of the Soviet regime—was forever with him. This duality of inner intellectual freedom ..., and everyday accommodation was common among the Soviet intelligentsia. (p. 9)

Olga Vinogradova, a student of Alexander Romanovich's during the 1950's who went on to become a leading neuroscientist, described how Luria's adaptation to political pressure from the authorities manifested itself in his lectures:

The 1950s arrived and with them the "Pavlovian" session, as a result of which we psychologists learned that there was no such thing as a science of psychology, that there was not a soul, and that there were only conditioned reflexes. But this view found no echo in the lectures Alexander Romanovich gave us. He knew Pavlov's theory quite well and merely changed the vocabulary in his lectures: The beauty of a direct psychological language was replaced, but nonetheless the knowledge he gave us remained at the level of real science.

Nataliya Traugott, a contemporary of Luria, wrote about this same period:

They came to this kangaroo court and repented. They repented that they inadequately understood Pavlov and had devoted too

much attention to the brain. Then, when they finished repenting, the Presidium would declare whether they had repented enough or not. If they thought it was not enough, they forced them to do it again. Shmar'yan, for example, appeared three times, because each time after he said, "Well, yes, I am guilty of this or that, but nonetheless one must still take cerebral factors into account" they replied, "You have not repented enough; you have not understood your own mistakes." He appeared before them again, and he literally collapsed before your eyes, like a balloon when you let the air out of it.

Alexander Romanovich also repented. But his case was decided quickly. They said that he had caused damage to the development of the theory of aphasia, and that this had to be put on record, and Alexander Romanovich did not particularly dispute this."

FAMOUS ABROAD, A NOBODY AT HOME

One of the mysteries surrounding Luria concerns the contradiction between his status abroad and his position at home. He was a Soviet citizen who was allowed to travel abroad, where he was widely honored, but, at home, he was not treated as a distinguished person at all. When Luria visited the USA in 1957, American newspapers compared his lecture tour to the launching of the first satellite by the Soviet Union that same year. Subsequently, Luria became one of the best known Soviet Russian scientists outside Russia. But in his own country he never occupied an official position higher than head of a laboratory or departmental chair. His colleagues in the West could not imagine that Luria had never been elected to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, nor was he ever appointed a director of any Soviet institute or hospital.

During the Soviet period, a person who had won fame abroad was either used as an example of the great achievements of Soviet society, and was given all the high academic ranks and official positions that the state had to bestow, or was proclaimed a

dissident, a traitor, or even a spy and denied the possibility of traveling abroad or having contact with foreigners at home. But this did not happen to Luria. He became well known abroad where he received many awards and was elected to prestigious academies, while at home, he remained nothing more than the head of a laboratory. His international reputation was overlooked and he was permitted to visit foreign colleagues and to be their hosts in the Soviet Union.

A related puzzle is how Luria managed to escape being arrested or shot. In the 1930's his cross-cultural work in Central Asia was publicly denounced as an insult to the builders of socialism. At almost the same time, his work on the contributions of genetics and cultural experience to development at the Institute of Medical Genetics came under attack. Its program was accused of promoting genetic determinism. The Institute closed, and its director killed. He then entered the Institute of Experimental Medicine and became a student at the First Medical Institute. After completing the course with distinction, he did not return to psychology, but asked N. N. Burdneko, a famous Russian surgeon, to take him on as an assistant at his neurological institute. Many people believe that this move saved him from the Terror.

At the end of the 1940's, he was dismissed from the Institute of Neurosurgery and his laboratory was closed during the anti-Semitic "struggle against cosmopolitanism" (a code term applied to Jews). In the early fifties, during the infamous "Pavlovian" session of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, it was proclaimed that Luria caused great damage to the development of the theory of aphasia; somewhat later in the middle of fifties, during the "Kremlin doctors affair," he lost all his jobs and expected to be arrested from one day to the next. His concern was so great that he asked to be accompanied from home to work and back and kept a small suitcase with him containing his necessities so that if he was taken off the street, his family would know what had happened (as described by Lubovsky on the accompanying DVD). Yet, in spite of all these difficulties, unlike his sis-

ter Lidiya, Luria was never imprisoned, nor was he shot as Lidiya's husband was.

