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## Transmission in Extreme Situations: Russian Families Expropriated by the October Revolution

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In retrospect, the major social revolutions are seen in their historical truth: not so much as the achievement of the ideals of liberty and equity for which they were waged, and for which so many men and women gave their lives, but as the replacement of one hierarchical order by another. The old power structure crumbles, and with it vanish institutions, social relations, mores, the old social games, in short everything the members of the former ruling class and their allied classes called 'society' and whose foundations they thought to be eternal. A society dies, and the upper-class families, at least those that do not emigrate or are not liquidated by political repression, find themselves excluded a priori from the new society in the making. How do they survive, how do they gradually gain a foothold in the new social relationships, how do they help their children find a place in the new hostile social world? What strategies do they choose, what resources can they count on, how do they use them?

The old strategies for transmitting social status have lost all meaning; and it suddenly becomes obvious how much of their success depended not only on mobilizing family resources (economic means, cultural resources, political and social connections) but on the favourable environment provided by the earlier society: it was *that* social order which, in the end, was for them the crucial collective resource; and *that* is what vanished; all that remain are strictly family resources which suddenly appear laughable.

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From the standpoint of the sociological analysis of how family social status is transmitted from one generation to the next, then, social revolutions constitute so many laboratory cases, and it may be regretted that the sociology of social mobility has taken so little interest in them; not only because social revolutions, those 'catastrophes' (in the sense defined by the mathematician, René Thom) that snap the thread of history, engender much greater and qualitatively different upward and downward flows of social mobility than those found during smooth economic development; but also because, in those societies with a stable social order that are usually studied by sociologists, contextual continuity is assumed and ultimately goes unnoticed, whereas it is actually the condition that makes most of the attempts at transmission possible.

Let us focus on the two revolutions that occurred in 1917 in Russia. They produced huge upheavals in the social structure, which were aggravated after 1929 with the forced collectivization of land and the Terror of the 1930s. As a result, between 1917 and the Second World War the country experienced considerable downward and upward social mobility. In the framework of this paper, I focus on the fate of families who, before the February and October Revolutions of 1917, belonged to the ruling or simply privileged classes under the Czarist regime. As Pitirim Sorokin, the respected but forgotten founder of the sociology of social mobility, himself born in Russia but driven out by the Bolsheviks at the end of 1922, wrote in 1925:

The [Russian] revolution reminds one of a great earthquake which throws topsy-turvy all layers in the area of a geological cataclysm. Never in normal periods has Russian society known such a great vertical mobility . . . In one or two years . . . almost all people in the richest strata were ruined; almost the whole political aristocracy was deposed and degraded; the greater part of the masters, entrepreneurs, and the highest professional ranks were put down.

Within four years, from 1914 to 1918, almost all the well-to-do and rich classes were made poor . . . the entire classes of landlords and well-to-do farmers, entrepreneurs, merchants, bankers, business men, well-to-do or high-salaried state and private officials, employees, intelligentsia and professionals, not to mention the nobility and gentry . . . were cut off and turned into poor people. On the other hand, a great many Communists, new business men, profiteers, swindlers and underhanded dealers, who before the war and the revolution had not been anything, now became *nouveaux riches*.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the Russian Revolution, Sorokin was a junior sociology professor at the University of Saint Petersburg.

With the assistance of my pupils I carried out in 1921–22 an investigation of the social circulation in Petrograd, during the years of the revolution. Eleven hundred and thirteen persons were subjected to investigation . . . Every one had at least once changed his original occupation in the period from 1917 to 1921 . . . The average number of changes of profession . . . amounted to five . . . The majority became impoverished; a comparatively small section became rich. Their 'social position' also changed sharply.

Two examples will prove the rapidity and sharpness of those changes. A former Senator and Deputy-Minister, during three and a half years of the revolution, has passed consecutively through the following stages: a starving gardener, a prisoner in a concentration camp, a dealer in powder against cockroaches, a clerk in a cooperative shop, a typist in the Academy of Sciences, a teacher in the Agronomic School, a member of the Board of an Agricultural Association, a photographer. A former village lad, eighteen years old, had been consecutively in those years: a Red Army soldier, a factory worker, a party propagandist, arrested and condemned to death by the Whites, a member of a factory committee, an administrator of finances in a provincial town, a Red Army officer, a student, a member of the Provincial Committee of the Russian Communist Party, chairman of the Provincial Extraordinary Commission, a member of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and a prosecuting counsel.<sup>2</sup>

The data for the study conducted by Sorokin and his students has been lost, but the survey is probably the only empirical study of the awesome vertical fluctuations in social mobility brought about by the war and the two revolutions of 1917. The February Revolution overthrew the Czar and

all former rulers, down to the policemen, as well as the dominant class, i.e., the gentry, were removed from their position in the legal pyramid . . . Their places were taken partly by representatives of the middle class of industry and trade, partly by the representatives of workers and peasants, and partly by the persecuted nationalities of Russia . . . At the end of October there came a new explosion which finally buried the gentry and brought to the surface a new layer consisting of workers, soldiers, lumpen-proletarians and village paupers on the one hand, of international adventurers of all countries . . . which filled all the commanding posts . . . Communists, together with the paupers and the dregs of society who supported them, became a new 'gentry' . . .

Many representatives of manual labor—workers and peasants—took to brain work as commissaries, propagandists, factory managers, etc.; on the contrary many intellectuals, like teachers, professors, students, writers, employers and factory managers were compelled to earn their living by manual work and became factory workers, guards, agricultural laborers, woodcutters, dockers, station porters, etc. Both of the former and the latter, according to Zinoviev [at the Eleventh conference of the Russian Communist Party], 'changed their profession nearly every month'.<sup>3</sup>

For Sorokin, writing these lines in Prague in the winter of 1922–3, such upheaval could only be temporary: one day the cycle would have to reverse directions and those professionals (engineers, doctors, economists, administrators, teachers, entrepreneurs, and merchants) once again take up the work which, because of their training, they alone could perform effectively. He thought he already detected the beginnings of the reversal in 1921. And yet, retrospectively, we know that other cycles of exclusion were to follow, with the end of the New Economic Policy, the expropriation of the well-off peasants (*kulaks*) beginning in 1929, the repression of bourgeois specialists and even old Bolsheviks in the 1930s. Even the *children* of the former ruling or simply cultivated classes were affected and would be refused access to the university on the grounds of their class origins.

