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The Soviet evolution of marketing thought, 1961–1991: From Marx to marketing

Karen F.A. Fox

Santa Clara University, USA

Irina I. Skorobogatykh

Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Moscow

Olga V. Saginova

Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Moscow

Abstract. *The official Soviet ideology rejected most aspects of marketing, and yet there were marketing specialists in the Soviet Union, mostly in ministries, research institutes, and state enterprises involved with foreign trade. This article focuses on the development of marketing thought in the Soviet Union during the period 1961 to 1991, when the Soviet leadership was striving to increase Soviet exports, to push state enterprises to greater efficiency, and to deliver a higher standard of living. We report on the 1976 founding of the Marketing Section of the USSR Chamber of Commerce, and introduce eight early contributors to marketing thought. With the coming of perestroika and the end of the USSR, several early contributors continued to teach marketing and to publish marketing guides. We tell of the preparation and 1980 publication of the first Soviet edition of Philip Kotler's Marketing Management.*

Key Words ● Boris Soloviev ● Helsinki Accords ● Igor Kretov ● Karl Marx ● Marketing Section of the USSR Chamber of Commerce ● marketing thought ● Nikolai Smeliakov ● Philip Kotler ● Soviet Union

An informed western reader may anticipate that a history of marketing thought in the Soviet Union would indeed be very short. The western image of the Soviet economy featured shortages of shoddy consumer goods and chronic mismatches between what consumers wanted and what state factories supplied. The western



press reported on potatoes rotting in the fields due to a shortage of harvest workers, or rotting in railway boxcars due to inadequate transportation and logistics. And western visitors returning from the Soviet Union told of near-empty store shelves and long shopping queues.

Despite these everyday realities, the official media aimed to convince Soviet citizens that socialism was delivering to them an enviably high standard of living, while capitalism bred poverty, disease, and despair. In fact, for most of the Soviet era – with brief exceptions such as the New Economic Policy after the First World War and *perestroika* from the mid-1980s – many typical practices of modern marketing were ideologically suspect, or even proscribed.

Then where would marketing appear in this Soviet economy that was guided by Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy? For despite their official pronouncements on the evils of marketing activities and with little or no market feedback, the Soviets had to devise and ideologically justify substitute approaches in order to carry out distribution, retailing, pricing, and other functions for domestic consumers. As early as the 1960s, some in the Soviet leadership recognized that their state-owned enterprises had to produce goods that consumers were willing to buy, and they called for reforms including better measurement of domestic demand to improve central planning. By the 1970s foreign trade specialists in key ministries recognized that a sophisticated understanding of capitalist markets and marketing was required if the Soviet Union was to trade its goods with capitalist countries and purchase industrial goods from them. Talented, forward-looking economists were attracted to the study of marketing and its practical application to Soviet foreign trade. With *perestroika* in the mid-1980s, information on modern marketing became more widely available, and its acceptability and application grew and then burgeoned in the post-Soviet 1990s.

Our purpose is to present the significant developments in Soviet-era marketing thought from 1961 to 1991. This examination is both important and timely: the Soviet Union was one of the world's largest countries in population and land mass, and it dominated the economies of its satellite states. Yet few people outside of the Soviet Union were aware of the development of marketing thought during the Soviet period.

Foreign marketing academics, economists, and other social scientists had few opportunities to visit, let alone gather data in, the Soviet Union. Western social scientists often had to rely on official documents; articles in Soviet newspapers, magazines, and journals; and/or interviews with émigrés from the Soviet Union for their information (Bonnell and Breslauer, 2003: 12). For their books on Soviet marketing, Marshall Goldman (1963) and Thomas Greer (1973) used Soviet documents, newspapers and magazines, and brief visits to the Soviet Union in order to describe how the Soviet marketing system was organized and how it functioned. Roger Skurski's (1983) book on Soviet marketing and economic development analysed the functioning of the Soviet distribution system, including warehousing, wholesaling, and retailing. In his analyses Skurski employed quantitative data from Soviet and US sources. Jere Felker (1966) visited the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, conducted interviews, and extensively reviewed Soviet



documents. His purpose was to discover what efforts were being made by the Soviets to incorporate some aspects of a marketing orientation into their system. He discerned a move toward basing production on consumer wants and preferences, which seemed to him to signal a change in official Soviet attitudes (Felker, 1966: 58).

The end of the Soviet Union, the legitimation and expansion of modern marketing practices and marketing education in post-Soviet Russia, and the advent of open contacts between Russian and western researchers have made the present work possible. Our bi-national author team includes two Russian marketing professors, one of whom worked in the Ministry of Trade during the Soviet period. We have sought out and cite here some of the influential early Soviet publications on marketing, and we draw on the limited literature on Soviet marketing, as well as our analyses of marketing dissertation research, marketing textbooks, and marketing faculty preparation in Russia (Danko et al., 2001; Fox et al., 2001; Skorobogatykh et al., 2001).

Our interviews with Boris Soloviev and Igor Kretov have been of special importance. Both were early contributors to Soviet marketing thought and both are still professionally active. They related to us what was going on 'behind the scenes' during the 1961–91 period. Information on the political context of the Kosygin market reforms came from Vitali Vorotnikov. Vorotnikov was a member of the Soviet Politburo from 1983 to 1990, and President of the Russian Federative Republic of the USSR from 1988 to 1990.

The background and context of Soviet marketing

At the beginning of the 20th century Russia was a 'normal' country with a history of extensive and profitable internal and international trade dating back more than a thousand years (Dixon, 1998). Russia's capital, St. Petersburg, impressed visitors with its European architecture, elegant shops, large department stores, and prominent Russian headquarters of multinational firms. Fashionable Russians traveled abroad, followed European tastes in fashion and art, and frequently led European tastes in music. In 1907, wealthy merchants and financiers established Moscow's first school of commerce, where their children could acquire commercial knowledge and learn the most up-to-date practices.

The economy of the vast Russian hinterland of villages, estates, market towns, and provincial centers relied on often-feudal agricultural production and on extraction of natural resources, such as timber, coal, and minerals. In contrast, the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow reflected the accumulating wealth and luxurious lifestyle of the urban elite, as well as the wretched poverty of the poorly-housed majority who worked in factories or served those with the means to hire them.

On seizing power in 1917, the Bolsheviks imposed on the economy their interpretations of Karl Marx's writings. Marx himself had read widely in the literature of his time, and his ideas constantly evolved as he applied them to new situations.



And so, after his death in 1883, it was impossible to discern from his writings what Marx himself would have recommended in specific, practical situations. Nonetheless, Marx's writings on economics, politics, and philosophy were the guiding flame for Lenin and other Soviet leaders. His writings directly influenced their decisions about marketing-related activities as well as most other facets of Soviet life.