These strange—by Soviet standards—circumstances gave birth to speculations that Luria had some special relation with the Soviet authorities. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that his research in Central Asia was conducted at the direct request of Josef Stalin as a means of assessing the minds and moods of peasants in the Soviet Central Asia republics. Others have intimated that his research on the combined motor method was sponsored by Alexander Vyshinsky, the Prosecutor General, who ordered Luria to produce the lie detector. Such speculations show a limited understanding of Soviet reality. For example, a lie detector was the last thing Vyshinsky needed. It was his well-known custom to prepare not only the written accusations against his victims but also their written “voluntary confessions” long before they were even arrested.

Examples of such speculative criticism can be found in an otherwise scholarly book by Renee van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner (1991). For example, on the basis of such speculations they criticize him for writing an apologetic letter to the Communist Party to excuse his work in Central Asia. They have never seen the letter. We have. It reads:

To the Culture and Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party,

To the People's Commissar on Education

The Moscow Control Commission of Workers and Peasants Inspection, which investigated the Institute of Psychology, demanded from me the material on work done under my leadership in the psychological expedition to Central Asia. Despite the fact that this material has not yet been properly analyzed and is in crude form, the commission felt it could hand down a decision on our work not having in its hands the conclusions without which neither the purpose of the study nor the raw material could be properly understood. Making a biased selection of individual facts and interpreting them incorrectly,

the commission made a number of extremely grave charges, presenting our work as a specimen of colonizing research based on a racist theory.

It is very difficult to interpret this letter as cowardly obedience to authority—especially when one realizes that it was written during the great purges of the 1930's when Bolshevik Party Commissions wielded the power of life and death over everyone. Luria seemed to be as unrepentant as was possible, while, at the same time, trying to avoid being killed.

It is true that Luria was compelled to find a balance between freedom and necessity. Without question his personal convictions and loyalties entered into his decisions. Luria made no secret of his support for the revolution in its early phases. It is far easier to make judgments from afar with decades of hindsight. But like Isaiah Berlin (p. 245) we doubt that the moral state of affairs in the USSR in the 1930s was as clear at the time.

CREATIVE AND COMPULSIVE

Steven Toulmin, an American philosopher and then professor at the University of Chicago, wrote a year after Alexander Romanovich's death:

The most distinguished of Vygotsky's comrades-in-arms was Alexander Romanovich Luria, whose extraordinarily range of interests and abilities ... made him possibly the finest all-round psychologist of the century ... Luria was Beethoven to Vygotsky, and Vygotsky can be seen as the Mozart of psychology as Sadi Carnot was of physics

Everyone who knew him remembers how artistic Luria was. His love for architecture, especially the Northern Russian churches, his deep knowledge of painting, his passion for making photos of tiny natural objects, his wonderful ability to mimic the speech patterns of people from different countries, the verses and fairy tales he wrote, his diaries and personal letters to his wife and his

daughter, full of genuinely poetical pages, to say nothing of his two literary chef-d'oeuvres, *The Man with the Shattered World* and *The Mind of the Mnemonist* all speak to his artistic talent. These "unimagined portraits" created a new literary genre, a tradition ably followed by Oliver Sacks.

"He had a tremendous sense of drama; when we walked along the Red Square in Moscow, I felt as if Luria was showing me a movie," recollected Jerome Bruner during the Luria memorial conference in Moscow in 1997. "A great actor died with him," wrote Maria Knebel, a well-known Russian theatre producer and critic.

Although he was clearly artistic, Luria was also disciplined, punctual, and orderly to the point of being compulsive. He was notable for his punctuality. He never postponed or delayed anything. Vladimir Zinchenko recounts one manifestation of this characteristic which many experienced (see the interview on the accompanying DVD):

At the Academic Council session where I presented a preliminary report on my thesis, he agreed to be my official opponent. Some days later he told me: "I have completed my comments on your thesis. When can I finally see it?" I suspect he wrote the comments right after the Council session.

One month before his death on his 75th birthday, Alexander Romanovich showed Karl Levitin how he had prepared himself for death. Folders with unpublished works were placed on lower shelves of the bookcase. He joked that only the easiest part of work remained: to take the folders to the publishing house.

He answered letters the day he received them; the same practice was used with the numerous articles he had agreed to prepare for various scientific journals. Professor Peter Galperin, whose pupils and colleagues used to rely on his wisdom in complicated situations, once said "What advice can I give to Alexander Romanovich? He writes faster than I read."