The importance of investigating these phenomena *in detail* and submitting them to social analysis is obvious. Of all the questions that spring to mind when these are mentioned, questions concerning not only the social consequences of the Russian Revolution but any victorious revolution, here are a few that we still cannot answer. Among the families of the dispossessed classes, which ones chose to emigrate and were able to do so, and which ones were unable or unwilling to leave? What resources were lacking for those who stayed? What kept some from trying to emigrate? Of those who stayed, what distinguishes those who fell victim to political repression, famine, poverty and those who survived? Besides expropriation and direct repression, what other forms of coercion were used—administrative violence, political stigmatization, social exclusion—to bar government employees from their jobs and 'put down' members of the former élites? What strategies of protection, disguise, retraining, reinsertion were they able to contrive for themselves or their children in order to avoid social degradation? Were they able to pass on to their children resources (culture,

moral values, relations) that could be used to win a decent or even desirable place in the new society with its new hierarchies? Were these transmissions tolerated or, on the contrary, fought by the new regime, necessarily aware of the danger from former élites attempting to reconstruct part of their power? Confronted by professional competition from old-regime trained specialists, how did the new political élites react, aware as they probably were of the inadequacy of their own technical skills and level of culture?

If war is simply (international) politics carried on in another form, it could also be said, paraphrasing Clausewitz, that civil war is class struggle carried on by other means; and, likewise, just as wars are often continued by the occupation of the losers' territory by the winners, the civil wars that accompany revolutions are continued by many forms of repression of the defeated by the victors, who, once in power, rely on State violence. The only difference is that these post-revolutionary class struggles do not set one nation against another, but oppose social groups within the same people, leaving the members of the losing side at least the theoretical possibility of changing sides. It is these free-for-alls that follow victorious revolutions that will be examined here, from the standpoint of 'social mobility'.

Our data are drawn from an initial corpus of some fifty Russian family histories going back before the Revolution and continuing down to the present day.<sup>4</sup> From this corpus we selected the families whose ascendants included members of the old-regime ruling classes (nine cases). Rather than trying to generalize from such a narrow base, we have chosen to examine these life stories for traces of some of the social processes that had a profound effect on the fate of these families, as well as accounts of the families' struggles to help their children find a new place in post-revolutionary society. In effect, each family's or person's global experience contains a multitude of individual experiences, among which the sociologist's eye can pick out the effects of collective socio-historical processes. There are many of these and they vary with the context and the period; they have a number of facets; and each individual experience throws light on only one small aspect. It is a labour of patience to compare, establish relations, cross-check data and hypotheses in order to reconstruct the social logics of historically situated contexts; a labour akin to the work of the archaeologist, painstakingly piecing together, out of the scattered shards, an ancient vase or mosaic.

In this exploratory paper I will simply suggest a few hypotheses concerning certain aspects of transmission in extreme situations, based on a presentation of a few authentic experiences. I have chosen to present two cases in some detail and to give the basic outlines of three others.<sup>5</sup>

#### VERA'S STORY

Our corpus contains examples of privileged families who were unable to avoid social degradation. We have scant access to the most tragic stories, those of men and women who died without children and therefore without witnesses (nevertheless these stories can be told by surviving nieces or nephews). But there are still stories that are sufficiently dramatic to show that reconversion was not always possible.

Let us take the story of the Nilaiev spouses and their children. At the beginning of the century, Mr Nilaiev was a brilliant engineer trained in the new electrical technologies; he was one of the directors of a large industrial firm in Moscow. His wife came from a noble family, and had studied at the famous Smolny Institute for young women of noble extraction. Her husband had no noble blood; but he did cover his wife with jewelry, which he bought on his way home from work. They had four children: Alexandra, born in 1899; and three sons, Illia (1900), Nikolay (1901), and Vassily (1904). They lived in a large villa north of Moscow and had also bought, in Lesnoy Gorodok, a village some forty kilometres out of Moscow on a local railway line, a wooded plot where they built a small one-room dacha at which to spend their Sundays.

When the revolution broke out, Alexandra had just started medical school; the three boys were still in high school. The father's factory was in a state of turmoil: the workers occupied the plant day and night, the owner had fled abroad, the managers were left to their own devices. Every night Mr Nilaiev would return home deeply demoralized, repeating over and over: 'What's going on? What's going on?' In the space of a few weeks he lost his mind and had to be placed in an asylum, where he soon died. Meanwhile the family home was occupied by worker's families, who took over one room after another.

Vera retreated to the dacha with her three sons. The eldest, Illia, who worshipped his father and imitated him, was distraught. And

yet he was now the head of the family! Under pressure from his mother, who upon her husband's death was confronted with the loss of the only income for the family, Illia, a bookish and docile boy, always dapper and extremely well spoken, took a job as a factory labourer. His formal speech and delicate manners immediately made him the butt of the other workers' jokes. The tension was too much for him and he soon began drinking when he got home: after a few months he could take no more and he disappeared.

Vera saw where she had gone wrong and steered her two younger sons into crafts: they became lathe operators (Russia has a tradition of household objects made from wood). They were to exercise this trade all their lives.

On one side of the dacha in Lesnoy Gorodok, where they now lived, Vera and her two sons made a garden; they raised chickens and rabbits. Vera was clever with her hands: she knew how to knit, sew, embroider, and dressed the whole family and even sold (for a small sum) to her neighbours items of clothing she made from start to finish.

But then Nikolay became engaged to a girl who had been placed at the age of 14 as a servant with a family in Lesnoy Gorodok. She was a country girl and practically illiterate; but she had caught Nikolay's eye, as he often passed her in the village. Vera was set against this *mésalliance*, but the marriage took place nevertheless. With no help from Vera, with his own hands, Nikolay built a rudimentary *isba* (log cabin) for his wife and himself on a bit of land that his mother had finally agreed to let them use. Two children were born, in 1923 and 1924.

Now winters were very cold in the *isba*, and both children fell ill. Hundreds of prayers would be said for their recovery, before the family icons (some very old and valuable). All for naught: both children died, one after the other. In a fit of rage at divine injustice, Nikolay burned all the icons, which was a considerable trauma for his devout mother. Many years later she would remember that dramatic moment as the point when the thread of her former life was truly severed; furthermore she saw it as her son's conversion to atheism, for which the Bolsheviks were actively campaigning at the time. Nikolay's loss of faith seemed to her the ultimate failure in all her struggles to maintain family continuity.

One day a letter arrived from Moldavia, from her eldest son,

Illia. He described his poverty-stricken life there as a stableman in a *kolkhoz* (collective farm). He had married the daughter of a farm worker; the couple lived in a shed next to the stables. They had two children, but the youngest daughter had died from lack of care, and Illia was worn out. The family got together and decided to bring him back to Lesnoy Gorodok. It was a spent man, alcoholic, unrecognizable, who arrived some time later with his wife and small daughter. He would never recover his equilibrium and even stole from his mother to buy drink.

The years went by, and Nikolay's wife bore three more children, among them Ludmilla (born in 1925), who many years later would be telling this story, interviewed by Marina Malysheva (her grandmother, Vera, lived with her until she died in 1972). Vera's youngest son, Vassily, whom his mother no doubt wanted to keep with her as long as possible, also finally married in 1939 to a girl from the village; they would have a daughter in 1940 and a son in 1941.

