

Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, vol. 49, no. 1,
January–February 2011, pp. 3–16.
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ISSN 1061–0405/2011 \$9.50 + 0.00.
DOI 10.2753/RPO1061-0405490100

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Guest Editors' Introduction

Remembering for the Future: Grigorii Sereda in the History of the Kharkov School of Psychology

In this issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, we introduce the scientific legacy of Grigorii Kuz'mich Sereda (1925–95), our colleague and former member of the editorial board of this journal, whose work on a number of occasions has previously been presented to the journal's readership (Laktionov and Sereda, 1993/2008; Sereda, 1984/1985, 1984/1994, 1985/1994, 1994).

Grigorii Sereda, born November 25, 1925, on the outskirts of Kharkov, was a teenager during the time of the Nazi Germany occupation of the European part of the Soviet Union in 1941–43. Not an exception for a young person of his age at the time of occupation, Sereda experienced deportation to Germany, forced labor, and concentration camps. However, according to Sereda, the most difficult years of his entire life were the years upon his repatriation. Following a series of calamities upon his return to the Soviet Union caused by his alleged “disloyalty” to the Soviet Motherland and Communist ideals, it was in 1948 that he finally managed to enter the Department of Philology at Kharkov University. Another

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fifteen years of his undergraduate studies and work as a teacher in a provincial town of Kupyansk near Kharkov had passed, and, in 1963 Sereda was again admitted to the university—this time as a graduate student of P.I. Zinchenko, the head of the Department (*kafedra*) of Psychology. His Candidate of Sciences dissertation “Involuntary Remembering and Learning” was defended in 1967. After the death of Zinchenko in 1969 he took over the Department, and, from 1972, the Program (*otdelenie*) of Psychology. His highest graduate dissertation for the title of Doctor of Sciences “Memory and Activity (Theoretical and Experimental Investigation of Human Memory as a Functional Psychological System)” was defended in Moscow at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union in 1985. In 1990, Sereda was elected a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* (titled *Soviet Psychology* at the time). In pursuit of a vibrant research program and full of plans for the future, Sereda did not reach his seventieth birthday: fifteen years ago, on November 18, 1995, he tragically died in a traffic accident.

This issue of the journal continues our explorations of the line of research on memory and learning conducted in Kharkov by scholars who belonged to what we might refer to as the post–World War II Kharkov school of psychology. These have been presented on a number of occasions in previous issues of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*. Thus, the prewar “Kharkov school of developmental psychology” made its first appearance in English as early as 1979/1980 in this journal (Cole 1980). Translations from Russian and Ukrainian were published in the early 1980s and constituted the first English publication of a collection of post-Vygotskian studies by the circle of students and associates of Vygotsky, typically done under the supervision of A.N. Leontiev and A.V. Zaporozhets in the 1930s (Asnin, 1941/1980, 1941/1981; Bozhovich and Zinchenko, 1941/1980; Galperin, 1941/1980; Khomenko, 1941/1980; Zaporozhets, 1941/1980; Zaporozhets and Lukov, 1941/1980; Zinchenko, 1939/1983). Another collection of these interwar studies of the “Kharkov school” (Sereda, 1994; Valsiner, 1988; Kozulin, 1990) was published quite recently (Leontiev, 1935/2005, 1937/2005; Leontiev and Asnin, 1933/2005; Leontiev and Luria 1937/2005; Zaporozhets, 1941/2002; Zaporozhets and Lukov, 1941/2002; Zinchenko, 1939/2008). These studies, along with the earlier translations, make up a solid foundation for any researcher interested in

the development of Vygotskian psychology by the group of scholars of the “Kharkov school” and a considerable contribution to the ongoing “archival revolution in Vygotskian studies” (Yasnitsky, 2010); for the recent and most thorough historiographical account of the “school,” see our studies (Ivanova 1995, 2002; Yasnitsky, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Yasnitsky and Ferrari, 2008a, 2008b). However, unlike the interwar studies of Vygotskians in Kharkov, the postwar research of the “school” still remains, a “lacuna in our knowledge [that] is clearly our loss” (Wertsch, 1994, p. 107). Thus, the publication of this issue of the journal—along with several others recently—is an effort to fill this gap.

