I. The Role of the Soviet National Abroad

Early in the Soviet regime, professional Party apparatčiki and ideologues realized the agitational-propagandistic nature of bylina (folktales) and částuški (historical songs), and they enlisted them to perpetuate the codes of behavior, the social mores, and the Marxist-Leninist thought which have been superimposed in a remarkably short time over a tradition-bound Russian culture. At the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Maxim Gorky rode his favorite hobbyhorse. He wanted to see the average Soviet citizen, a recently recruited modern artisan, parading in the fancy-dress of a folklore hero, or at least as a prehistoric peasant – and a legendary one at that.¹

Gorky had decided that the new Soviet folklorist could be most usefully employed, not in penetrating the inward state of the Soviet people as they were, but in depicting declamatory, model artisans, absorbed with whole-hearted enthusiasm in the glorious work of transforming their physical surroundings by better machinery and labor-saving devices. If the Russian folklore hero, Ivan the Fool, the simpleton, despised by his father and his brothers, were to receive a modern Soviet education, he might learn how to outwit his unattractive elder brothers and to triumph over life’s difficulties, just as did the heroine, Vassilissa the Wise.²

Every character in Soviet folk tales is expected to make a sharp, moral point, so that there is no doubt about the good or the bad in him or her and no distraction from the quality he represents. When Ivan takes on the role of a Soviet foreign trade negotiator, he finds himself ideologically by imposing a specific Marxist-Leninist input subsystem structure between himself and the extra-national which is shown in Figure 1.³ The political structure screen shapes the incoming stimuli to conform with the present content of its belief-disbelief system.

In trying to interpret ambiguous psychological situations in real life, the socialist foreign trade negotiator tends to become a watchdog over his
own thoughts in his desire to be a good, loyal citizen "in thought as well as in deed." This self-monitoring is something more than conformity to and the credulous acceptance of propaganda – the ideal of a loyal citizen has become internalized as part of his consciousness, or Ego-ideal, and he has taken over the functions of the censor and of the propagandist, excluding 'disloyal' thoughts from his mind and disavowing them.

With a kind of Orwellian 'double think', he consciously rejects at one moment an interpretation, which, in the previous moment, had seemed to him to be probably true. He is able to do this with a good conscience and with little or no loss of self-pride, since the name he would give to this process would not be 'wishful thinking' or 'distortion', but 'loyal thinking', or 'right thinking'.

The role of the national, like all roles, is somewhat differently enacted by each person. It becomes defined according to the way in which it is played, just as a part in a theatrical drama is not re-created by the dramatic actor in the exact sense that the playwright had intended in his original writing of it. To the extent that the personifications used by the characters in Soviet folktales coincide with the 'real' behavior of those who are personified, the interactions of the national and the extra-national will tend to proceed to the realization of the goal-states toward which the interaction is directed.

The chief appeal of the Soviet folktale is that it covers the entire range of human aspirations, it eliminates and abolishes situations of conflict, and it provides a workable life script which can be incorporated into the individual Soviet foreign trade negotiator's repertoire of sets or plans for the attainment of high-reward/low-cost outcomes in interpersonal transactions. In performing this character and behavior study of the Soviet foreign trade negotiator in his milieu, we are attempting to attain useful insights into the broad tendencies and the irregularities which more or less are common to all Great Russians and which form more or less a predictable syndrome 'built into' each national abroad.

Research Hypothesis One: Analysis of the basic structural, stylistic, and ideological content of Soviet bylina (folktales) provides one of the more promising frameworks within which to study the interpersonal relationships of Soviet nationals with extra-nationals at home and abroad.

As the Soviet citizen grows from infancy to adulthood, bylina provide him with an identity in terms of a certain bundle of traits of character, having