When the war broke out, in June 1941, the three sons were mobilized. Restrictions were tightened, the family, now reduced to Vera, her daughters-in-law and their children, had almost nothing to eat. That was when Vera decided to sell her last pieces of jewelry for bread and gruel.

All that now remained of the family fortune were the books, some valuable editions. But the German troops were close, and rumour had it that they were executing all Communists, who could be identified by the fact that they owned books. Any books, as the Germans could not read Russian. As a precaution, the whole library went the way of the stove.

In the end, the German army was stopped four stations down the line from the house. But Vassily, the youngest of Vera's three sons and the one closest to her, had been killed at the front. Nikolay came back alive, but in a weakened state, and died of pneumonia in 1950.

His daughter, Ludmilla, would have liked to go on with her studies. But she was 15 when the war came. She was recruited to work in one of the big Moscow factories; conditions were harsh, and she slept on the shop floor for weeks on end because of the curfew. She finally escaped from the factory in the 1940s by marrying a worker, who found her a job as a helper in the *crèche* at his own factory. She moved into a two-room apartment in Moscow and sent for her grandmother, Vera. Ludmilla's brother and sister, her

cousins (the children of Alexandra, Vassily, and Illia) and their spouses all met similar fates: the men became factory workers, with frequent alcohol problems which broke up their marriages and made life difficult for the mother left to raise the children on her own (this was the case for Ludmilla, among others); the women worked in factories, in hotels, as cooks and as childminders. Their own children, born in the 1940s and 1950s, remained in the same social class. Ludmilla herself, now 67, today lives in a small two-room apartment with her daughter and her granddaughter; it is cold and damp in the winter, they have to leave a window open because the gas water-heater leaks.

Nothing remains, then, of the original family's great material resources, which before the revolution placed them in the top centile of Russia's most privileged families. Clearly the husband's depression was a factor that weighed heavily in the family's subsequent fate: with him disappeared not only their source of income, but also the possibility of activating useful relations. (Had he survived the 1917 Revolution, however, he would probably have become a victim of the repression that in the 1930s hit 'specialists' trained under the old regime.) This family was lucky enough to have somewhere to fall back on when the apartments and homes of the aristocracy were requisitioned and occupied by workers and their families; the family microculture was thus preserved. And yet Vera's considerable efforts to transmit to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren at least some bits of the culture she bore were for the most part in vain. She was unable to prevent her three sons from marrying practically illiterate country girls—who nevertheless turned out to be good solid mothers; Illia was broken by life and lost all sense of morality; Nikolay lost his faith; Vassily did not live to see his children grown up. None of the children in the following generation went on with their education. Such an example allows us to measure the importance of the overall *social context*, without the support of which all attempts at transmission may prove vain.<sup>6</sup>

#### LYDIA'S STORY

The second story is that of Lydia Ziemlianine, born in 1914; she was interviewed in Moscow, in 1992, by Victoria Semenova. At that

time she was 78 and lived in a modest apartment; nothing told of her noble origins or her brilliant career as a Soviet geologist. She shares the three-room apartment with her daughter, Irina (born in 1940, a biologist), her son-in-law and their son, Alexander (born in 1969), whom Lydia, like so many Soviet grandmothers, often looked after when he was small.

Lydia recounted her family story:

My paternal grandfather, Fedor L., was very rich. He lived in the provinces, he owned a very fine house with a big terrace and an *escalier d'honneur*. He was a collector of indirect taxes. His first wife had attended the Smolny Institute. She was very beautiful, I saw a photo of her. They had a baby, Konstantin (my father), but she died of galloping consumption shortly after his birth.

My grandfather remarried, he had three other children; but his second wife hated Konstantin. The others had private tutors, but not him, they left him to grow up on his own. This caused him a lot of suffering. He left home (and school) as soon as he could. He took to the road, worked at various trades; finally he joined the Czar's army as a junior officer. He met my mother, Antonina, they got married and she got pregnant with me. That was in 1913. In August 1914 the Prussian war started; he was wounded, a punctured lung; he was sent to recuperate in central Asia because of the warm climate. Mother joined him and that is where I was born.

My mother Antonina came from a well-to-do family; her father started out as the steward of a large estate in Belorussia; then he bought the property. That is where my mother was born, in northern Berezina. At the beginning of the war, her father lived in Moscow, on the income from his estate in Belorussia. He had a big apartment in the heart of the old city. My mother could not stay in central Asia to raise me; she came back to Moscow. We lived at her father's with her younger sister, who was not married.

But the revolution came. I was 4. I remember one winter, it was so cold [1918 or 1919]. All five of us lived in one room. There was nothing to eat in all Moscow; a terrible famine. Below the window of our apartment there was a shed roof; grandfather would throw out seeds to attract the pigeons, and sometimes he would manage to net one.

A cousin came to see us. He was working in the Ukraine on the railroad. Mother, who saw we were a burden on the family, decided to leave with him for a warmer climate, better for me. He found her a job as a secretary on the construction site; obviously she knew how to read and keep books, she had a good education. We lived in one of the big wooden shacks on the site. In the same shed lived the construction supervisor, Savva. He had nine children to support and he was alone. His wife had just died of tuberculo-

sis, she had caught it while nursing her son, who had come back from the front with the disease. Both died the same day. Savva was at his wit's end. My mother helped him look after his children; she was a good seamstress and she made their clothes. Savva and she began living together. Mother had removed my father's pictures from the family album because in all of them he was dressed in the uniform of an officer of the Czar. She destroyed my birth certificate and re-registered me as though I were Savva's daughter.

I was very fond of Savva, both of him and his children. They were all musical! None of them went on with their studies but we have always kept in touch.

We moved with the railroad construction; we went to the village schools. My mother wanted me to continue my studies. When I was 15—that was the end of compulsory schooling—she sent me to my aunt's in Moscow. But my aunt did not want to help me find my way. And I was a hindrance to her. I tried to get into the Pedagogical Institute (teacher training school), but I was too young, for one thing, and especially, there were my class origins! . . . Officially Savva was my father, an engineer trained under the old regime, a bourgeois specialist; they only accepted the children of workers. This was in 1930.

In the courtyard lived a girl who worked in a spinning mill. She got me a job there. I didn't have a choice, I had to earn my way, my aunt made me pay rent and, besides, everyone worked there. I spent five years there, but after two years I managed to enroll in night classes at the rabfak.

The rabfaks, or *rabochii fakultet*, were secondary schools set up by the new regime to bring workers up to a level from which they could continue on to higher education. Of course they were reserved for workers. Having easily passed the successive examinations during the two years of rabfak (as her friends had failed, she repeated the last year with them for the pleasure; the teachers, all trained 'in the old way', were top notch), Lydia won, as a worker, the right to enroll at the university. She chose geology, a speciality not frequently selected by girls ('there were ten boys for every girl').