Luria's daughter Elena writes how insistent Alexander Romanovich was that everything in his study be in its proper place, how he always loved to have his pencils well sharpened,

and how he considered it a tragic loss when his favorite Parker fountain pen broke.

ACTIVIST-SCIENTIST

As a general rule, a scientist can be an activist, organizing conferences, jobs, salaries, grants, visits, contacts with mass media and industrial and agricultural companies, foundations and other universities, or be a really good scientist. Luria was both.

At a memorial meeting in Amsterdam in 2002, Vladimir Zinchenko reminded attendees about Luria the activist.

It should not be forgotten that for many years Alexander Romanovich was president, or rather Father, of the International Association of Foreign Psychology Students at Moscow State University.

He was genuinely considerate of young scholars in general, not only of his disciples. He helped many to get a job in their special field (which was not easy then). He also helped them to get their books and articles published (which is always hard).

During the 1962–63 academic year Michael Cole was an attendee at these informal seminars which were generally held monthly in the dormitory at the main building of Moscow University, where most of them lived. Luria lived downtown, next to the older part of Moscow University where the Psychology Department was located. The trip from the dormitory to Luria's apartment was not an easy one, requiring either a long walk to the metro (often in sub-zero weather), or a 45 minute ride on one of the most notoriously crowded buses in all of Moscow. With access to an automobile, Luria took it upon himself to go to the students, rather than make them come to him. This seminar was not a teaching activity Luria was paid to do, according to Zinchenko. Rather, it was one he felt it his duty to do.

Cole was also present to witness Luria lead the organization of the International Congress of Psychology in the summer of 1966. Luria's already voluminous correspondence mushroomed under the pressure of finding housing, translating abstracts of

talks, organizing the delivery of food, and all the other minutia that go into organizing a large international congress in a country poorly equipped for such an undertaking.

All of this organizing did not seem to effect the pace of Luria's scientific work. He still went most days to his laboratory at the Burdenko Institute, and each afternoon that summer he and Cole spent an hour going over the data he had collected in Central Asia, 30 years earlier.

MENTOR-DISCIPLE

Luria made a powerful impression on people both in his role as mentor and his role as disciple. In his book about the role of Vygotsky's students as champions of research on the blind-deaf, Levitin (1979, pp. 53–56) reported on Luria's role as a mentor.

Alexander Meshcheryakov, a student of Luria's who became famous for his work with the blind-deaf, commented during an interview that

Alexander Romanovich was a very good man. I sensed this always, but as you grow older, you grow wiser. I really understood this only after we had already been friends for many years.

We worked together at the Burdenko Institute of Neurosurgery, and studied the location of psychological functions in the brain. But as it happened, both of us had to leave this institute.⁶ We moved to the Institute of Defectology—for only a temporary period, we thought. This was 1952. There was no job for me except as a technician. But I, of course, did not care what I was called. I took the job and began to work. We were interested in feeble-mindedness—mental retardation. I, of course, wrote the obligatory annual reports and did what was necessary according to our contract; but the actual problem of mental retardation did not attract me.

⁶Note how Meshcheryakov phrases this transition. A more literal translation would be, "it befell us to leave the Institute" as if there were no agency involved in the event. This comment was made by one Russian to another within the framework of Soviet law. One can discern the full drama underlying the events at issue only if one understands enough of the historical context to interpret interpolation of the phrase, "This was 1952."

Mescheryakov continued,

Ivan Sokolyanskii, who conducted work on the instruction of the blind-deaf worked at the same institute. At that time he was already old, the spark of life in him was already fading . . . He had only one teacher and one blind-deaf little girl as a student . . . I, of course, saw what a sorry state the practical work of Sokolyanskii was in; but his idea that by studying the development of the blind-deaf it would be possible to study the human mind in its purest form, of constructing everything with one's own hands, seized me. I began to work with Sokolyanskii out of a feeling of social obligation. Actually, I was his only scientific assistant. I devoted all my thoughts and almost all my time to work with the blind and deaf children, although I was counted as part of the laboratory for the feeble-minded, to which they finally transferred me officially from the ranks of technician.

I don't know if my interest in the blind-deaf was embarrassing for Alexander Romanovich, but he did not once reproach me, never interfered with my work with Sokolyanskii, and indeed helped us as much as he could. Without his help we truly would not have survived.