Marx considered many aspects of trade and distribution unnecessary and wasteful, believing they did not add value. In line with this thought, Lenin stated that delivering goods to consumers 'through an abyss of small middlemen who also are ignorant of market conditions creates both superfluous shipping and excessive buying' (Lenin, 1947: 36, cited in Felker, 1966: 23). In the 1930s, 'speculation' – selling goods outside of the official distribution channels, usually at a higher price – was made a crime punishable by years of forced labor in the Gulag (Applebaum, 2003: 294). Soviet substitutes had to be found for the rejected distribution methods and business practices, but Marx's writings gave no practical guidance on how distribution, pricing, and other such tasks should be carried out. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were left with no realistic theory or models to guide the transition to a socialist economy (Felker, 1966: 27).

In search of workable solutions, Soviet policy lurched from government expropriation, rationing, and the resulting starvation under 'War Communism' (1918 to 1921), to a free-wheeling entrepreneurial heyday during the New Economic Policy (1921–8), to a forced collectivization and the imposition of a massive system of central planning (starting in 1928). Each zig and zag revealed the inadequacies of Marx's writings – and Lenin's interpretations – as guides to practical action.

Lenin criticized 'consumerism', arguing that capitalist consumer culture cared only about profit and about creating and maintaining markets for 'new' products. As a result, people would feel dissatisfied with their current possessions, throw them out, and buy new things. Yet by the 1930s Stalin was urging Soviet citizens to buy products – including radios, record players, and pianos – that enabled them to live 'cultured' lives. They would thereby become more urban in their tastes, more modern and less backward, and thus better Soviet citizens. Stalin believed that the living standards of the Soviet people should demonstrate to them and to the whole world the superiority of socialism over capitalism. As part of Stalin's push for 'cultured Soviet trade' store managers and clerks were exhorted to improve customer service (Randall, 2000: 429–30). But due to other economic priorities and a lack of market feedback, Soviet enterprises continued to produce consumer goods grossly inadequate in style, quality, and quantity, and efforts to improve distribution and retailing had limited impact.

Marx held that capitalism exploited workers by delivering the surplus value their labor had created into the hands of the capitalist owners. The Bolsheviks declared that this surplus value should be gathered [expropriated] by the State and redistributed to the workers in the form of free education, free medical care, housing, and other benefits. As holder of the people's property, the State also was in charge of distributing this property and production to the people in line with



central planners' judgments about citizens' wants and needs. As it turned out, the State's inability to fulfill this role created enduring problems for production and distribution, and eventually led to the search for improved tools for demand measurement.

In what sense did the Soviet Union 'do marketing' from the 1930s on? While the Soviet Union produced and priced consumer products, distributed and retailed them, and occasionally produced what looked like advertising for them, the decisions about which products to produce, in what quantities, and at what prices was determined almost entirely by central planners rather than consumer preferences and levels of demand. Thus the functions typically associated with consumer marketing were carried out without regard to markets.

In the absence of a market system, practical systems emerged from trial and error, and often diverged from strict ideological orthodoxy. Then ideology would be modified to justify current practices. Ironically, these inconsistencies probably enabled future Soviet marketers to more flexibly pick and choose among divergent views, and to justify their choices as congruent with some version of official ideology.

The emergence, development, and diffusion of marketing thought

The earliest suggestions that some lessons from capitalist marketing could be usefully applied in the Soviet economy came in the 1960s. At this time the term *маркетинг* (which is simply the Cyrillic transliteration of the English word 'marketing') came into limited use. This was a new term to denote a concept that had not existed before in the Soviet Union. However, even some of its advocates still viewed modern marketing through the lenses of Marxism and Leninism. And on occasion some of those who advocated marketing misperceived or misconstrued what they were reading, and other early marketing proponents faced resistance in their efforts to publish and apply what they had learned.

Four principal factors supported the revolution in marketing knowledge and thought that began in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Table 1 summarizes these developments and their most direct impacts. Each factor is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

The Kosygin reforms and the development of research institutes

The development of a field of inquiry tends to occur in conjunction with pressing practical needs, and this was certainly true in the Soviet Union. By the 1960s, with the devastation wrought by the Second World War and massive post-war reconstruction largely behind it, the Soviet leadership had fewer justifications for the country's failure to provide its citizens with an improved standard of living. Nikita Khrushchev was First Secretary of the Communist Party from 1953 and Premier of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964. Khrushchev 'made a strong commitment to improving mass living standards . . . repeatedly promising that per capita con-



Table 1

Factors influencing Soviet marketing thought and practice, 1961–1991

Factor	Impact
Government support, particularly the Kosygin reforms that motivated Soviet enterprises to be profitable	Encouraged interest in improving productivity and profitability, and furthered the development of research institutes to measure demand to improve central planning
The importance of international trade and Soviet signing of the Helsinki Accords on marketing and trade	Justified the creation of the Marketing Section, and publication and limited dissemination of marketing information in the Russian language
Centralized direction of the Soviet economy and the concentration of economists in ministries and research institutes in Moscow	Brought together ‘the best and brightest’ who became interested in new ideas and practical solutions in demand measurement and marketing, and from whom emerged the leaders in Soviet marketing thought
Increased access to marketing publications in foreign languages and in Russian translation	Enabled the diffusion of marketing information within and beyond the Ministry of Foreign Trade, including the publication of translated western marketing articles and books

sumption would soon overtake that of the United States’ (Reid, 2002: 221). Khrushchev’s legitimacy rested on delivering on these promises. His commitment was embodied in the 1961 Communist Party Program which stated:

In the next decade [1961–1970], the Soviet Union, in creating the material and technical basis of communism, will surpass the strongest and richest capitalist country, the USA, in production per head of population; the people’s standard of living . . . will improve substantially, [and] everyone will live comfortably. (Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1961)

To deliver the promised improvements in living standards called for new ideas and programs; and the Soviet leadership recognized the need for changes in the functioning of state enterprises and the economy. By the early 1960s, Marx’s economic theories were being de-emphasized because they had failed to answer the pressing requirements for economic growth and productivity. Felker observed that ‘today there is comparatively little reliance upon Marx and Engels’ traditional methodology of how *in practice* the socialists are to proceed to communism’, and that, with the easing of political coercion after Stalin’s death in 1953, economists could develop ‘sounder guidelines for economic efficiency’ and there was increased government support to ‘improve operations’ (1966: 10–11).

Brezhnev was elected Communist Party General Secretary in 1965 and Alexei Kosygin became head of the Council of Ministers. Kosygin came to his position with extensive industrial management experience. And the reforms he rolled out, beginning in 1965, did strive to incorporate some market-like elements. Kosygin



proposed using ‘commodity-money relations and categories of *khozraschet* [the use of financial tools, including accounting], price, and profit to manage production’ (Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1970). His reforms also included increasing the scientific level of central planning; giving state enterprises greater freedom to engage in buying and selling among themselves, rather than being subject to government directives; and using pricing, profit, and other incentives to encourage productivity and quality improvements. According to Valentin Pavlov (1995: 68), an economist who became prime minister under Gorbachev, the Kosygin reform ‘attempt[ed] to lay the foundations for the gradual and smooth introduction of [a] market economy in the country’. While Kosygin and his associates did not use the word ‘marketing’, the reform did represent a shift in thinking: it suggested that some market-like elements and practices could be usefully implemented within a socialist economy.