Lydia herself confesses that she was very interested in boys; she quickly fell in love with one of the students, Evgeni, who was fascinated with geology. He had spent five years working in a coal mine; he too had gone through a rabfak. They became engaged and then married secretly, each continuing to live in their respective student dormitory: both were active members of the Komsomols

(Communist youth organizations) and aspired to join the Party; but early marriage was frowned on.

Evgeni was brilliant and cultivated, and that is what had drawn Lydia to him. He was well versed in the great Russian and Western writers. When he saw he could trust Lydia, who had confessed to him that both of her real parents were of noble extraction, he confided that he, too, was from a noble family and even once a rich one; his time in the coal mine had served to launder his origins.

As soon as they graduated from the Institute, Lydia and her husband would participate in expeditions to the outer frontiers of the Soviet Union (Altai, Siberia) in extraordinarily rustic conditions. Luck smiled on them, as they rapidly discovered deposits of gold and other rare minerals and were entrusted with organizing new expeditions. Evgeni, who had volunteered when war was declared in 1941, would soon be sent back to the expeditions, considered to be strategic for national defence. When Lydia gave birth to a little girl, the child was given into the care of her grandmother, Antonina, who had been living with the couple since the death of her husband, Savva; she raised the child herself. Some years later, Lydia and Evgeni separated, each having developed a relationship with another partner; but they remained on very good terms for the rest of their life, something that surprised my Russian colleague, V. Semenova, who attributed this apparently uncommon civil attitude to the persistence of aristocratic values.<sup>7</sup>

### *First Comments*

Although this second family history has been highly summarized, it sheds some light on a few important social processes. First of all it provides us with information on the fate of the adult members of these classes that were brought down by the revolution. Excluded from Soviet society, deprived of all income and social aid, Antonina's parents actually starved to death in Moscow. They lacked a son, or a son-in-law, who could have found them a place in the new society, even if it were in a manual occupation, and could have helped them get through the dramatic time that followed the revolution. Theirs was no doubt also the fate of many others of their social class and generation.

According to Sorokin, who quotes Soviet figures, the population

of Petrograd fell from 2,420,000 before the revolution to 1,469,000 in 1918, and 740,000 in 1920. Moscow dropped from 2 million to 1 million inhabitants between February 1917 and 1920.<sup>8</sup> Emigration, famines, high mortality, flight to safer places: the Russian cities had become high-risk zones for the former upper classes.

Antonina herself managed to find an entry into the new Soviet society, due no doubt to her courage and her ability to adapt, but at the cost of repudiating her husband and concealing her own identity. And yet she manifestly succeeded in transmitting to her daughter her own cultural and moral resources, which were all she had left of her past.

'The real object of transmission is to pass on', writes the psychoanalyst, Pierre Legendre:<sup>9</sup> 'to pass on *something*, whatever it may be, so as to be able to recognize oneself in one's children.' How can this be done in such trying conditions? Antonina's daughter, Lydia, was only able to attend village schools, changing schools as the railroad advanced. But she had the best of tutors in her mother, and she was a fast learner.

When Lydia was of an age to go on to higher schooling, she came up against a formidable barrier: university was reserved for working-class children. In this case the substitute father was inoperative. Disqualified, Lydia went to work in the factory, as did the vast majority of young people of her age.

Nevertheless and without forming a conscious strategy, she remained on the lookout for opportunities to learn. It must be added here that Lydia enthusiastically espoused the progressive ideals of the new regime and thoroughly internalized them. She was active in the factory Communist youth group. She dreamed of one day joining the Party. What was there to regret in the status of the former nobility, idle and parasitic as it was?

But it is fascinating to see how, at the very time the Soviet regime was the most totalitarian, when the struggles against the 'class enemies' and their children was raging, not only Lydia but many other children of the former élites discovered in the very *rabfaks* that were created to train their replacements, paths which led to highly qualified positions carrying responsibilities. These falsely 'working-class' children were also more fit for higher education; they were at the top of the class because of the cultural resources they inherited and which set them apart from the others. They were also, by an additional paradox, whole-hearted communist activists.

We have found the same phenomenon in other family histories as well. Such was the case, for instance, of the two sons of a well-known Moscow jurist at the beginning of the century. As I have discussed this example elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> I will only touch on it here. The jurist, a cultivated *grand bourgeois* who received the cream of Moscow society in his drawing-room under the last Czar, was not only dispossessed of his apartment by the revolution (he lived confined to one room with his wife and his books), but deprived of all income: the regime had no place for a specialist in bourgeois law. But his own interest in the history of Russia and France—his library contained a wealth of historical works—would save his two sons. The elder managed to finish his studies in Chinese and became an expert on the Far East. The younger was not as fortunate: he graduated from high school with excellent marks but was rejected by the history department of the university because of his class origins. Like all of his schoolmates from the same milieu, he took a job as a construction worker for the Moscow subway, where the conditions were very harsh. Like Lydia in the preceding story, he too was an enthusiastic supporter of Party ideals, and his natural authority rapidly made him a worker's leader (the bulk of the men digging the tunnels were peasants fresh from the countryside). After many vicissitudes, including deportation to the Altai for 'anti-Soviet propaganda' at the end of the 1930s (a time when a political joke told in public could result in denunciation and deportation), he would end up as a senior Party official at the time of Destalinization.

Lydia's story, that of the successful reinsertion of a young woman of noble extraction into Soviet society, is therefore not unique; which authorizes a few hypotheses of a general order.

#### ANALYSIS

The overall situation that forms the backdrop for these accounts of social degradation is that of a society turned upside down by a victorious social revolution. To be sure, Western societies also provide cases of strong downward mobility; for instance, families ruined by bankruptcy, the rapid dilapidation of a fortune by a carefree heir, the premature death of a family head or the gradual loss of drive by generations raised in the lap of plenty, as described

by Thomas Mann in *Buddenbrooks*. But each of these cases illustrates the fall of a single family; its social class as a whole continues to prosper. With respect to what happened in Russia after 1917, even the dramatic consequences of something like the 1929 Wall Street Crash pale in comparison. What characterizes the post-revolutionary situation is the *societal*, nation-wide nature of the expropriation and stigmatization. In the Russian case, there would come a remission, provided by the NEP, but it would be of short duration.

In the face of this historical 'catastrophe', three main types of response could be envisaged: emigration, organized resistance, or adaptation to the new situation. Here once again we find Albert Hirschman's *exit, voice, loyalty* typology.<sup>11</sup> In the present article we are interested only in behaviours of the third type. But the two others need to be mentioned, not because they were adopted by tens of thousands of families, but because those families who remained in Russia without trying to resist would be suspected either of having taken part in acts of resistance (civil war) or of having maintained contacts with the members of their own family in exile.

We will therefore focus on those who were caught up in the net of the new regime, and more precisely those who survived the most 'catastrophic' time. *How* did they survive? What resources could they still command in order to attempt to insert themselves into the new social relationships and reconstruct some kind of social status? What channels of insertion were objectively open to them? What could they transmit to their children to help them become fully integrated in the new Soviet society? But first of all, what did this sudden loss of their formal social status mean to them?