As he reminisced about Luria, Meshcheryakov told Karl about a note that Alexander Romanovich had jotted down at his doctoral defense. Luria was in a great hurry, and was unable to wait to the end, so he sent the note separately. In order not to lose the note, Meshcheryakov stuck it away in a folder with the other papers, and then later put the folder away. Karl reports that at first Meshcheryakov could not find the note, but finally said with satisfaction, "Ah, here it is finally." It read: "I heartily congratulate you for the triumph, but of course you absolutely deserved it. You have found yourself, and your work will suffice you for your entire life. But this is only the main investment in a great achievement."

The note was in a most precise handwriting, that of a person used to carefully ordering his thoughts. The words "triumph" and "absolutely deserved" and "found yourself" are carefully

underlined. Below is a signature that is difficult to decipher, but Karl knew it said Alexander Romanovich Luria, Professor—the person under whose guidance Meshcheryakov had become a scientist, defended his candidate's dissertation, and whom he later left behind, so to speak, if one could squeeze life into the prescribed classic framework of relationships between teacher and pupil.

Jerome Bruner also commented on Luria as a mentor and father figure:

I think the first time I met Luria was in 1956, at McGill University in Montreal. But is difficult to be sure of this: In the course of years we became so close to each other, that I can't imagine myself not knowing him—everyone always knows his father, uncle, elder brother. Luria was a perfect "adopting father." I understood after many years that though he had a talented and active daughter, he always suffered because of the absence of a son. That is why he was attentive to his "adopted sons"—such as Oliver Zangwill, Hans Lukas Teuber, and me. By the way, all three of us had some common features—all had developed literary and artistic tastes, all were more European-oriented than our contemporaries, and all three of us were well assimilated Jews.

Elkhonon Goldberg (2001) wrote as follows about this aspect of Luria's personality:

My relations with Alexander Romanovich and his wife Lana Pimenovna, herself a noted scientist-oncologist, were virtually familiar. Warm and generous people, they had a habit of drawing their associates into their family life, inviting them to their Moscow apartment and country dacha, and taking them along to art exhibits. The youngest among Luria's immediate associates, I was often the object of their semi-parental supervision, ranging from finding me a good dentist to reminders to shine my shoes. (p. 11)

In an interview with Levitin, Olga Vinogradova, his pupil and collaborator, remembers:

They pointed out to Alexander Romanovich that there were too many Jews in his laboratory. He personally sought to find other jobs for Zhenya (Evgeniya) Khomskaya and Nelly Zislina, but could do nothing for them. Undoubtedly to save Alexander Romanovich, Evgeniya submitted her resignation. He found her a job in a specialized home for retarded children in Sokol'niki, and he himself went there for research and consultations. He thought that Evgeniya had behaved nobly, and throughout his life would say that he was indebted to her.

But Alexander Romanovich was also an outstanding disciple, whatever difficulties accompanied the dangerous and conflictual periods of his life.

Stephen Toulmin, in the article quoted earlier, which launched Vygotsky into the mainstream of American developmental psychology, wrote that

The wide-ranging intellectual possibilities pursued by Luria ... from literature across the board to neurophysiology by way of linguistics and educational innovation, had all been initially suggested in discussions with Vygotsky and his associates during the years around 1930. Luria's own comment in his autobiography ... reads: "Vygotsky was a genius. After more than half a century in science I am unable to name another person who even approaches his incredible analytical ability and foresight. All of my work has been no more than the working out of psychological theory which he constructed."

Ah, but what a "working out"! ... (1978, p. 57)

Finally, Gita Vygotskaya, Vygotsky's daughter, reported how Vygotsky's books were confiscated from the Institute of Defectology following the July 4, 1936 resolution of the Central Committee of the Party condemning pedology (the name given to work that Vygotsky was conducting at the time). In her words,

Lev Semenovich's works were banned—they could not be mentioned or referred to for 20 long years.

True, there were people who did not always obey this proscription. Lev Semenovitch's portrait hung for many years in Luria's home and in Zaporozhets's home, and in their laboratories. And even before Lev Semenovitch's name was rehabilitated, Luria and Zaporozhets would refer to his works and talk about them to their students.