Retrospectively, Brezhnev’s administration was considered a period of stagnation and the eponymous Kosygin reforms ultimately failed through flawed logic, unbalanced incentives, and weak implementation. But despite this failing, the Kosygin years brought a new focus on consumer needs, effective management, and the implementation of more market-oriented practices in pricing, productivity, and quality. During this period Soviet economists and planners involved with domestic trade began to acquire practical experience with new economic functions and market mechanisms, including financial incentives and the balance between central planning and local initiative (Vorotnikov, 2004).

Furthermore, the Kosygin incentives encouraged efforts to improve central planning of domestic supply and distribution, which in turn required improved forecasts of supply and demand. Trade-related research institutes were encouraged to undertake projects to improve the accuracy of central planning for domestic markets, by conducting research on consumer demand and by coordinating demand with available supplies of consumer goods. These specialized research institutes applied advanced mathematical and statistical techniques and used what would now be – but were not then – described as marketing research methods. It is important to note that the focus of these efforts was to improve central planning, not to introduce or apply marketing.

The most important of these institutes studying domestic trade issues was VNIKS, the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for Conjuncture and Demand Studies of the USSR Ministry of Trade, which was founded in 1964. Other Soviet institutions studying trade in the Soviet domestic market included the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for Economics and Trade System Organization Studies; the Scientific Research Institute of Consumer Cooperation; the Center of Scientific Labor Organization and Management of the Russian Federation Ministry of Trade; and still other scientific institutions such as *Informelectro*. While the specialists in these institutions thought in terms of planning rather than marketing, several institutions carried out opinion polling; some measured and tracked consumer demand. For instance, VNIKS developed eight consumer panels in different regions of the Soviet Union that were contacted quarterly to gather household expenditure data.



International trade, the Helsinki Accords, and the creation of the marketing section

The Soviet Union of necessity focused on exporting in order to earn hard currency for the purchase abroad of essential industrial equipment. From the 1920s, as part of Stalin's intense drive to finance industrialization, the Soviet Union exported its abundant raw materials, including timber and oil. During the 1930s, even masterpieces from the State Hermitage Museum were auctioned abroad. With industrial development, the Soviet Union was able to export heavy equipment and other high-value products, in addition to raw materials.

By the 1960s official Soviet ideology was clearly useless in guiding effective international trade. With its primary responsibility for selling Soviet raw materials and products to overseas markets, and for purchasing needed goods from abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Trade needed to understand foreign markets, buying behavior, and marketing as carried out in capitalist countries. The ministry thus became fertile ground for new marketing ideas and practices.

VNIKI, the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Trade, was founded in 1947. It was charged to carry out research relevant to foreign trade and foreign markets, and to assist in Soviet foreign trade efforts. By the 1960s, in order to assist Soviet export organizations to be more competitive, VNIKI began actively to promote knowledge of marketing among foreign trade experts. They did this through the translation and publication of articles originally published in foreign languages, and through other publications on methods of consumer, product, and market research for foreign markets. VNIKI's publications included the *Bulletin of International Commercial Information*.

In addition, institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Trade provided academic instruction to staff and others on marketing topics deemed relevant to foreign trade. They – and all other Soviet university students from 1960 to 1991 – also took mandatory courses in Marxist-Leninist political economy that incorporated criticism of capitalist marketing, under the heading of 'critiques of bourgeois economic theories'. Perhaps juxtaposing practical lessons on marketing with instruction on the evils of marketing prepared these students well for the contradictions they would face in their professional careers.

Through the 1970s, marketing as a coordinated system of business activities was used almost exclusively by Soviet foreign trade organizations. While necessary for foreign trade, advertising and product promotion were virtually unknown to Soviet domestic enterprises; or if known, these tools were considered to be useless as well as ideologically incorrect in a planned economy, where the correct quantity of goods should be produced to match existing consumer demand. But Soviet foreign trade organizations recognized that they needed to use these and other marketing tools in order to sell competitively to foreign markets. In fact, a special advertising agency *Rostorgreklama* ('Russian Product Advertising', later renamed *Sovero*), had already been established inside the State Committee for Foreign Economic Activities to promote Soviet products abroad.

The greatest impetus for disseminating modern marketing thought and practice came from an unanticipated direction: an international meeting in Helsinki,



Finland, in 1975. The Soviet Union was one of over four dozen countries to participate in the 1975 meetings which concluded with the signing of the Helsinki Accords. Best known for their forceful statements on human rights, the Helsinki Accords energized dissidents in the Soviet Union as well as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to openly protest human rights failures by their own governments, and to create national movements that eventually succeeded in overthrowing Soviet-dominated governments.

A far lesser-known part of the Helsinki Accords addressed the sphere of trade. In a 164-word section of the Accords entitled 'Marketing', the signatory countries agreed that expansion of international trade was an important mutual goal, and that there should be 'international cooperation in the field of trade promotion, including marketing'. To do this, exporters should strive to improve their performance by 'develop[ing] further the knowledge and techniques required for effective marketing'. The section further urged that signatories should

encourage the improvement of conditions for the implementation of measures to promote trade and to satisfy the needs of users in respect of imported products, in particular through market research and advertising measures as well as, where useful, the establishment of supply facilities, the furnishing of spare parts, the functioning of after sales services, and the training of the necessary local technical personnel. (Helsinki Accords, 1975, Basket II, 'Marketing', in Bloed, 1993: 160–1)

Leonid Brezhnev, Communist Party General Secretary, requested economist Nikolai Smeliakov, the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, and other Soviet experts to review the documents on trade and marketing. These advisors approved and recommended these provisions to Brezhnev for his signature. There is unfortunately no record of what Smeliakov or other Soviet economic experts actually thought at this time. But we can infer from Smeliakov's subsequent actions upon returning to Moscow that he fully understood that the signed agreements would help him justify the promotion of contemporary marketing ideas in the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev's signing of the Helsinki Accords opened the way for Smeliakov's creation of the Marketing Section to study and promote marketing. As a signatory to the Helsinki Accords, the Soviet Union had a new rationale for catching up with world practices regarding trade. It logically followed that Soviet specialists involved with foreign trade would need to learn world-class marketing in order to be competitive, and thus would need access to more, and more up-to-date, information about marketing as it was practiced in capitalist countries. Nikolai Smeliakov took advantage of this logic to encourage his most innovative colleagues to create a 'marketing section' within the USSR Chamber of Commerce, and the first organizational meeting was held on 17 February 1976 (All-Russian Academy of Foreign Trade, 2001: unnumbered first page).