This question, foremost in the series, can be answered in different ways, depending on whether these were families of leisure, numerous in Russia due to the nature of the old regime, or families from the economically active classes, among which must be distinguished entrepreneurs and merchants, on the one hand, and professionals and intellectuals on the other.

The loss was the more severe for the leisure classes, who lived on land rents and privileges; it was no doubt they who emigrated or put up armed resistance in the greatest proportions. For them, the new society manifestly had no place, held out no future. Everything that had made up their world, the old regime 'society', had collapsed; many others had known the fate of Antonina's parents, who

died from hunger and cold in their Moscow apartment to indifference or general hostility. The harsh new times were exacerbated by the loss of all that founded their former life ('What's going on?', the heartfelt cry of the company manager who identified completely with the old regime, must have been all the more heartfelt for the many landowners who, as in Tchekhov's plays, had not seen the new times coming). Loss of all familiar landmarks: not only sources of income but friends and relations, social milieu; life habits, former beliefs, the comprehension of a social world acquired by experience, all of this was rendered null and void overnight. The new society, brutish and incomprehensible for them, invaded their very private space: working-class families obtained from the municipality the right to live in your apartment, to occupy nearly all of the rooms, to pile up, a family per room, to use the kitchen and bathroom, leaving you to get along as though on suspended sentence, in one room, at the mercy of a denunciation for a critical remark overheard.

The invasion of one's privacy by families of a different social class flaunting their political victory seems to have been a particularly traumatic experience. There was almost no way to avoid it, since the housing market had been abolished: no amount of money could (at least in principle) keep the invaders at bay, nor secure another apartment. For that, you would have had to go through those very officials who had caused your misfortune in the first place and who would, in all likelihood, have eyed your request with the utmost suspicion. Even possessing money was suspect, a sign of belonging to the former upper classes.

We have the case of a family living in a villa surrounded by a splendid orchard in the middle of a town in southern Russia, who managed to keep the entire family home for themselves throughout the 1920s, thanks to the political support of a relative who had joined the revolution in its early days. The slow dilapidation of the orchard, home to a large number of working-class families living in makeshift shelters, was a source of suffering; notwithstanding, the story of this family shows how great a resource continuing control over their *private space* was for them. The mother was able to go on raising her four daughters, to keep them safe under her wing until they could make their own way in the world; their fiancés called on them in a controlled space and even lived there as students—which made it possible to hold off the city officials, always on the lookout

for vacant rooms; and this ten-year reprieve was used for their necessarily slow adaptation to the new society.

For most, by contrast, the loss of control over private space, even more than the loss of their source of income, was the greatest trauma; for, among other reasons, without some privacy, it is practically impossible to pass on to one's children—by education but also by everyday interaction and maintaining a style of life that is first and foremost an objective means of their cultural production—the values, orientations, and codes of behaviour desired by the parents, who have nothing else left to transmit. Not only for those families of independent means, but also for the many in which the adult generation was now comprised exclusively by women, loss of family privacy would virtually eliminate all hopes of transmission.

Where there was a trade to hand on, the situation was slightly better. To be sure, many qualifications, such as jurist or theologian, had suddenly lost all value; these would have to be forgotten and replaced with new skills (one of the girls' fiancés mentioned above, a theology student, managed to cram enough applied economy to be recruited by his high-school classmates, now engineers, for the committees planning the housing developments that were mushrooming around the new mines: like Magnitogorsk, or Azovstal). But it was a safe bet that whatever direction the new regime took, it would always need doctors, engineers, architects, agronomists, and teachers. One of our informants, 90 years old at the time of his interview, was the son of a rich fisheries owner in Astrakhan, on the shores of the Caspian Sea. He was steered towards medical school. When his father, who had managed to keep his company afloat during the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the early 1920s at the cost of large bribes, was arrested and tried for corruption, his son was sent to a camp. But as a doctor, he enjoyed a regime of semi-liberty; he was even allowed to sleep outside the camp when his wife visited him.

Another case is that of a sawmill owner in northern Russia whose mill was seized by the state. Nevertheless, under the NEP, he was restored, if not as owner, at least as director of his mill, long enough to complete his daughters' education and to marry them off to his own engineers, while two of his three sons went off to join the Whites in Siberia, then after the resounding defeat of the White army, stayed on and made a new life for themselves under a new identity (one of them would be denounced in the 1930s and ex-

ecuted); here transmission was indirect, it concerned the daughters and was effected not through an occupation but through marriage.

Yet even the common-sense expectations ('there will always be a need for engineers'), like those of Sorokin in 1922, eventually turned out to be overoptimistic. In the 1930s the grave economic crisis that followed the collectivization of land, and which affected not only agriculture but industry as well, set off a search for scapegoats. We know today that it was due to the inability of central planning to handle, in real time, the same amount of information as a market economy.<sup>12</sup> But this was not the perception at the time: the Plan, being more rational than the market *should* have made the economy run without a hitch; and if it could not, it was surely due to sabotage at every level.<sup>13</sup> Suspicion obviously fell first on the specialists from the Czarist period. Thousands were arrested and deported or executed, among whom the above-mentioned engineers who had codirected the construction of Magnitogorsk or Azovstal, or the saw mill owner's sons-in-law. Being in possession of a useful trade was not enough to save them, it only postponed the fatal moment: their class origins caught up with them in the end.

The only one of the sawyer's sons to survive was the youngest and most intellectually inclined, Kostia. He had gone to the trouble of reading not only the new regime newspapers but the Marxist classics. He had become convinced, the only one in his whole family, that the new ideology was consistent and that the new regime was there to stay. Consequently he did not join the Whites, but, on the contrary, when the NEP ended, decided to move to a remote village in the northern forests where, concealing his family origins, he offered his services as a schoolteacher. One of the village houses was turned into a school, and he was given a room. A short time later, he married an almost illiterate peasant girl, daughter of one of the poorest families in the village, and they had several children. He lived in constant fear of one day being discovered, something he was spared: he died at the front in 1941, but he had had time to see his children grow up and to hand on to them his taste for study. Thanks to their good marks at school (and to their mother's secret collaboration with the KGB, which she provided with information on individual villagers' attitudes towards the government), they would later be the first authorized to leave the village—something that was theoretically forbidden by the administration. Considering the times, which were very dangerous for

those who, like Kostia, had been put down, this strategy can be regarded as a success.

It is reminiscent of the strategy of Antonina, the young noblewoman who had concealed her first marriage with an officer of the Czar: these are extreme strategies in that they affect personal identity, but they were necessary because this aristocratic identity was a mortal danger. The hardening of the struggle against 'class enemies' did not leave much choice. But the need to conceal one's past, hence an essential component of one's personal identity, means that, beyond the external private space, it is one's intimate privacy that is impaired; and when one is forced to lie to one's children, whose innocence obviously makes them incapable of keeping a secret, the damage is exacerbated.

