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**Soviet Society in the 1980s:  
Problems and Prospects**

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## Soviet Society in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects

### Key Judgments

*Information available  
as of 30 November 1982  
was used in this report.*

Both Western observers and Soviet officials recognize that the Soviet Union now faces a wide array of social, economic, and political ills including a general social malaise, ethnic tensions, consumer frustrations, and political dissent. Precisely how these internal problems will ultimately challenge and affect the regime; however, is open to debate and considerable uncertainty. Some observers believe that the regime will have little trouble coping with the negative mood among the populace. Others believe that economic mismanagement will aggravate internal problems and ultimately erode the regime's credibility, increasing the long-term prospects for fundamental political change.

Whatever the ultimate prognosis, these problems will pose a challenge for the new Soviet leadership. The Politburo's approach probably will be based on its assessment of the threat posed and the degree to which these issues can be addressed by policy shifts. Three broad categories of problems—the quality of life, ethnic tensions, and dissent—are surveyed in this paper. Of these, popular discontent over a perceived decline in the quality of life represents, in our judgment, the most serious and immediate challenge for the Politburo.  $\Sigma$   $\int$  the Soviet people are no longer confident that their standard of living will continue to improve. Popular dissatisfaction and cynicism seem to be growing. This popular mood has a negative impact on economic productivity and could gradually undermine the regime's credibility. Such discontent has already led to some isolated strikes and demonstrations, developments that immediately get the leadership's attention. Other manifestations of discontent—crime, corruption, and alcoholism—are evident as well but pose no direct challenge to the regime. Such ills, nonetheless, have a detrimental effect on Soviet economic goals, are harmful to the social climate in general, and in turn are made worse by the slow rate of economic growth.

Ethnic discontent—rooted in cultural, demographic, and economic problems as well as political suppression—remains primarily a latent but potentially serious vulnerability. Currently, there is no widespread, politically disruptive protest or dissent among the Soviet nationalities. The regime's policies—granting to national minorities some linguistic, territorial, cultural, and administrative autonomy; raising the standard of living; expanding the educational base; and using overwhelming police power when needed—have been largely successful so far. Although the potential for political unrest and sporadic violence in the Baltic republics remains

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high because of economic, demographic, and cultural grievances, Baltic concerns have little impact elsewhere in the USSR and can be suppressed if necessary. With more time (perhaps decades), however, similar problems could become much more consequential in Muslim Central Asia, requiring the regime to manage this problem more adroitly.

Finally, the range of political, religious, and cultural discontent that is expressed in the Soviet dissident movement does not, at present, seriously challenge the regime's political control, but the regime deals with it as if it does. Soviet dissidents cause concern because they have an international audience and their activities embarrass the regime. Moreover, the leadership remains psychologically insecure and is unwilling to allow any hint of challenge to its authority, apparently because it fears such dissidents could appeal to a wider audience by articulating more widely held discontent over food shortages and the like. For these reasons, the regime, particularly of late, has used widespread arrests and imprisonment of dissident leaders, confinement in psychiatric hospitals, and exile to crush the movement. The movement, however, is not likely to die and in the long run could grow if it can capitalize on increasing discontent, cynicism, and alienation among the populace.

The sharp slowdown in economic growth since the mid-1970s is the underlying problem that ties all these issues together and makes them potentially more troublesome for the regime. Unless this trend is reversed, increasing alienation and cynicism, especially among young people, are likely; and other social ills—crime, corruption, alcoholism—could get worse. The regime, to be sure, has impressive resources for trying to deal with particular economic problems—especially in its centralized control over priorities and resources, but a return to the more favorable economic conditions of the 1960s and early 1970s, when there were substantial improvements in the standard of living, is highly unlikely. The pervasive police powers at the Politburo's disposal, when coupled with the Soviet populace's traditional passivity toward deprivation and respect for authority, should, however, continue to provide the regime with the necessary strength to contain and suppress open dissent.

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Difficult decisions regarding resource allocation and new management approaches, nevertheless, will probably be needed to deal with the Politburo's economic problems and to reverse the malaise that has set in. How the new leadership will handle these issues over the long run is uncertain. Its policy options range from undertaking major "reforms" and reallocating resources away from defense to greater reliance on administrative controls and repression. Some mix of policies involving both directions might be attempted. No solutions it is likely to attempt, however, offer any certain cure for its growth problem and the malaise related to it. This situation will likely require the leadership to fall back even more on traditional orthodox methods to control dissent and suppress challenges to its authority while continuing efforts to avoid an overall decline in a "quality of life" that has become the regime's real basis for legitimacy.