The Marketing Section brought together ministry and research institute professionals and interested people from state enterprises to advocate for the idea of marketing, and to compile and disseminate marketing information to the professional community. The Marketing Section aimed to help Soviet export and



Table 2

Founding Members of the Board of the Marketing Section, 1976

Name	Position on the Board	Professional position
Piotr Stepanovich Zavialov	Chairman	Section Head, VNIKI
Vladlen Sergeevich Petrov	Deputy Chairman	Head, Department of International Relations of the USSR Chamber of Commerce
Boris Alexandrovich Soloviev	Deputy Chairman	Deputy Director, VNIKS
Georgi Georgievich Abramishvili	Deputy Chairman	Docent (Associate Professor), Moscow State University of International Relations
Vladislav Illich Galtsev	Member	Expert at <i>Vneshtorgreklama</i>
Yuri Georgievich Kremnev	Member	Expert at the Main Engineering and Technical Department of Ministry of Foreign Trade
Igor Ivanovich Kretov	Member	Expert at <i>Energomashexport</i>
Efalia Dmitrievna Kurtova	Member	Deputy Director, Scientific and Research Institute for Light Industry
Piotr Sergeevich Sergeev	Member	Head, Pricing Department of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations
Boris Alexandrovich Khrantsov	Scientific Secretary of the Marketing Section	Consultant to the USSR Chamber of Commerce

foreign trade organizations to employ marketing; to improve production quality and new product development for foreign trade and export; and to improve their research on foreign markets and consumer demand.

The Marketing Section Board included Georgi Abramishvili, Igor Kretov, Piotr Zavialov, and other foreign trade specialists; and also Boris Soloviev, a specialist involved with internal trade. The names and positions of the founding board members appear in Table 2. The Marketing Section membership included individual members as well as enterprise and organization members. Virtually all of the members came from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and from institutes and export enterprises involved in foreign trade. Marketing Section members all had some experience in marketing, and were among the first in the Soviet Union to author publications on marketing issues. Nine working groups each focused on a particular area such as marketing research, pricing, or advertising.

The creation of the Marketing Section launched marketing as a sphere of theoretical and practical studies in the Soviet Union, even though marketing-related scientific research and dissertations began to be published and presented at academic conferences only in the mid-1980s. The Marketing Section focused



on introducing fresh and progressive marketing ideas into Soviet foreign trade organizations. The Marketing Section organized conferences within the Soviet Union, and sent delegations to conferences abroad. But the most influential of the section's activities was the collection and periodic publication of academic and applied articles on aspects of marketing, listed in Table 3 (Marketing Section, 1977–90). In the absence of other Russian-language publications on marketing, these 18 booklets became the 'first textbooks' for Soviet scholars and foreign trade specialists who recognized the relevance of marketing in their work. Each booklet contained carefully selected articles related to a specific marketing topic. For example, Issue #5 consisted of articles on advertising in the system of marketing by such leading Soviet scholar-advocates of marketing as Piotr Zavialov, V.E. Demidov, and Igor Kretov. The booklet also included an article by *Vneshtorgreklama* ['Foreign Trade Advertising'] executive V.I. Galtzev, and examples of actual advertisements and other marketing communications – practical applications of marketing tools which were unfamiliar to most readers at that time.

The emergence of Soviet marketing pioneers

The presence of Soviet foreign trade-related ministries and the development of related research institutions in Moscow brought together the brightest and best trained specialists, most of them from applied economics and mathematical economics. Together they faced a variety of practical challenges in the Soviet economy and foreign trade. They also had opportunities to investigate new areas of inquiry, further energized by the Marketing Section from its beginning in 1976. From this talent pool emerged many of the contributors to Soviet marketing thought.

Eight early contributors to Soviet marketing thought are presented in Table 4, in alphabetical order: Georgi Abramishvili, Ivan Korzhenevski, Igor Kretov, Felix Krutikov, Nikolai Smeliakov, Boris Soloviev, Leonid Stolmov, and Piotr Zavialov. Their names and much of the information about these men come from interviews with Igor Kretov and Boris Soloviev (2004), and from biographical sketches in Marketing Section booklets. All but Korzhenevski and Krutikov were members of the Marketing Section. Korzhenevski, the oldest of the eight, spent his professional career far from Moscow, in Kiev; Krutikov most likely did not join because his specialty was domestic trade. These eight men deserve to be remembered for their part in preserving, extending, and disseminating marketing knowledge in the Soviet Union. Many were active authors whose books and articles can be found in major research libraries in Russia today. Yet for most of them, this is the first historical account – in any language – of their contributions to Soviet-era marketing thought.

From these eight contributors, we now focus on three: Nikolai Smeliakov (now deceased), who played a key role in introducing and diffusing marketing ideas, and Boris Soloviev and Igor Kretov who are still professionally active in marketing and marketing education.



Table 3

Booklets Published by the Marketing Section, 1977–1990, with titles and authors of selected articles, published under the series title *Marketing Teoriia, Metodologiia, Praktika*. Moscow: Torgovo-Promyshlennaia Palata SSSR

1. **Problems of modern marketing** (Issue 1, 1977)
Kostiukhin, D. Marketing: Purposes, functions, and organization
Alexandrova, D. Integrated market research
Galtsev, V. Advertising in marketing
Abramishvili, G. Social aspects in marketing. How bourgeois economists see marketing in social terms
Soloviev, B. Marketing and integrated economic program for domestic market under socialism
Kretov, I. Why the Foreign Trade Staff has to learn marketing principles
2. **Problems of increasing quality and competitiveness of export products and marketing** (Issue 2, 1978)
Materials of the 25th Congress of the Communist Party (some materials devoted to problems of increasing the competitiveness of export products)
Authors: Burenin, V., Nikhonov, P. et al.
3. **Pricing policy in the marketing system** (Issue 3, 1980)
Shamrai, Y. Pricing principles in modern marketing
Remizov, D. Modern concepts of analysis and forecasting prices in modern marketing
Chekai, V. Research project in the State Committee on External Economic Relations about methodology of using principles of modern marketing in the socialist economy
4. **Problems of sales management in socialist economy and marketing** (Issue 4, 1981)
Abramishvili, G. Efficiency of management public production in socialism and marketing
Bialecki, K. Marketing in the national economy of the Polish Republic
Soloviev, B. The main approaches to using elements of modern marketing in the plan-based economy
Zavialov, P. Approaches to increasing the effectiveness of the development of economic relations with capitalist countries
5. **Advertising in the marketing system** (Issue 5, 1982)
Zavialov, P. Problems of using marketing in a plan-based economy
Abramishvili, G. Communication in marketing strategy
Kretov, I. Linking global, regional and national elements of advertising in export marketing
Galtsev, V. Public response to advertising
6. **New products in marketing strategy** (Issue 6, 1983)
Zavialov, P. New products in the market strategy of capitalist production
Kretov, I. Organizational problems of new product development
Soloviev, B. Problems of production and sales of new products in marketing
7. **Forecasting of export marketing** (Issue 7, 1984)
Shagalov, G. Economic and mathematical modeling for forecasting commodity markets and development of foreign trade
Zshuchkov, V. Short-term forecast for raw materials in textile industry as a system of related products
8. **Scientific and methodological basis of system modeling of export marketing** (Issue 8, 1984)
(No information about authors)

continues



Table 3 (cont.)