Upper-class families then had not only to face the loss of their sources of income and their heritage, the devaluing of their cultural resources, the lost effectiveness of their now inoperative social relations, the inversion of the value of their 'social qualification' (their class *habitus*: see the case of the unfortunate Illia); but also the loss of such basic resources as control of family privacy, or the symbolic resource of belonging to a family line with respected social status; and even more generally of being forced to suppress the family memory, which is so crucial to one's identity.<sup>14</sup>

And yet some young people from noble or bourgeois families, like Lydia, Evgeni, or the jurist's two sons, after having spent the required time in manual occupations, manifestly managed to efface their class origins, to find a place in the new society and to make a career for themselves. All four went through Communist youth groups and finally joined the Party, after having been required to provide a detailed biography which included their ascendants. One might think they were motivated by political opportunism; but our findings show that, on the contrary, their allegiance to the new ideals was sincere.

Let us take for example the way Lydia managed to enroll in her local *rabfak*:

At the factory I met other girls who would have liked to go on with their studies. At the end of the first year, I called together my girlfriends and said to them: 'Girls, we've got to try to get into the *rabfak*!' They all agreed.

The group of us went to see the director of the factory. He refused. The

classes were at night, but as we worked in three shifts, he would have had to reorganize all of them, and he wouldn't hear of it!

That was the period when every senior Party official was affiliated with a large factory that he was supposed to visit periodically. We had Boudienny. One day we heard he was in the plant, with the director! We got together—there were ten of us: 'Let's go see him! Maybe he'll help us!' The director's secretary wouldn't let us in; we showered her with insults and rushed the door. I still regret that, but it was the only way.

Boudienny was taken aback: 'What's wrong, young ladies?' We explained to him that the director didn't want us to go to night school. The director confirmed this. 'Ten at once, it's not possible; it would disrupt my night shifts'. 'That's your problem, Comrade', Boudienny told him. 'Our problem is that we have no working-class intelligentsia. You must send these girls to school!' Turning to us, he said: 'Have you made out your applications?' He read them and signed them in front of us, and made the director sign, too.

Is it credible that Lydia could mobilize a whole shift, and convince a senior Party official—at the height of the Terror—if this had been only a calculation? What drove her and gave her the necessary daring was the conviction that the ideals of the Party were just, and her trust in its leaders.

Does this mean that the price of her reinsertion was the betrayal of her parents' values, the rejection of everything that her mother had tried to hand on? Things are not that simple.

In the first place, Lydia and those who followed parallel paths were younger than Vera's children, for instance: they had barely known the former society and no doubt saw only its bad sides. But the essential is not there: it lies to my mind in the unconscious transmission of a way of relating to the political sphere.

In Western societies, the political dimension is built into the social structure. It is part of the scenery, and one can live and die without being aware of it; it is the business of specialists, and those who go into political activity proper at one time or another in their life are fairly few in number.

The experience of a social revolution, on the other hand, teaches that politics can kill (that is the lesson of Nazism, too, in its way<sup>15</sup>). This experience is deeply engraved in the awareness of those who live through it. They draw the lesson that people should keep their distance from political activity and they try to dissuade their children from getting involved. But this very fear, or the silence that

expresses it, rouses their children's political sensibilities. We noticed this during an international research project on the family origins of 1960s student activists in the United States, France, and other countries:<sup>16</sup> many were born into families of political refugees or Jews who had been driven out of their country by Nazism or Fascism. While some had received an anti-Fascist political legacy from their parents, others were totally unaware of the reasons that had made their parents emigrate; the latter, whose only ambition was to find a place in the target society, had hidden their former political activism or even their Jewishness from their children. Nevertheless, their own children, sensing some mysterious secret, became interested early on in politics and ended up in leftist groups. I believe it is a process of the same kind—the unravelling of some relationship with the political sphere, subconsciously passed on from parents to children—that led Lydia and so many others to engage in political activities, which could only—given the context and the idealism of youth—bring them to espouse the progressive ideals of the new regime. It may be the case that a governing-class habitus, internalized in childhood as a disposition to organize and direct others, has contributed to the process. If this is the case, the strange phenomenon of children of former governing classes integrating themselves into post-revolutionary society through political activism appears less paradoxical.

It was precisely this type of reinsertion through political activism that, in the new society, opened the way to other professional, cultural, or social insertions; the parents were unable to comprehend this, but the children had grasped it instinctively.

In market economies like our own, social integration comes primarily through economic integration. Cultural integration, too, is important, but it is not sufficient in itself, as shown by the case of jobless youth in our societies.<sup>17</sup> As for political integration, it is altogether secondary.

Soviet society, like any post-revolutionary society, centred its new structure around the political sphere; and the concentration of power at the head of the Party-State only exacerbated and prolonged the phenomenon.<sup>18</sup> From the end of the NEP, economic and cultural integration were definitely subordinated to political integration. This would be cruelly felt by the engineers and other specialists trained under the old regime and who thought they had found their place in the new society because of their technical skills:

the lack of political integration eventually made them lose everything else.

## CONCLUSION

The study of 'transmission in extreme situations', as we have defined it here, namely the efforts made at transmission in a societal context thrown into turmoil by a social revolution, is only at its beginning. But it is already possible to see beyond its field proper to the contributions it can make to the study of 'transmission in normal situations': indeed it highlights the considerable importance of the overall *societal context* in transmission.

When this context exhibits a high degree of historical continuity, as in the case of Western societies, there is a tendency to see it as an unchanging backdrop and to no longer perceive its effects. This is particularly evident in the abundant Anglo-Saxon literature on 'social mobility', which focuses on individual competition for the most desirable professional positions.<sup>19</sup> The fact that empirical studies of social mobility have been conducted exclusively in stabilized societies, made 'homogeneous' by a century or two of nation-state building,<sup>20</sup> the stress, for ideological reasons,<sup>21</sup> on *mobility* to the detriment of the reproduction of family resources in the wake of the transmissions; and especially the observation technique systematically used, namely questionnaires administered to a representative sample (a technique which has its own built-in blind spots<sup>22</sup>), all these imperceptibly lead research to focus on the *individual* factors (social origin, education) that might explain the difference in paths taken. Applying to this field concepts borrowed from micro-economic theory, such as 'cultural capital' or 'relational capital',<sup>23</sup> tends in the same direction: in the end, the societal context is reduced to a set of markets, always present from the outset, in which families and individuals compete with other families and individuals endowed with different capitals, which they attempt to accumulate, enhance, and transmit by more or less successful strategies.