The postwar “Kharkov school” remained in the shadow of socially and intellectually more successful psychological “schools” such as those of Moscow (represented by S.L. Rubinstein, A.R. Luria, S.V. Kravkov, E.N. Sokolov, A.N. Leontiev, A.A. Smirnov, B.M. Teplov, and many other scholars typically affiliated with Moscow State University), Leningrad (now St. Petersburg; the group of scholars originally from the psychoneurological and reflexological “school of Bekhterev” led by individuals who controlled a number of important research, clinical, and educational institutions in Leningrad and Moscow, such as V.N. Myasishchev, B.G. Anan’ev, or, later, B.F. Lomov), or the Georgian school of psychology associated with the name of its founder Dimitri Uznadze (alias Usnadze) and his students, associates, and followers. There are a number of reasons why Kharkov scholars played second fiddle to their metropolitan peers in postwar Soviet psychology. Among these we should mention the gradual shortage of funding and resources in the former capital of Soviet Ukraine after the war.¹ Another factor was the migration of scholars from Kharkov to Moscow in the late 1930s and mid-1940s (F.V. Bassin, M.S. Lebedinskii, P.Ia. Galperin, A.V. Zaporozhets, T.O. Ginevskaya, and L.I. Bozhovich), Leningrad (G.D. Lukov), Kyiv (V.V. Mistyuk), and Lviv (L.I. Kotlyarova) and, in the mid-1950s, the untimely deaths of several leaders of psychologists in Kharkov such as T.I. Titarenko, O.M. Kontsevaya (1909–55), and V.I. Asnin (1904–56) (Anonymous, 1956a, 1956b; Asnin, 1956). Subsequently, in 1957 the Department of Psychology at Kharkov State Pedagogical Institute was closed down and was not restored until 1975. This is how, in the absence of other protagonists, Petr Zinchenko (1903–69) was destined to become the undisputed leader of psychological research in Kharkov from the mid-1950s through the 1960s, at the N.K. Krupskaja Kharkov Institute of Foreign Languages and Kharkov

State University (in 1960 the institute was turned into the Department of Foreign Languages at Kharkov University). Nevertheless, even as “second fiddle,” Kharkov psychology remained an important integrative part of the “ensemble” of Soviet psychologists after World War II, and the achievements of Kharkov psychologists constitute a notable contribution to Soviet and international psychology.

Several works of P.I. Zinchenko were published in the 1960s–80s in English (Smirnov and Zinchenko, 1969; Zinchenko, 1939/1983, 1961/1981) and in French (Zintchenko, 1966). However, the renewed interest in the scientific legacy of P.I. Zinchenko (who should not be confused with his son, a prominent contemporary Russian psychologist and a prolific author, Vladimir P. Zinchenko) is manifested in a series of publications over the past decade in Russian and in English. Among the latter, are two issues of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* (2008, vol. 46, nos. 5 and 6) that presented a number of works of P.I. Zinchenko previously not available to Western readers (Zinchenko, 1939/2008, 1961/2008a, 1961/2008b), and discussed these Zinchenkian studies and their relevance in the context of contemporary psychological and educational research in Eastern Europe and in the West (Craig and Lockhart, 2008; Laktionov and Sereda, 1993/2008; Mace, 2008; McCafferty, 2008; Mescheryakov, 2008; Yasnitsky et al., 2008). Another major showcase for the Zinchenkian tradition in the psychology of remembering and learning was an issue of the Russian journal *Cultural-Historical Psychology* that came out in 2009: some of these materials will be presented to Western readers in a forthcoming issue of this journal. Thus, one might wonder what makes this approach so appealing to contemporary scholars. We tend to believe that two strands in this tradition of research on memory, learning and remembering, are particularly interesting and promising from the standpoint of contemporary educational and psychological research. Both these strands were sponsored and supervised by P.I. Zinchenko under the auspices of the Department of Psychology founded upon his initiative in 1963 at Kharkov State University (renamed Kharkiv National University in 1999) and headed by Zinchenko until his death in 1969. Let us have a closer look at the two avenues of this research.

Petr Zinchenko’s central research topic was memory: the problems of involuntary remembering as a function of human activity, and the interrelations between voluntary and involuntary remembering, and