- 9. Information systems and research of foreign markets** (Issue 9, 1985)
Kretov, I. Information in marketing research for decision making
Usoltsev, V. The European Society of Public Opinion and Marketing Research
Hefedov, V. Principles of collecting and analyzing data about internal market of consumer products
 - 10. Organizational and economic problems of management and marketing** (Issue 10, 1985)
Krasilnikov, S. Economic pivots and stimulus in the management of product quality
Korliugova, Y. Analytical methods and efficiency of management of external economic relation
Goriachev, A., and Korliugova, Y. Problems of market segmentation in the marketing concept
 - 11. Socialist economic mechanism: exchange of experience** (Issue 11, 1986)
(No information about authors)
 - 12. Marketing and problems of the development of foreign trade management** (Issue 12, Part 1, 1987)
Zavialov, P. Marketing as a factor for development of effectiveness of external economic relations for socialist countries
Usoltsev, V. Problems of using elements and methods of marketing in the socialist economy
 - 13. Marketing and problems of the development of foreign trade management** (Issue 12, Part 2, 1987)
Gerchikova, I. Marketing in the management of capitalist companies
Simanovskaia, M. Marketing as a form of monopolistic regulation of the market
Yukaeva, V. Complex research of consumer demand: problems and decisions
 - 14. Science and technology progress and marketing** (Issue 14, 1987)
Soloviev, B. Marketing in the internal trade in the USSR
Kretov, I. Experience of the new product development of heavy machinery in co-operation with western companies
 - 15. Problems of competitiveness of export products and marketing (Methodological aspects)** (Issue 15, 1988)
Goriachev, A. Competitiveness, marketing, information
Matveiev, A. Some aspects of the issue of competitiveness of household appliances
 - 16. Information, production, marketing** (Issue 16, 1988)
Kotin, L., Novokreschenov, V., Ponomarev, M. and Pribylov, Y. Information resources of foreign trade during *perestroika* in the system of external economic relations management
Ponomarev, M., and Khlebnikov, V. Using economic and mathematical methods and electronic machines [computers] in data analysis for marketing decision making
 - 17. Marketing of services** (Issue 17, 1988)
Lomakina, O. Marketing in the sphere of services
Nemoliaeva, M. Consumer demand research for tourist services and product development related to demand
 - 18. Market research: experience and prospects** (Issue 18, 1990)
Savinov, Y. Current problems of export development for machinery and tools
Yermolov, M. Methods of estimating industry competitiveness
Bolshakov, V., Tcherny, A., and Samokhvalov, E. Marketing research and computer programming
-

Table 4



Early contributors to Soviet marketing thought

Name and dates	Education, background, positions	Contribution to marketing thought
Georgi G. Abramishvili (1938–1995) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educated at Moscow State University • Doctorate (<i>kandidatskaya</i>) in political economy (Marxism-Leninism) • Professor at the prestigious Moscow Institute of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author of first Soviet dissertation on marketing: 'Marketing in Foreign Trade' published in 1973 • Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Marketing Section • Researched marketing concepts to apply to planned economies • Editor of first Soviet edition of Kotler's <i>Marketing Management</i> published in 1980, and editor of seventeen Soviet marketing publications • Author of the 1984 book <i>Problems of International Marketing</i> [translated title]. Moscow: International Relations Publishing House. 223 pp.
Ivan Korzhenevski (1902?–1990s)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering background. • Worked at the Kiev Research Institute of Trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributed to research and forecasting of consumer demand • Strongly criticized by Soviet political economists, who claimed that only the volume of production could influence demand, and that demand could not depend on price, since pricing was the responsibility of the State Committee on Prices, which calculated all the costs of production and made price lists for all Soviet enterprises • Author of the 1974 book <i>Consumer Demand</i> [translated title]. Moscow: <i>Ekonomika</i> Publishing House.
Igor Kretov (1932–present) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University education in linguistics, including English, French, and German. • Doctoral degree in economics • Founder and currently (since 1991) Head of the Marketing Department at the Academy of Foreign Trade, Moscow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Board of the Marketing Section • One of five translators of Kotler's <i>Marketing Management</i> into Russian, published 1980 • From 1990 has served on the national board that created Russian educational programs and standards for diplomas in marketing, based at the University of the Economics of Trade in Moscow • Author of the 1993 book <i>Market Segmentation and Positioning</i> [translated title]. Moscow: Jurist Publishing House.
Felix A. Krutikov (1927?–1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctorate in economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authored first doctoral dissertation in the Soviet Union on analysis of consumer demand, 'Measurement and Estimation of Consumer Demand,' at VNIIEK in 1964 • Created a multifactor model for consumer demand analysis

continues



Table 4 (cont.)

Name and dates	Education, background, positions	Contribution to marketing thought
Nikolai N. Smeliakov (1911–1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University education in engineering • Head of Soviet Foreign Trade Mission in the United States (New York), 1959–1960 • Deputy Minister of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Trade, 1957–1986 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author of the 1969 best-selling book <i>Delovaya Amerika</i> [<i>Business in America</i>]. • Initiated the preparation and translation of first compilation of Western marketing articles, published in 1974 • Advisor to Brezhnev at the Helsinki conference, 1975 • Founder of the Marketing Section
Boris A. Soloviev (1934–present)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduated from Leningrad Institute of Soviet Economy in 1964. • Doctorate (<i>kandidatskaya</i>) in applied economics from VNIIEK in 1968, with dissertation on methods of demand measurement for durable goods • Doctoral dissertation (<i>doktorskaya</i>) on 'General Principles of Demand for Durable Goods in the USSR' in 1984 • Deputy Director for Research at VNIIEK, from 1966 to 1985 • Founder (and still Head) of the Marketing Department at Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Moscow since 1990 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Marketing Section • Systematized marketing knowledge and marketing terminology in Russian • Author of books, textbooks, and articles on marketing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Principles of Marketing</i> [textbook for Plekhanov students]. Moscow: Plekhanov Publishing House, 1993. – <i>Marketing Management. Textbook for Managers</i>. Moscow. Infra-M Publishing House, 1997.
Leonid F. Stolmov (1924–1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral studies in Lvov, USSR (now Ukraine) • Worked at the Scientific and Research Institute for the Study of Demand in Co-operative Trade during the 1970s • Vice Rector, Moscow Commercial Institute, the educational institute for co-operative trade, during the 1980s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Marketing Section • His 1991 book <i>Rynkovedenie</i> [<i>Marketing Research</i>]. Moscow: Progress Publishing House, was the main source in Russian on how to conduct market and consumer research.
Piotr S. Zavalov (1927–1995)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educated at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO) • Doctorate in international economics. Dissertation on 'Cooperation in International Markets' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Chairman of the Marketing Section • Author of Marketing Section publications • Co-author with Demidov, V. E. (1991) <i>Formula Uspekha: Marketing</i> [translated title <i>Marketing: Formula for Success</i>]. Moscow: International Relations Publishing House.