To be sure, this approach has led to some conclusive results, especially when structural effects were also taken into consideration.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, what it omits is just as important as what it brings to light; namely the specific effects of the historical continu-

ity of societal contexts. Paradoxically it is these effects, invisible because they are always there, that the study of transmission in extreme situations brings out: when a social revolution has 'destroyed' a societal context, even those capitals that families have managed to preserve (culture, relations) become difficult to utilize or transmit. When this happens, it becomes easier to understand just how much, in societies enjoying historical continuity, successful family transmission depends on the features of a favourable societal context: a school system which only seems neutral, but whose content actually favours types of knowledge acquired in families who live out/off the dominant culture;<sup>25</sup> a banking system that favours access to credit by members of already well-to-do families; a fabric of relations which spontaneously restricts the circulation of strategic information to the same social milieu and reserves the best opportunities for the members of this milieu or their offspring; in short the spontaneous self-organization of a ruling class and its middle-class allies in an active, integrated milieu, orienting the collective institutions to their own advantage, accumulating exchange relationships through the daily exercise of responsibilities and sociability, excluding along the way without malice or aforethought—though sometimes with—anyone not belonging, by birth or marriage, to this milieu.

Societal context is not an inert backdrop; it facilitates transmission for families of the dominant classes. It even invites these transmissions, raises them to the status of norm. But it works so naturally that one forgets that it is an active, enabling presence; only when it disappears, something almost unthinkable, does one measure its full importance.

An 'individualistic' approach does not reveal this type of phenomenon, particularly if it consists of merely taking down the facts from a sampling of individual trajectories, however representative the sample may be. If the societal context is to be made visible, if its existence is even to be conceived of, the place to start is not with individuals but with institutions; with instances of social integration, of the constitution of social milieux; in short, from an approach which, from the outset, focuses on collective and societal phenomena, a Durkheimian approach.

Such a method also leads to a better understanding of exclusions, as Robert Castel's recent work has shown.<sup>26</sup> Trading the concept of exclusion for that of 'disaffiliation', Castel shows the importance of

relations of affiliation, those ties which form the integrating web of a stabilized society. These are the pathways leading to a place in society; and when they are severed, in particular those provided by professional or family ties, exclusion follows.<sup>27</sup>

In market economies, male social integration is accomplished traditionally through professional integration, while women's takes place through marriage; reciprocal phenomena do operate, even though, until recently, they have been constantly underestimated. Exclusion is simply the converse of integration, it obeys the same logics of affiliation: the economic dimension is the crucial dimension; the family dimension is also very present.

In early 20th-century Russian society, a market economy was just beginning to emerge. Serfdom had been abolished only in 1861; the land belonged to the gentry or was jointly owned by peasant communities; to be sure commerce was booming, and industry was developing fast, but the upcoming bourgeoisie was excluded from the political system. This was a society based on orders, an autocratic system that revolved around the political sphere and not economics.

It was this society that collapsed during the 'bourgeois' revolution of February 1917; but the rise to power of the entrepreneurial class was to be short-lived. The 1917 October Revolution brought in a new social order even more power-centred than the Czarist regime. The end of the market economy was not long in coming; the Party-State became the sole entrepreneur, the only owner, investor, manager, and beneficiary of the entire wealth of the country. The political sphere subsumed the economic (and the professional), the cultural, and all the other spheres of society, including the justice system.

This means that the Western approach to transmission cannot be applied directly to a post-revolutionary society like the Soviet one. In the new order,<sup>3</sup> integration and exclusion, social ascension or degradation are not decided in the economic sphere: these decisions come first and foremost out of the political sphere. This is the key without which it is impossible to arrive at a sociological interpretation of family destinies, of massive exclusion or of individual reinsertions into the new society: they must constantly be thought with reference to political power. Any Western-style analysis of the efforts to transmit family capitals is doomed to fail if it does not take into account this societal phenomenon: the *inversion* of the

values of all (upper-class) families' resources. Not only the former possession of wealth: former possession of a large political capital (at the time of the Czar) also became a considerable handicap; renewing contacts with former relational networks became a perilous exercise, as it might be interpreted as an 'attempt to rebuild a dissolved class'. Even professional skills came under suspicion and took on a negative valence: political loyalty had taken precedence over professional skills.

Women from the former dominant classes, in so far as they were systematically excluded from the political intrigues of the old regime, seem to have come off more easily (Alexandra, Vera's oldest daughter, was unable to complete medical school, but she became a nurse and found a job, in the early 1920s, at the Kremlin hospital). No doubt regarded as politically inoffensive and easier to retrain, they could reaffiliate themselves by marrying into the new society (Alexandra married a Communist official). But those whose husband fell victim to political exclusion went through very hard times, commensurate with their loyalty to their spouse. Whatever skills they may have possessed, the majority were forced to earn a living in a manual occupation, deprived of qualifications, autonomy, or responsibility.

As for the offspring of these families, we have seen the difficulties they faced in finding a place in the new society. The resources, notably culture and relations, their parents had passed on to them could not be converted directly into access to qualified professions, for the societal context and its new rules had undergone a radical change. It is no doubt revealing that those in our corpus who had nevertheless managed to overcome the obstacles had spontaneously chosen the Party route. For them, twenty years after the political exclusion of their parents that had preceded all other exclusions, political reinsertion paved the way for the other forms of reinsertion.

*Translated by Nora Scott*

#### NOTES

1. Pitrim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility* (New York, 1964) (first edn. *Social Mobility*, New York 1927), 143, 466.

2. Pitrim Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution* (New York, 1967) (first edn. 1925), 238–9.
  3. Ibid.
  4. This study was funded from 1991 to 1993 by the Social Sciences department of the French Ministry of Research and Technology, with occasional aid from DGRCSST, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Programme Europe).
  5. These two fragments of family histories, as well as the other even shorter examples, are taken from a corpus of 50 case histories of families conducted since 1991 in Moscow. The methodology, called the method of 'commented and compared social genealogies', consists of constructing case histories of kinship networks; the older members of the network, via their family memories, provide access to the history of their own parents, born at the turn of the century; the inclusion of collaterals makes it possible to observe the histories of parallel and intertwined lines (Daniel Bertaux, 'From Methodological Monopoly to Pluralism in the Sociology of Social Mobility', in Shirley Dex (ed.), *Life and Work History Analyses: Qualitative and Quantitative Developments* (The Sociological Review Monograph Series, 37; London/New York, 1991), 73–92; Daniel Bertaux, 'Social Genealogies Commented and Compared', *Current Sociology/La Sociologie contemporaine*, 43 (2) (1995), special issue, 'The Biographical Method', 70–88. For a large part, the kinship networks explored have been chosen at random, their entry point being a young man or woman chosen from a representative sample of Moscovites born in 1967. It was via one of the grandchildren selected by chance that, for instance, Ludmilla or Lydia, the narrators of the following accounts, were met.
- The study takes in all urban social milieux. It includes of course all of the living generations, even the youngest, which is presently going through a societal crisis comparable in scope to that following 1917. For the purposes of the present paper, we not merely chose only lines which came from the dominant classes of the old regime, but also narrowed their histories to the post-1917 years.
- The information on the Nilaiev family ('Vera's story') was collected by Marina Malysheva; that on the Zemlianin family ('Lydia's story') by Victoria Semenova. I am indebted to them for a number of relevant comments; but I assume full responsibility for the interpretations and hypotheses put forward here.
6. If I have kept the comments following this first story to a minimum, it is not only for lack of space; it is also because the most important has already been said through the way in which the story is told. As one can well imagine, between the information collected in the course of