involuntary remembering as a function of the place of the material to be remembered in the structure of activity constituted his main contribution to psychology and his claim to fame. On the other hand, Zinchenko was far from being an “ivory tower thinker,” and his research cannot be adequately understood unless from the perspective of the researchers’ deep interest in the issues of the interrelation between memory and activity in the naturalistic contexts of children’s play, classroom learning, and professional labor, which has been noted by contemporary authors (Mace, 2008; McCafferty, 2008) and is evidenced in his publications beginning with his earliest works of the 1930s until his mature studies of the 1960s in educational, developmental, and industrial psychology (Smirnov and Zinchenko, 1969; Zinchenko, 1939/2008, 1961/2008b). This interest in practical applications of psychological theory explains his enthusiasm for sponsoring experimental research in classroom settings in the footsteps of Daniil Elkonin and his younger collaborator Vasilii Davydov, who launched the pioneering project of research on learning activity and developmental learning in Moscow in 1958–59. Around this time, Petr Zinchenko finished his doctoral research and defended his dissertation for the title of Doctor of Sciences, which was the second postgraduate and most prestigious scientific degree at that time. His advanced doctoral study was published in Russian in 1961 (Zinchenko, 1961) and reviewed by Daniel Berlyne (1964), several chapters from this book were published in English translation (Zinchenko, 1961/1981, 1961/2008a, 1961/2008b). What might seem to have been the conclusion of lifelong research on involuntary remembering was, in fact, only an intermediate step toward a better understanding of how memory operates in real-life contexts, and what the interrelations are between different memory types, such as voluntary, involuntary, or short-term memory. Therefore, in the early 1960s, Zinchenko was on the lookout for younger collaborators and graduate students who would help him realize his vision of full-scale research of interest to him. Vladimir Vladimirovich Repkin recalls:

As is well known, the main problem that occupied Zinchenko for many years was the problem, already posed by Leontiev, of the relationship between memory and activity. The investigation of [involuntary memory (also known as: incidental memory, incidental learning)] that he carried out from these positions was such an important contribution both to the psychology of memory and to the psychological theory of activity that it gave birth to Kharkov’s [postwar] reputation as an authoritative center of

psychological science. But Zinchenko himself by no means regarded this investigation as complete. He saw his task as being to explain the role of [involuntary memory] in man's real activity, first of all in the learning activity of the school student. It was this that prompted him to seek to introduce systematic experimental teaching in schools. It was precisely with a view to accomplishing this and some other tasks that Zinchenko invited me and my wife Galina Viktorovna to Kharkov. (Repkin 1997/2003b, p. 80)

Thus, by 1963, the research project of Elkonin and Davydov was joined by a group of Kharkov teachers-researchers Galina and Vladimir Repkin, Feliks Bodanskii, and Grigorii Sereda. Playing second fiddle, this group eventually pursued a very important line of original research in Kharkov. By the end of the decade of the 1960s, this group's initiative developed into a full-fledged "action research" project (on action research, see Lewin, 1946), and, led by V.V. Repkin, considerably contributed to the theory and practice of developmental education. Thus, in retrospect, Davydov remarked that as a token of recognition of the Kharkov group's contribution, the well-known psychological-educational "system of Elkonin–Davydov" should also bear the name of Repkin: "the system of Elkonin–Davydov–Repkin" (Davydov, 1996a). A few studies on developmental education and learning activity were occasionally presented in this journal in the 1970s–1980s (Davydov, 1977; Davydov and Andronov, 1979/1981; Davydov and Markova, 1981/1983), as well as in the "twin" periodical *Soviet Education* (Davydov, 1986/1988a, 1986/1988b, 1986/1988c), but of particular interest are several special issues of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* published in 1998 (Davydov, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e; Gromyko and Davydov, 1998), in 2003 (Davydov, Slobodchikov, and Tsukerman, 1992/2003) (on the work of Kharkov educators, see, e.g., Lampert-Shepel, 2003; Repkin, 1997/2003a, 1997/2003b), and in 2007 (Zuckerman, 1998/2007, 2007a, 2007b). The readers of this journal are familiar with the School of the Dialogue of Cultures, which was discussed at length in two issues published in early 2009 (vol. 47, nos. 1 and 2). The School of the Dialogue of Cultures is yet another "action research" educational project, an interesting offshoot of and, at the same time, from around 1986, a rival of the Developmental Education movement. The School of the Dialogue of Cultures was founded by Kharkov educators (Kurganov, 2009; Matusov, 2009a, 2009b; Osetinsky, 2005/2009; Solomadin and Kurganov, 2009)—many of whom were influenced by the work of

the Moscow group of D.B. Elkonin and V.V. Davydov and the Kharkov group of P.I. Zinchenko's former associates headed by V.V. Repkin—yet again, inspired by and in collaboration with educators and philosophers in Moscow, most notably Vladimir Bibler (Matusov, 2009b). In addition, a series of memoirs and personal reminiscences written by the pioneers of Developmental Education and the School of the Dialogue of Cultures comprise rich data for future historiographers of psychology and education in Eastern Europe, specifically, Developmental and Dialogic Education in Moscow and Kharkov (Davydov, 1996a, 1996b; Dusavitskii, 2002; Matusov, 2009b; Repkin, 1997/2003, 1998; Repkina, 2009).