Note: *Dates in italics were obtained from Boris Soloviev and could not be verified from other sources.



Nikolai Smeliakov Nikolai Smeliakov (1911–95), already mentioned as the founder of the Marketing Section, stands out as a pioneer in the development and diffusion of marketing in the Soviet Union. After graduating from the Moscow Institute for Machinery before the Second World War, he started work in a machinery plant in Kolomna, near Moscow, and worked his way up from engineer to director. In 1959 he visited the United States as the head of the Soviet trade delegation. On his return, he wrote *Delovaya Amerika* [*Business in America: Notes of an Engineer*] (1967). In this book he related his day-to-day observations of how American businesses operated, and showed real enthusiasm for how business was conducted in the United States. For instance, Smeliakov observed the progress of a construction project from his New York apartment window, and the concrete trucks making their deliveries to the site. He noted with amazement that the wheels of these trucks were hosed down before leaving the construction site, in order to keep the streets clean. Such attention to detail had never occurred to Smeliakov. Similarly, his Soviet readers were amazed to read about this and other specifics of American business practices.

The book was a phenomenal success and went through several printings. It was a best-seller and was read by 'ordinary' Soviet citizens as well as by specialists. Soviet specialists were greatly influenced by it, as it was the first detailed description in Russian of the western style of doing business in various fields, including construction, manufacturing, and retailing. The book also was a clear challenge to Soviet approaches. According to Kretov (2004), this book also brought Smeliakov 'a lot of problems' from *Glavlit*, the central censorship office that operated under KGB auspices. *Glavlit* was powerful because it was well known that its directives were issued directly from the Central Committee of the Party. Smeliakov was accused of promoting American business and the American way of life. Of course these 'charges' were true, even though Smeliakov was writing as an observer, not as an agitator. Fortunately for himself and for the subsequent development of Soviet marketing, Smeliakov was able to get past the criticism and the matter died down within a year. Yet Smeliakov's stay in the United States had a lasting influence on him: thereafter he became a proponent of the business approaches and practices he had observed, including marketing and advertising.

From 1959 to 1986 Smeliakov was Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade of the Soviet Union, responsible for the study and collection of information on foreign markets. In carrying out this responsibility, he directed his staff to find information about marketing in foreign publications, translate this information into Russian, and publish it in the *Bulletin of Foreign Commercial Information*. In the early 1970s, Smeliakov encouraged the preparation of a book containing articles on marketing that were selected from United States and British publications and translated into Russian. This book, entitled *Marketing* (Kostyukhin, 1974), was unique in two respects: it was the first book ever published in the Soviet Union with the word 'marketing' in its title; and it included for the first time a 44-page 'dictionary of marketing terms', that is, English-language marketing terms translated and defined in Russian. (A bizarre feature of this book is that the names of the authors of the original articles are not included, due to the absence of copy-



right permission (Soloviev, 2004) yet the references and footnotes from the original articles are meticulously complete.) While Smeliakov was instrumental in founding the Marketing Section in 1976, his government position as Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade precluded him from playing an active management role in the organization.

Boris Soloviev Boris Soloviev (1934–) first became interested in consumer demand as a student of applied economics at the Leningrad Institute of Soviet Trade. In fact, he wrote his graduation thesis on consumer demand, completing in-store interviews with 100 consumers on what they were looking for in a sewing machine purchase. After graduation, Soloviev was invited by Krutikov to come to Moscow to work at VNIKS. There he completed his doctorate in 1968 and that is where he remained for the next 19 years, first as an analyst and eventually as deputy director responsible for research projects that included consumer panel research. Soloviev was a very active member of the Marketing Section and as such he influenced the development of standard translations of marketing terms into Russian. The role of refining and standardizing scientific terminology is highly revered by Russian scholars. Soloviev recalled that this was a difficult but interesting task that involved many discussions about how best to translate and adapt terminology.

Soloviev became chair of the Department of 'Economy of Trade' at Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics in 1985. Over the following six years the name of the department changed twice, first to 'Marketing and Trade' and then simply to 'Marketing'. In 1994 Soloviev founded Plekhanov's Marketing Institute, which in its first decade prepared and graduated over 1000 marketing specialists to work in the Russian market. He helped shape the Russian educational standards in marketing that are now applied nationwide. Recognizing that only one or two of the existing faculty at Plekhanov Academy had any experience teaching marketing, and that most faculty had never taken a formal academic course in marketing, from 1990 to 2000 Soloviev conducted a series of bi-weekly seminars for all the marketing professors at Plekhanov Academy. Topics included all aspects of marketing and the teaching of marketing courses. These seminars extended his role as a leader in marketing thought to younger colleagues.

Soloviev, still vital and professionally active in his 70s, said he was always interested in whatever was 'new', for he had very early recognized that central planning systems did not work (2004). Speaking to a seminar of Moscow marketing professors in June 2004, Soloviev was clearly aware of modern currents in marketing thought, referring to the views of the Scandinavian School on relationship marketing, and summarizing past, present, and future directions in marketing. In 1995 he traveled to the United States for the first time and met Philip Kotler.

Igor Kretov Igor Kretov (1931–) had a background in both linguistics and economics. He first graduated from the Moscow Linguistics University as a specialist in translating from German, English, and French into Russian. Then he took further studies and completed his doctorate at the All-Russian Academy of External Trade, an academy that trained specialists for Soviet foreign trade and



export organizations. With this combination of languages and knowledge of trade economics, Kretov worked in foreign trade. He traveled abroad in connection with his work, where he was exposed to new marketing ideas. He worked with Nikolai Smeliakov and was one of the founding members of the Marketing Section. Kretov authored several articles and books about marketing in Soviet export activities. With his marketing background and knowledge of English, he was one of five translators of Philip Kotler's book *Marketing Management*, published in 1980. In 1991 Kretov became head of the Marketing Department at the All-Russian Academy of Foreign Trade and continues to teach there. He currently serves on the Educational and Methodological Board which develops curriculum guides and educational standards in marketing nationwide. His particular interests are international marketing and business-to-business marketing.