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## Preface

Western observers have reported more on the array of Soviet social, economic, and political ills in recent years than before. Intelligence reporting in recent months has also indicated heightened concern over internal problems within both the Soviet establishment and the populace. Just how serious these problems will become—and how successfully the Soviet leaders will deal with them—is an area of great uncertainty. The Soviet regime still possesses great inner strength, but the challenges are clearly growing.

This overview paper surveys a wide range of internal problems in the USSR—consumer frustrations, alcoholism, ethnic tensions, dissidence, to name a few. Treatment of many of these issues is necessarily brief, but the study, nonetheless, provides a better basis for assessing the Soviet Union's internal strengths and weaknesses in the years ahead. This study will be followed by papers that examine some of the USSR's more pressing problems—not sufficiently covered in intelligence or open-source analysis—in greater depth.

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## Soviet Society in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects

### The Soviet Regime and the Quality of Life

Discontent over a perceived decline in the quality of life in the USSR represents the most immediate and important challenge for the new leadership. Under Khrushchev in the 1960s and under Brezhnev until the mid-1970s, wages were increased, more consumer goods were made available, the diet was enriched, and services were improved. These results stimulated popular desires for a better life but did not completely satisfy them. As the rate of economic growth has declined since 1978, the regime has had to cope with unfulfilled rising expectations. The new leadership is already having to make some hard economic choices between defense spending, investment, and consumption. The new post-Brezhnev leadership will also have to decide the politically difficult issue of where to place their investment rubles: in Central Asia, where most of the growth in labor force will occur; in the western USSR, where the industrial plants already exist; or in Siberia, where the exploitation of natural resources awaits the necessary industrial infrastructure.

The section below surveys what is perhaps the most important domestic issue confronting the leadership, the economy. Subsequent sections discuss the range of other issues associated with the quality of Soviet life.

### The Economy: A Leadership Dilemma

The primary source of economic growth in the Soviet Union has been increased amounts of productive resources (labor and capital) rather than increased efficiency of their use. However, additions to the labor force have shrunk and are projected to shrink further during the 1980s. This has occurred as access to necessary raw materials and energy supplies has become more expensive. Moreover, Soviet agriculture remains a drag on the entire economy, with four poor

harvests in a row, and the high cost of Soviet armament programs siphons off needed men, material, and funds from other economic projects.

### The Hard Choices

The Soviet Union now faces some difficult economic decisions. In the late Brezhnev era, investment growth apparently was sacrificed to maintain modest growth in consumption and substantial growth in military spending. Continuing this course will be harmful to the economy, but changing priorities poses problems as well. Under present circumstances, cutting consumption growth probably would not solve Soviet economic problems although additional funds might be freed for investment and defense. Without positive incentives, however, worker morale could plunge even further, and growth in labor productivity could stagnate when a boost in both is needed.

The regime also recognizes that "social factors" are an underlying cause of lagging productivity growth. Cheating, bribery, black-market activity, and profiteering permeate Soviet society. According to Western researchers, alcoholism, Russia's hereditary plague, has apparently risen in the 18 years of Brezhnev's leadership as have the disorders associated with it—crime, family breakup, increased adult male and infant mortality, absenteeism, inefficiency in the work place, and industrial accidents. The leadership is attempting to combat the range of social ills, but the problems are mostly intractable.

### The Regime's Course—Steady as She Goes

With the phenomenon of widespread disaffection in Poland fresh in their minds, Soviet leaders are still inclined to appease the beleaguered consumer. The quality of the diet remains the key element in this approach and is the standard by which the Soviet

populace judges its well-being. The regime has pursued various strategies to keep domestic food shortages manageable. At the November 1981 plenum, Brezhnev described the food supply as the central economic and political problem of the current Five-Year Plan. The food program announced at the May 1982 plenum hopes to translate higher farm spending into more food on Soviet tables. Imports of food products will continue to play a large role as well. To ensure that food shortages do not precipitate incidents of worker unrest, the leadership is channeling more food directly to industrial enterprises, but this has left food supplies in retail outlets strained.

