

tive would not be political suicide for any politician. The only difficulty would be that the government would then have to pay tremendous amounts of money from its treasury to cover the costs of the Social Security benefits for the working and retired over 23 years of age. This would involve an increased budget deficit or increased taxes for the rest of the population -- or probably both. However, because the government is already robbing and cheating its citizens, how would it be any different for it to incorporate these taxes into some other form? The sooner the government attempts to deal with the Social Security problem the less likely will a tax rate of 37.5 percent become a reality.

A second alternative involves IRAs, or Individual Retirement Accounts. This would entail setting aside a certain amount of the individual's paycheck into an account for that individual's retirement. The rest would be paid into the Social Security system. In this way, the worker is assured that he will receive at least the amount that he sets aside in this individual account. This alternative can be implemented immediately and help to offset the effects of the Boomers' soon-to-come retirements.

It is best to try to diffuse the Social Security bomb before it explodes. However, to do this, the federal government must seriously consider and weigh all of the consequences of various solutions. It is time for the government to stop playing the role of Rumpelstiltskin in waiting for someone to identify the right policy by the proper name and magically solve the problem. Otherwise, some president in the future, like FDR, might have to propose a program in which the retired population pays a certain amount in taxes to alleviate the poverty and destitution of the workers.

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very time I rode the Moscow Metro this spring something seemed wrong. It wasn't the stations: the Metro stops are gorgeous, though like many train stations, they smell of dirt, smoke and urine. My American hostess reminded me that the Communist idea was that art is for everyone, not just those who could afford to go to a museum, so the Metro stops were beautified. Every day on their way to work, the masses could see statues of the revolution, frescoes of the government's agricultural prowess and mosaics of Soviet World War II military achievements.

It wasn't the service: the digital clocks posted at each stop to prove that your government was providing efficient service never registered more than seven minutes before a train arrived to take us away.

No, as I stood holding a train pole like any other train pole, it struck me. Or, rather, it bumped me. Or rather, they bumped me. Huge brass buckles on babushka's purses, canvas bags on old ladies, jacketed

shoulders of vodka-soaked men swaying against my back. Unlike a public train ride in the U.S., in Moscow there is no personal space.

In the U.S., when someone stands close on the train, Yankees think, "you have a right to that spot; I'll keep my distance." In Moscow, Russkis think, "I have a right to that spot" and bump into you. Whatever objects people carry with them, or on them, or near them become extensions of their bodies, sent out to prod you, make sure that the foreigner wearing the good boots is real. Maybe, when jostled, his Goretex coat will fall away to reveal the army uniform of a Mongol invader, or a KGB informant.

You would think that this disparate view of personal space was another obvious difference between the opposing countries of the Cold War. But both-the USA and USSR embraced a similar ideology about resources, including space: everyone should have equal access. The only difference was, in the USSR, the government was to control and distribute it, and, in the USA, the free market would allow those who could earn the means to purchase and control it. This leads to eerily similar actions from countries that insisted they



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MOSCOW METRO: PLACE TO HIDE

were ideologically opposed. In the USSR, everyone had a right to a home, so the government built large apartment buildings for the masses. In the USA, no one has a right to a home (you have to earn it), so the government built large apartment buildings for the masses.

But when it came to public space, in the USA, it was public only until someone bought it; in the USSR, even "private" space remained public. Julia and her husband, native Muscovite friends of my American hostess, still have to share their apartment with an old babushka assigned to the same apartment un-

der the Communist system. Each gets one room, and they share the kitchen and bathroom. This despite the fact that Julia now earns the exorbitant Moscow salary of U.S. \$1,000/month now that she chucked her metallurgic engineering job to pirate porn videos.

So, any space you carve out for yourself is still in danger of being invaded. One day in Moscow, three consecutive trains stopped and opened their doors, but there was no room to get on. The babushka on the platform next to me could take no more. The next train was stuffed too, but she burrowed into a car full of people, like an American footballer

trying to push back the defense. Twice, the doors banged her ribs and re-opened, but she wouldn't get off. The third time the doors started to close, another old lady on the platform shoved her in the back so that she was plunged into the crowd just as the door closed, sealing her in.

They both smiled and waved to each other as the one rode away happy that she got what she had coming to her.