Wider access to marketing publications and publication of Kotler's *Marketing Management*

In the early 1980s, articles and monographs debating the possibility and justifiability of using marketing tools within the Soviet domestic market first appeared. The openness with which points of view were expressed was refreshing, despite the Party-line bows to official ideology. An example of the latter is this boxed announcement of a forthcoming booklet [the off-putting title of which, in English translation, would be 'In the Cobweb of Marketing'] by A. P. Dolgorukov and I.F. Baryshnikov 'to be published in 1982':

The Publishing House of Political Literature [*Polizdat*] has issued a booklet which, in an accessible form, writes about the essence, goals, and socioeconomic consequences of the monopolies' marketing activities. Making wide use of factual data, the authors convincingly demonstrate how the ample arsenal of marketing tools and methods is used to incite excessive irrational needs, to implant a consumerist psychology, and to manipulate consumers' behavior. While pointing out the inability of marketing to resolve the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, the authors emphasize that marketing has many positive elements which objectively reflect the modern type of relations between production and consumption and which can be used in a planned economy. (Marketing Section, 1982, Issue No. 5 in Table 3)

The diffusion of modern marketing beyond the Moscow institutes and ministries was accelerated by the 1980 publication of the first western marketing textbook in the Soviet Union. The first Soviet edition of Philip Kotler's *Marketing Management* was greatly abridged and editorial admonitions warned readers to beware of following the book's advice. Despite the 'warnings', the first and only printing – 12,000 copies – sold out quickly. The justification for publishing Kotler's book appears in the editor's preface, and reflects the trends we have noted: the call for more effective central planning, greater attention to productivity, and enhancement of quality of life:

Among economic issues of the development of our country in the present conditions is the modernization of planning systems, and the organization and management of all the modern sectors of business. This task is part of the long-term plan of the Communist Party to improve the material and cultural life of the Soviet people. (Abramishvili in Kotler, 1980: 7)



Unnoticed by Soviet readers, the Russian version was 223 pages long, compared to the 529 pages of the original American version (Kotler, 1976). While the Russian title page does note – in small print – that this is a ‘shortened version’, the editor’s preface makes no mention that entire chapters were omitted. According to Kretov (2004), Georgi Abramishvili, the book’s editor, and Piotr Zavalov presented Kotler with a copy of the Soviet edition of his book at a 1982 conference in New Delhi. Kotler mentioned to them that the book seemed much shorter than the original, but Kotler did not know what content had been cut. Nearly two decades later, Kotler said that he always assumed that the Soviet editor had omitted those chapters that were deemed to be ‘not relevant’ to Soviet readers, and he presumed that sales management and international marketing had in fact been included (2000, personal communication). Kotler was surprised to learn, from us, in 2004 that these topics had in fact been omitted, not included. A side-by-side comparison of the Soviet and American editions revealed that the omitted chapters were on market segmentation and targeting; product, brand, and new-product strategy; pricing and channel decisions; sales force decisions; and international marketing (Fox et al., 2004). A western marketer would of course be amazed to find marketing presented minus segmentation and most of the marketing mix, while Soviet readers were unaware that they were getting anything but a comprehensive introduction to marketing as it was done in capitalist countries.

Georgi Abramishvili, the book’s editor, wrote the preface and also added footnotes to the text, to orient the Soviet reader to new content or to present critical comments on it. Some of Abramishvili’s commentary is problematic and even baffling. For example, in his preface he states:

Western economists try to introduce different methods to overcome economic crises. They do not understand that traditional marketing theory aims to stimulate consumer demand rather than to rationalize consumption. [Note: ‘Rationalize consumption’ in Soviet parlance meant that the level of consumer demand would match the available supply of goods.] . . . Kotler ascribes to marketing a universal character, saying that it can be used by commercial and non-commercial organizations. We cannot agree with this. Were it so, customers would have their own system of marketing and become equal members of the economic process. Therefore we can criticize the idea that marketing is a market approach to management. Kotler tries to equate the marketing of capitalist enterprises with their tools for influencing consumers and their buying behavior, when consumers may not have enough accurate information about the product to make a choice. (Abramishvili, preface to Kotler, 1980: 13–14)

The question naturally arises: Did Abramishvili understand what he was reading, or were there pressures on him to write in a certain way? Kretov (who was one of the book’s translators and a colleague of Abramishvili) and Soloviev were convinced that Abramishvili had a full understanding of the text and did not believe what he wrote in the preface and in his editorial footnotes (Kretov, 2004; Soloviev, 2004). Abramishvili was fluent in English and through his employment he had full access to western marketing books and articles; and as early as 1974 he was authoring books with the then-troublesome word ‘marketing’ in their titles. There is no doubt that Abramishvili was well informed about marketing. Therefore,



actual and potential censorship determined not only what Abramishvili left out, but also which editorial comments he added in order to clear the censors and make the book acceptable for publication.

According to Kretov (2004), ultimate approval to include specific chapters of Kotler's book came from *Glavlit*, which even determined which parts of included chapters were to be omitted. All publishing houses in the Soviet Union had internal censors working for *Glavlit*, responsible for pre-publication censorship of all publications, including translated publications. (Some foreign books which did not pass full censorship were allowed to be imported or printed in Russian translations, but then copies were distributed only to a list of specialists and/or kept in special library reading rooms with restricted access.) Thus the final length of the book was determined by official censorship of the contents, and not due to editorial considerations.

It bears repeating that, despite the significant content omissions and the sometimes bizarre editorial comments, the Soviet edition of Kotler's *Marketing Management* was the *first* western marketing textbook to be published in the Soviet Union, and also the *only* western marketing textbook in the Russian language available in the Soviet Union until 1990.

From *Perestroika* to 1991 and beyond: marketing in the ascendance

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev promulgated his policy of *perestroika* ('restructuring') which created limited new opportunities for Soviet citizens to engage in private enterprises. Foreign and new Soviet publications on previously forbidden topics became available. Economics faculties began to teach courses in mainstream economics and marketing. To ambitious university students studying marketing in the early 1990s, the names Marx and Lenin and the concept of a 'planned economy' were as irrelevant as for their contemporaries in the West.

Specialists who had worked in Soviet foreign trade organizations had accumulated considerable experience in practical marketing and advertising which they were able to put to commercial use. For example, Alexander Repiev, a translator for copywriters at *Vneshtorgreklama* [the official advertising agency for foreign trade] in the 1960s, became head of Xerox's national office in Moscow in 1989, and later started a school of marketing and advertising, as well as a consulting agency. Other Russian university graduates found employment in multi-national firms as well as in Russian companies, some of which are now traded on the New York Stock Exchange and offer a portfolio of successful national brands.