Soon after the war, in 1947 (or perhaps 1948), a meeting took place at which Luria was one of the speakers. His words are engraved in my memory: "There is nothing in Lev Semenovitch's works that could not be published. They can be published today, right now, changing only one word: In place of the word 'pedology,' one must put 'child psychology.'"

Luria began to undertake a determined effort to publish Lev Semenovitch's works. A great optimist, he spoke to me and Mama: "We are soon going to publish 'Thinking and speech,' and then we are going to publish everything in succession." In fact, in late 1956, thanks to Luria, the first of Lev Semenovitch's books was published, *Selected Psychological Works*; it contained "Thinking and speech." In 1960, again thanks solely to Alexander Romanovich, the second book, "The development of higher mental functions," consisting of unpublished manuscripts, came out.

Then again came a long pause.

In 1966, in connection with the 70th anniversary of Vygotsky's birth, the Presidium of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences decided to publish his works. But a long 16 years went between adoption of this resolution and publication of the first volume! I can say quite confidently that, if it had not been for the incredible efforts of Luria, the collection of Vygotsky's works might not have been published at all—or would still be awaiting publication Some complication or another was always arising, and Alexander Romanovich had barely surmounted one when another arose. First, it was a paper shortage; then it was necessary to get the agreement of someone about something; and then the person who was to make a certain decision had gone off on a trip somewhere, etc. This lasted for several years. The person to

whom we are mainly obliged [could not] see the first volume of the six-volume set (Luria died in August 1977).

THE SOCIAL AND THE PERSONAL: IN SEARCH OF SYNTHESIS

We have now reached the end of our exploration of the social and personal contexts of Alexander Luria's life. Additional material can be found on the DVD accompanying this text. As a means of exploring how these two, interwoven, aspects of life might have been combined in the person of Alexander Romanovich, we conclude with a long excerpt from a book by one of his last students, Elkhonin Goldberg, currently a neuropsychologist practicing in New York and one by his daughter.

Elkhonin Goldberg:

My mentor Alexander Romanovich Luria, and I were immersed in a conversation that we had had dozens of times before. We were strolling away from Luria's Moscow apartment, up Frunze Street and on toward Old Arbat The year was 1972. The country had lived through Stalin's murderous years, through the war, through more of Stalin's murderous years, and through Khrushchev's aborted thaw. People were no longer executed for dissent; they were merely jailed. The overriding public mood was no longer bone-chilling terror, but damp, resigned, stagnant hopelessness and indifference, a society stupor of sorts. My mentor was 70 and I was 25 As on many occasions before, Alexander Romanovich was saying that it was time for me to join the Party—the Party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. (2001, pp. 7–8)

Goldberg, now an American scientist residing in New York, continues his story in the same manner—with a bitter irony, poorly concealed affection towards his teacher, and a hint of nostalgia about the occasion. Luria, being a Party member, offered to nominate his young colleague and to arrange the second nomination from his long time colleague, Alexei Leontiev, who

was then Dean of Psychology Faculty at the Moscow University. Goldberg fully understood that Luria's idea was based on the existing "rules of the game": Party membership served as an obligatory steppingstone to any serious aspirations for career advancement in the Soviet Union. Goldberg not only knew that his teacher's "love" for the Party was equivalent to his own, but also that nominating him for Party membership was a very generous gesture both for Luria and Leontiev. There were many reasons to consider his candidacy problematic. Goldberg came from Latvia, which was regarded as an untrustworthy province and was of "bourgeois" background. His father had spent five years in the Gulag as an "enemy of the people." Most importantly, Goldberg was a Jew. By vouching for him, Luria and Leontiev ran the risk of irritating the university Party organization for pushing "another Jew" into the rarefied strata of the Soviet academic elite. But there were no other ways to make it possible for him stay on at the University as a junior faculty member. These were the realities of Soviet existence.

But this is not the end of the story, so ordinary for the times in which Luria lived.