Petr Zinchenko's charisma, academic openness, and gift for diplomacy enabled him to keep together two different yet interrelated strands of research: experimental studies on memory and applied educational research. Yet, after his death in 1969 his larger unified research group split into two. V.V. Repkin, F.G. Bodanskii, and their team of ten to fifteen teachers-researchers continued pursuing their educational studies in close collaboration with Moscow scholars and educators. Research on memory in the context of developmental instruction constituted a notable segment of their research. Of primary interest in this context are studies by G.V. Repkina, A.S. Yachina (conducted at the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s), E.F. Ivanova (1970s), N.V. Repkina, and E.V. Zaika (end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s): for an overview of this research, see the articles "G.K. Sereda's Theory of Memory as a Development of the Ideas of the Zinchenko School," by Elena F. Ivanova (in this issue) and an article by Natal'ia V. Repkina, tentatively titled "Memory in the Learning Activity of the Schoolchild," which is scheduled to be published in a forthcoming issue of this journal. On the other hand, by 1969, G.K. Sereda had finished a series of experimental studies aiming to prove the superiority of involuntary remembering and "incidental learning" over rote learning, memorization by repetition and drill in education, and, appointed as a new head of the Department of Psychology at Kharkov State University after P.I. Zinchenko, focused on fairly idiosyncratic theoretical and experimental research on memory in the Zinchenkian tradition. Notably, in 1972, under Sereda's supervision, on the basis of the Department of Psychology, a Program in Psychology providing students with both undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology was formed at Kharkov University. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s, two relatively isolated groups of Kharkov scholars

were formed and occupied their own niches in the social hierarchy of Soviet psychological research and social practice. In the early 1970s, the group of Repkin and Bodanskii was granted funding from the Moscow Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the Soviet Union and the Institute of the Russian Language of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. This entailed their full-scale research into “learning activity” and involvement in curricula design for the novel educational approach of developmental instruction, specifically, curricula for teaching the Russian language and mathematics in schools. On the other hand, Sereda took over the administrative responsibilities for supervising undergraduate and graduate instruction at the Kharkov State University Program in Psychology and developed his theory of memory. In this way, Sereda directly continued the line of research on memory that was developed in the work of his teacher, P.I. Zinchenko, in Kharkov in the 1930s–1960s, and, for that matter, his teacher’s teacher, A.N. Leontiev, under the supervision of L.S. Vygotsky in Moscow in the 1920s (Leontiev, 1931, 1931/1981). A comprehensive overview of the development of Sereda’s theory throughout the 1970s–1990s can be found in this issue in an article by Elena Ivanova, who is yet another representative of the Kharkov school of psychology with a considerable record of publications in this journal (see Ivanova, 1977, 1994, 2000; Ivanova and Nevoynenaia, 1998; Yasnitsky et al., 2008).

Grigorii Sereda rarely published in the central and most prestigious Russian academic periodicals of the time, such as *Voprosy psikhologii* or *Psikhologicheskii zhurnal*, and a great many of his papers came out in the rare and relatively inaccessible *Herald* (in Russian, *Vestnik*, or, in Ukrainian, *Visnyk*) of Kharkov University, which positions his works largely at the margins of mainstream Soviet psychology. Yet, we argue that by virtue of the novelty and boldness of his theoretical proposal, Sereda’s theory is among the most interesting and original contributions to mainstream psychology of the post-Vygotskian tradition. The problem of accessibility of Sereda’s texts was partly remedied for Russian scholars with the recent republication of several of his most important works in *Dubna Psychological Journal* (the full issue, no. 2, 2009, of the journal is available at www.psyanima.ru/journal/2009/2/index.php). It is hoped that the publication of the translations in the current issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* will similarly fill the gap for the international readership.

Sereda's idea of "remembering for the future" or the "intentional approach" to memory seems to belong to the corpus of those important yet largely forgotten—or misconstrued—ideas of the past that have recently attracted much attention among a considerable number of contemporary authors. These scholars propose to review the history of the past sixty years of the discipline's development in North America and Europe, in search of lost opportunities that will help us avoid the trap of historically blind, atheoretical, fragmented, and reductionist empirical psychology (Clegg, 2009; Toomela and Valsiner, 2010). Specifically, the work of Sereda may make an important contribution to the ongoing effort to build up a theory of future-oriented capacities, for instance, following the proposals of Russian physiologists N.A. Bernstein and P.K. Anokhin (Toomela, 2010). And the future will show the productivity of these ideas of Sereda, born in the mid-1970s within the "Kharkov school" of psychology.

Note

1. Kharkov (in accordance with the Ukrainian spelling of the word, alternatively spelled "Kharkiv") was the first capital of Soviet Ukraine in 1919–34 and also from February 16, through March 10, 1943. In the summer of 1934, the capital of the republic was transferred to Kiev (Kyiv).

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