the interviews and the constructed version that is set out here, there has been a necessary labour of analysis and composition. The analytical work consisted in patiently piecing together, from the fragments of information provided in the course of the interviews, the stories of Vera and her children. To give just one example, the children's birth dates, which situate each child biographically in the historical temporality of Russia, allow one to calculate their respective ages at *each* subsequent historical moment, which adds precious information to that explicitly provided by the person being interviewed: it is important, for instance, to realize that at the time of his father's death Illia was not 12 or 20, but 17. Likewise, the scant information provided by interviewees on housing made it possible to reconstruct the phases of cohabitation or de-cohabitation, which are crucial; once the data has been laid out on the table, it is possible to get a fairly accurate idea of the *family group history*, which was not apparent in our first readings of the interviews.

Thus step by step we can begin to uncover the relationships which plausibly linked the various events or situations recalled. The story line is fleshed out, becomes more complex; events, situations, reactions, and conflicts fall into place. The inevitable blanks are gradually filled in by increasingly plausible inferences (in the present case, one last interview was held to verify a few 'hunches', which turned out to be accurate).

That leaves the story; one becomes aware that it can be told in different ways, all equally true, and equally incomplete. The thrust of the present paper has led me to focus on transmission, which means that I put this account into 'story form' (*'en intrigue'*, to use Paul Ricoeur's expression) in order to bring out the various moments of transmission—here especially the failures. The reader's sociological imagination will have done the rest, spontaneously linking up those parts merely waiting to be connected.

At this point the commentary becomes almost superfluous, since it comes down to repeating explicitly what the reader has already perceived. But it is relevant to point out that this account, which can be read as a simple story that could have been told as it is, actually contains conclusions from an effort of analysis: in a sense it represents a synthesis of this effort (Daniel Bertaux, 'Écrire la sociologie', *Informations sur les sciences sociales*, 19 (1) (Jan. 1979, 7–25).

7. The second story is told here partly in direct speech. This form should be read as a way of making the story more lively but not as a *verbatim* transcription of an interview.

Certainly Lydia is a better storyteller than Ludmilla; and she is talking about things she herself has experienced, while Ludmilla is

reporting what she has heard from her grandmother a thousand times. And yet her interview too is made up of bits and pieces that have had to be pieced together. Although I have stayed as close as I could to Lydia's speech, and especially to its content—which I only grasped after reading the transcript many times—I could not avoid putting it into written form. Oscar Lewis set the example, and felt somewhat guilty about it—see his introduction to *The Children of Sanchez* (New York, 1961)—almost apologizing for having overstepped the rules of scientific procedure (objectivity first) and added the artist's touch to the finished product. But one knows now that the researcher cannot help interfering with the text, if only because of the distance between the oral and the written accounts; between the inevitable form of *oral* discourse, even for a highly literate speaker (unfinished sentences, skipping ahead, going back, parentheses, background constructions, associations of ideas, explanations, assessments), and *written* discourse, which follows much stricter conventions, among which the cardinal rules of linearity and clarity.

Lydia did not say everything I have made her say, then; and yet I have obviously not made anything up, and did not make her say anything she did not say one way or another. Oscar Lewis made his tape-recordings available to his colleagues as proof of his good faith. We too have placed our transcriptions at the disposal of anyone who wishes to consult them; when possible, we also submit the text to the interviewees themselves, as a means of controlling the accuracy of our own interpretations.

8. Sorokin, *Sociology of Revolution*, 244.
9. Pierre Legendre, *L'Inestimable objet de la transmission: Étude sur le principe généalogique en Occident* (Paris, 1985).
10. Daniel Bertaux, 'Révolution et mobilité sociale en Russie soviétique', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, special issue, 'Les Sociétés post-totalitaires', 46 (1994).
11. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).
12. Friedrich August von Hayek, *La Présomption fatale: Les Erreurs du socialisme* (Paris, 1993).
13. Gabor T. Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953* (Chur [Switzerland], 1991).
14. Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, 'Introduction', in Bertaux and Thompson (eds), *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths, and Memories* (International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories, 2; Oxford, 1993).
15. Cf. Nicole Lapierre, *Le Silence de la mémoire: A la recherche des Juifs de Plock* (Paris, 1989).

16. Ronald Fraser *et al.*, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York, 1988).
17. François Dubet, *La Galère: jeunes en survie* (Paris, 1987).
18. Moshe Lewin, *La Formation du système soviétique* (Paris, 1985).
19. See e.g. Peter Blau and Otis D. Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure* (New York, 1967); Robert Erikson and John Goldthorpe, *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies* (Oxford, 1992).
20. Daniel Bertaux, 'Mobilité sociale: l'alternative', *Sociologie et sociétés*, 25 (2) (Fall 1993), 211–22.
21. Charles-Henri Cuin, *Les Sociologues et la mobilité sociale* (Paris, 1993).
22. Cf. Bertaux, 'From Methodological Monopoly to Pluralism'.
23. Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1980).
24. Raymond Boudon, *Education, Opportunity, and Social Inequality* (New York, 1973); Claude Thélot, *Tel père, tel fils?* (Paris, 1983); cf. Cuin, *Les Sociologues*, for an assessment of French and American work.
25. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les Héritiers: Les Étudiants et la culture* (Paris, 1964); and *Reproduction* (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1977) (French first edn. 1970); Bourdieu, *La Distinction*.
26. Robert Castel, 'De l'indigence à l'exclusion, la désaffiliation: Précarité du travail et vulnérabilité relationnelle', in Jacques Donzelot (ed.), *Face à l'exclusion: Le Modèle français* (Paris, 1991), 137–68.
27. In the course of a study on the increasing fragility of the father-child relationship in France, we encountered men 'in free fall': who have lost their job, their family ties, and their home. We also encountered men in precarious situations. This has led us to suggest the concept of *double étayage*, or twin supports—job and family—to characterize the equilibrium, however precarious, which enables an individual, especially male, to 'function well' (Daniel Bertaux and Catherine Delcroix, 'La Fragilisation du rapport père-enfant', report for the Caisse Nationale des Allocations Familiales, 1990; a summary of the results can be read in 'Des pères face au divorce: la fragilisation du lien paternel', *Espaces et familles*, 17, July 1991). Castel's concept of disaffiliation (rather than exclusion) refers to precisely this type of phenomenon; it has the advantage of designating the social content with greater exactitude.