On a dozen occasions over the past few years, whenever Luria brought it up, I would sidestep the subject, turning it into joke, saying that I was too young, too immature, not yet ready. I did not want an open clash and Luria did not force one. But this time he was speaking with finality. And this time I said that I was not going to join the Party because I did not want to (p. 8) ... Luria halted in the middle of the street. With a tinge of resignation but also a matter-of-fact finality, he said: "Then, Kolya (my old Russian nickname), there is nothing I can do for you." And that was that. This could have been devastating under a different set of circumstances, but that day I felt relief. Unbeknownst to Alexander Romanovich or almost anyone else, I had already made up my mind to leave the Soviet Union. By making Party membership a precondition for his continued patronage, he freed me from any obligation I felt toward him, which may have interfered with my decision (Goldberg, 2001, p. 11)

Goldberg summarizes his attitude toward Luria's involvement in the Party by writing, "I did not condemn Luria's Party membership, but I did not respect it either, and it was a source of nagging ambivalence in my attitude toward him. I sort of pitied him for that, and odd feeling for a student to have toward his mentor" (p. 10).

This truly Shakespearian combination of fidelity and betrayal, rendered in Goldberg's book in a matter-of-fact manner tells the reader a lot about what it could feel like for a young man to part ways with a teacher whom he really loved under difficult circumstances. Many years later, Goldberg re-experienced this unnatural situation in writing his book and tried to understand it more fully. Being a psychologist, he can't help using his scientific background to seek an explanation for his mentor's behavior and state of mind:

Whatever his true beliefs were, publicly he had always been a loyal Soviet citizen. Was it only a patina, which he was careful not to drop? I suspected that it was something in between, that a constant conscious dissonance between what you said and what you felt was too painful to endure. The closest Luria had ever come to revealing his deeply buried discontent was through an occasional oblique muttering "Vremena slozhnye, durakov mnogo" ("These are complex times, many fools abound"). What was first adopted as protective mimicry in time became a form of "autohypnosis." (Goldberg, 2001, p. 16)

Ironically, the term "autohypnosis" was proposed in 1990 by none other than Luria's daughter, Lena, over dinner with Goldberg in New York, while they were talking about her parents, both long deceased, and about other people of her parents' generation. Lena, reports Goldberg, was fascinated by political autohypnosis as a psychological defense against tyranny. An echo, though deformed, of this conversation can be found in Elena Luria's book: "In 1956 I finished my school and decided to enter the faculty of fine arts of the Moscow University. But father said: 'There is nothing for you to do there! What kind of sci-

ence is that? Art critics do not write what they think, but what is needed' " (1994, p.157).

This comment suggests to us that Alexander Romanovich inherited from his mentor Vygotsky a very high order of reflexivity: He was able to see himself and the situation he was in from outside. Perhaps the position he had chosen was dictated not by autohypnosis, but something else—perhaps a kind of wisdom, the rare human quality he so clearly demonstrated in his scientific work and so carefully concealed in day-to-day life. If so, it was wisdom which not only made him a great scientist but also allowed him to survive—to become one.

As for Goldberg's different choice about entering the Party, it may be worth remembering when Luria joined its ranks. It happened in 1943, when Alexander Romanovich was over 40 and his decision by no means could promote his career. Like millions of other Soviet citizens who swelled the Party's ranks in that critical juncture in world history, he knew too well the Nazi command "Jews and Communists—one step forward!" and he wanted to preserve the right if need be, to take more than two steps.

Of course, many people of Goldberg's generation did not understand these mundane facts of life in the USSR at war and its aftermath. Paraphrasing Luria, Karl would say in his mother-tongue "Vremena vseгда slozhnye, i durakov vseгда mnogo," which Mike will translate into his native English as "Times are always complex, and fools always abound!"

True, Luria was compelled to find his personal balance between freedom and necessity, according to the times in which he lived as he understood them. We hope that the materials in this book, especially the newly added materials, clearly indicate his value as a scientist whose work has, if anything, increased in significance over the years, and his value as a human being, taking energy from the opportunities that his historical era presented him as a youth and surviving the horrors that they meted out before his death.

So what remains two and a half decades after the death of a man whose earthly careers spanned three quarters of a century and who was recognized as the creator of a new science even during his lifetime? A long list of scientific degrees, titles, and prizes granted to him? Books, articles, pupils, and disciples? A few lines in encyclopedias? A granite plaque in a prestigious cemetery? Or twenty five years after his passing, does not the fond memory of Alexander Romanovich endure among his friends and relatives, so that it is still alive in their collective consciousness, as if he is still leading them through life and through science with his talent, his erudition, his knowledge, his rarely encountered combination of intelligence and goodness, and an unrepeatable combination of other uncommon personality characteristics?

—Michael Cole and Karl Levitin
San Diego-Amsterdam-Florence-Moscow