In every village there will arise some miscreant, to establish the most grinding tyranny by calling himself the people.

CAPITALIST MISSIONARIES IN MOSCOW
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the rare opportunity in the shadow of the aborted August coup to discuss the American legal system and economy with Soviet law professors, economists and high-level officials of the Russian Ministry of Justice and Supreme Soviet, plus as many visits with citizen comrades as could be managed.

...history's most sweeping experiment in socialism has been a dramatic failure...

What main themes emerge from these exchanges? On the positive side is the inescapable realization that history's most sweeping experiment in socialism has been a dramatic failure — a cruel hoax on hundreds of millions. Three-quarters of a century of command and control organization has produced a first-class military structure, but almost a Third World social and economic environment.

As we discussed the U.S. government and legal system, relating it to a market economy, our "students" heard the words, but only little of the music. Why?

Russian society never has been free in any sense. Command and control is all it has ever known. The individual has always existed for the state, never the state to preserve an environment of law in which individuals can best achieve their ambitions. Anglo-American principles were neither experienced nor read about.

In such a legal system, the concepts of contract — central to all of Western civilization — as a way for ordering economic and other relations between individuals is largely alien and unfamiliar. So also is that of private property. The state owns just about everything. And markets? Prices? Means of distribution of goods? Costs? All such notions, so common to us, have almost no intellectual content to the Soviet lawyer or citizen.

On more than one occasion, the doctrinaire and indoctrinated listeners equated capitalism with greed. The sin of the system is that little word, "profit." "Service" is the creed of communism: "From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs." Intellects so oriented could not comprehend the declaration: "No enterprise is ever in business for the purpose of making a profit."

To penetrate that mindset, I drew an analogy. "Does one live to eat, or eat to live?" Foreheads of frowns! Again: "Profit is to business what eating is to living." What's that? "Just as eating is essential to living, so also profit is essential to a business enterprise's surviving. Businesses exist to produce goods and services that society wants to consume. They do not exist to make a profit. The more of its goods and services consumers want, the greater its profits. The better its health."

Fewer frowns, but loads of skepticism.

Another example: Since the average Soviet citizen is untutored by any practical experience with private ownership, our listeners recoiled at the observation that "most Americans believe that the pursuit of private interests by individuals produces the best public results."

Not convinced that my observation registered, I offered an expository anecdote from the settlement of the American West — a saga most of the world has heard something about.

"**W**hen land on the frontier was government owned, ranchers would often overgraze. To do otherwise did not pay, for what one rancher left untouched another would consume. Land became barren. But after land was divided and given to ranchers, there was now an economic incentive to manage it as a productive resource for long-term usage." A perfect example of the pursuit of private interests serving a public purpose.

Maybe the story will blossom on reflection.

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Try explaining our concept of federalism or our constitutional separation of powers doctrine to a mind used to five-year plans centrally contrived and executed. The challenge is herculean.

Try painting a picture of a General Motors wounded by foreign competition, or of a once-proud U.S. Steel fighting for its economic health, and doing so to listeners who have had it drummed into them that such corporate giants are masters of the capitalist society.

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Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, what the line of it may be. If he keeps faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation.

- William James

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problems and dilemmas. He laughed in a self-depreciatory way (John has raised self-depreciation to Olympian heights) and mumbled — John does mumble — something about wondering whether there might just somewhere be some interest in bringing these reviews out again. He had found them, upon rereading, well, humph, pretty interesting. He looked at me inquiringly. "Yes," I said, "John, I'd love to read them." A few weeks later the reviews arrived by mail neatly encased in a three-hole cardboard binder. To read them was an education. I urged John to get them back into print. Material of this quality shouldn't lie moldering in the yellowing pages of the *Freeman*. They are too vibrant, too important to be lost.

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Try explaining that our government by and large has historically designed its regulatory machinery to promote competition, to umpire processes and to establish ground rules, rather than to command who can do what, when, where and how. To citizens used only to the latter, the former must be unworkable.

Try explaining how capital markets work in America. From where, and by what methods, is money raised to establish and carry on business? Even more difficult is to convince a Soviet citizen that the techniques work, and that they create wealth in many different ways for a large percentage of America's people.

But a huge amount of communist teaching will have to be unlearned. The starting place is an open mind, and interestingly, our students were mostly young.

Though hard for Soviets to understand, it was encouraging that they were willing listeners. Whether this desire to search beyond their own boundaries and dogma for a better way will take effect was the quintessential question of the program. It is also for the world. We came back with no answer, of course. Hope, and lots of it. But a huge amount of communist teaching will have to be unlearned. The starting place is an open mind, and interestingly, our students were mostly young.

The question of potential success of this new openness was put in Moscow to Konstantin D. Lubenchenko, deputy chairman of the Committee on Legislation and Law of the Supreme Soviet. Lubenchenko is one of the most powerful men in Russia. His views are not encouraging.

The coup, he said, was supported by a large percentage of the population. It was, happily, badly executed. Crime is on the rise; goods are scarce. The economy needs outside help, but the problem is to whom to give it. The same old people are in power, centrally and in the republics. If aid is offered and handed over to the same old factions, it will be "robbed." The population is not working hard enough, and some republics "over-demonstrate," rather than attacking economic problems. The "only way out" is for a new party to be organized, consisting of new leaders, businessmen and ordinary people. How this can occur he said he cannot describe. And "another spasm or coup is certainly possible."

My sense is that the opening of Russian society will continue. Even culturally, there are new vistas. I attended an all-Bach concert at the historical Conservatory and heard only his intensely religious works. As former president of the St. Louis Bach Society, I was surprised to find a sister group — the Moscow Bach Society — in this former communist capital. To hear Bach's theological works was stunning.

Before perestroika, none of this would have happened.

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