New opportunities during and after *perestroika* increased the demand for formal business study. To meet this demand, the number of marketing courses offered quickly outstripped the supply of qualified – or semi-qualified – instructors to teach them. Many of the new marketing instructors were drawn from linguistics (because they knew foreign languages and could read foreign books on marketing); from applied economics (because they had some practical experience in trade, research, and quantitative methods); and from political economy, which meant they had been active members of the Communist Party and had taught the



required courses in Marxism-Leninism. With the change of economic systems, the political economists needed to switch to new areas of study that were in demand – such as marketing (Fox et al., 2001). Training opportunities offered in Russia and abroad helped many faculty to make the transition to teaching marketing.

New forms of business required a better understanding of business processes and created wide demand for books in all areas of business, including marketing. In 1990, a different Kotler book, *Marketing Essentials*, was published in Russian translation as *Osnovy Marketinga* (Kotler, 1990), and went through many printings. The first full Russian edition of Kotler's *Marketing Management* was published in Moscow only in 1998, a translation of the American ninth edition. (Remarkably, the Russian translation of the 10th American edition appeared just two years later in 2000.) Major bookstores in large Russian cities now carry translated marketing books from all over the world. Russian translations of western marketing textbooks, including specialized books, often appear within a year of the original text version. Marketing textbooks by Russian authors abound, ranging from the superb to the idiosyncratic. A unique contribution was the fully Russianized edition of *Marketing* by Rudelius, Kerin, Hartley and 11 Russian collaborators published in 2001, in Russian with Russian cases and examples throughout and with a CD-ROM of instructional resources for professors – the first such 'instructor's guide' for a marketing text in Russia.

What became of the Soviet marketing pioneers?

Our account of the emergence of this talented group of Soviet pioneers in marketing thought should include a report on their fates.

The eight contributors introduced in this article lived through the *perestroika* era, and all but one – Stolmov died in 1990 – lived to see the end of the Soviet Union and the emergence of viable businesses, business schools, and the acceptance and application of modern marketing. Their books, articles, and other publications – from the 1970s and into the 1980s – were among the first and best sources of information on marketing in the country.

When the liberalization of *perestroika* arrived, most of these men were already in their 50s or older, and men were eligible for pensions at age 60. During *perestroika*, Abramishvili, Kretov, Soloviev, Stolmov, and Zavialov were writing books and articles, including marketing guides to help new commercial firms to implement marketing (such as Zavialov et al. (1989); the publications noted in Tables 3 and 4; and others). Georgi Abramishvili was actively writing marketing books as late as 1987, but died in 1995 at age 55. Soloviev and Kretov remain professionally active in significant academic positions where they continue to share their knowledge of marketing through teaching, publishing, and service on national education committees and advisory boards. They both told us that some of the harshest critics of marketing had 'instant conversions' after 1991 and began teaching marketing and authoring marketing books themselves.



A fitting symbol of the transformation we report is the story of *VNIKI*, the research institute where several Marketing Section members worked in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1994 *VNIKI* leveraged its over 40 years as the leading Soviet-era foreign trade research institute. Retaining its old acronym, *VNIKI*, it became a commercial entity. *VNIKI*'s sophisticated bilingual website (*vniki.ru*) notes the institute's excellent contacts with government agencies, its extensive experience, its ability to recruit the cream of Russian university graduates, and the number of its professionals who went on to prestigious positions in government and industry. *VNIKI* now does research for government agencies and companies, Russian and foreign, under its new name: the All-Russia Market Research Institute.

Conclusion

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, a common perception in the West was that the New Russia, now open for business, would need to learn about marketing for the first time, as there could be no Russian marketing experts.

Our research illustrates that in Russia there were already some notable experts on marketing who were well acquainted with foreign marketing literature, who were using marketing research tools, and who were authoring scientific and applied papers on marketing as early as the 1970s. The Marketing Section was, in effect, a Soviet marketing 'think tank' which served as an important element in the diffusion of marketing.

Given their professional status, it is likely that most if not all of these men were formally members of the Communist Party. But alongside their academic grounding in Marxism-Leninism and Communist Party ideology these Soviet pioneers were realists. They were determined to address practical marketing problems for which solutions could be measured by successes in Soviet exporting and in better matching of domestic supply with Soviet consumer preferences. Combining their practical focus with the Soviet (and Russian) enthusiasm for quantitative methods, they marshaled Soviet strengths in mathematics and statistics to guide and validate their work.

Our research underscores the importance of research on the history of marketing thought, even – or particularly – where marketing is not anticipated; as well as the importance of capturing the reminiscences of significant marketing figures, as Bartels (1976) and others have done in the United States. It is lamentable that the reminiscences of most of these pioneers in Soviet marketing thought were never recorded and thus are forever lost to us and future historians of marketing, in Russia and abroad. Of the entire group of eight contributors, none of their publications has appeared in English or other foreign languages, and – other than their own professional books and articles and a conference proceedings (All-Russian Academy of Foreign Trade, 2001) – there is no previous published report on their contributions to marketing. The new generation of Russian doctoral students in marketing – and many current Russian marketing professors – would be unlikely



to even recognize their names. We hope this article will honor their memory and their contributions, and encourage others to study the history of marketing and of marketing pioneers.

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Karen F.A. Fox is Associate Professor of Marketing at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California USA. She has co-authored two books, *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions* (with Philip Kotler) and *Sotsialni Marketing*, the first book on social marketing published in Russia. She served on the Editorial Review Board of the *Journal of Marketing*, and her articles appear in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Retail Banking*, *Studies in Family Planning*, and other journals in the US and abroad. Her primary research interests are in international social marketing; services marketing; and the history of marketing, including its re-emergence in formerly-socialist countries.

Address: Department of Marketing, Santa Clara University, 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95053 USA.

[email: kfox@scu.edu]

Irina I. Skorobogatykh is Associate Professor of Marketing at Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Moscow, Russia. She is editor of the Russian journal *Marketing and Marketing Research*. She is a co-author of *Marketing* (with William Rudelius et al.) and of a book on e-marketing. Her articles on marketing research and marketing education have been published in leading Russian marketing journals. Her primary research interests are in marketing research, marketing of luxury goods, and the evolution of marketing in Russia.

Address: Marketing Department, Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Stremmyany Pereulok 36, Moscow 115598, Russian Federation.

[email: iskorobogatykh@hotmail.com]

Olga V. Saginova is Dean of Plekhanov Graduate School and Professor of Advertising at Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Moscow, Russia. She has co-authored books on international integration and e-marketing, as well as *Marketing* (with William Rudelius et al.). Her articles on marketing of education and international cooperation regularly appear in leading Russian marketing journals. She is a member of the editorial board of the Russian journal *Economics of Education*. Her primary research interests are in branding and in marketing of education.

Address: Plekhanov Graduate School, Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Stremyanny Pereulok 36, Moscow 115598, Russian Federation.

[email: saguinova@rea.ru]