The Soviet propaganda apparatus is pointing to these measures as proof of its continuing commitment to the consumer. To counter the problems of worker productivity, the underlying social malaise that supports it, and labor discipline, the party may resort to more traditional palliatives. The ideological campaign of last year, which attacked consumerist attitudes and the sole reliance on material incentives to increase productivity, may be stepped up. Tough measures to increase discipline and decrease labor absenteeism and turnover may eventually be put forward as well. The leadership has heretofore lacked the political will or consensus, on the other hand, to pursue more major economic reforms or policy innovations that might help resolve its dilemma.

#### Social Discontent

Articles in the Soviet press indicate that the Soviet authorities are clearly concerned about the forces of social discontent in their nation, not only because they impact adversely on worker productivity but also because they tend to weaken the social fabric. The crime and hooliganism that appear to be increasing, the soaring divorce rates, and the apparent increase in alcohol consumption suggest there is a palpable sense of life going stale and sour for many in the Soviet Union. Moreover, according to [redacted]

[redacted] in the USSR, there seems to be an increased readiness to cheat, engage in black marketing, and peddle influence; and ideological countermeasures are ineffective

The situation does not immediately threaten the regime's stability, but over the long run it could undermine the leaders' legitimacy.

#### The Ordeal of Daily Life

Soviet published statistics demonstrate that striking material progress has been achieved in the USSR since 1917, but they do not begin to convey the frustrations of daily life. The seemingly endless list of scarcities, the long shopping lines, the bewildering variety of regulations and bureaucratic requirements, and the indignities endured in even routine activities add to the typical Soviet citizen's daily physical and mental burdens. Although the regime constantly launches campaigns to improve service and eliminate shortages, the leadership is almost powerless to improve the daily grind for most of its people.

*"Horror Stories" About Shopping.* The shopping rat race, especially the queues, symbolizes the Soviet citizen's predicament. In 1981, for example, a Soviet correspondent for *Literaturnaya Gazeta* took off from Moscow for Krasnodar, the capital of a resort area on the Black Sea. He deliberately left behind all the usual personal items (soap, razor, cologne, toothbrush, shaving cream, and so forth) to investigate reports that such items were unavailable in Krasnodar stores. The correspondent systematically visited every store in Krasnodar in an unsuccessful quest to buy the articles. He managed to get only the last package of razor blades in one store and a child's toothbrush at another (the toothbrush broke the following day). However, the correspondent later reported finding most of the items he desired on the black market.

There are numerous anecdotal reports of a similar nature from [redacted] observers, foreign correspondents, [redacted] and residents of the Soviet Union as well. A few examples serve to illustrate the general situation:

- A Soviet [redacted] indicated that he waited four hours to get a single copy (multiple copies are prohibited) of a few pages from a Lenin Library reference book.

- A Western correspondent in Moscow reported that he could not find a book required by his child's school in city stores, shoes for him and his daughter, or enamelware pans for his wife.
- A Moscow resident noted that consumers had to "reserve" toilet tissue in stores by filling out post-card order forms. Another resident said that even the supply of the postcards can become depleted.
- Longtime Moscow residents reported in the 1970s that it took six hours in line to buy a hat, 10 hours to buy a rail ticket (to the Black Sea resort area), 10 days (organized groups take turns in line) for a chance to buy a new book of poetry, and two or three years for a place in a sanatorium. It can, according to a Western scholar, take two to 10 years to get a city apartment.

*Unequal Burden.* According to Western newsmen in Moscow, Soviet citizens now, moreover, seem increasingly aware that the burden is not shared equally, a perception that exacerbates the normal frustrations associated with everyday Soviet life. At some factories and government agencies, for example, employees may order meat and other commodities unavailable in state stores. High party officials are entitled to shop at special stores closed to the general public, where stocks of imported and scarce goods are sold at relatively low prices. Housing, especially, has become more stratified with favorable treatment on the basis of employment, bureaucratic position, personal connections, and bribery. According to one Western expert, money and contacts can reduce the waiting time for an apartment from 10 years to two years or less.

Cars and dachas (summer homes) are also high on the consumer's most-wanted list. Like other consumer goods in short supply, however, many new cars are parceled out among the well placed or well connected, leaving others who have the money with the option of either placing their names on long waiting lists—a year is the minimum for less popular makes, according to a 1981 newspaper report—or heading for the used-car lot. Even in the used-car market, moreover, a dual system prevails. Many cars are sold for relatively low prices through an "official" used-car market

where the pecking order and waiting lists rival those for new cars. There is competition for dachas as well, with the best being reserved for the top leadership, followed by party and government officials and professionals in turn. (

*Food on the Table?* According to Soviet data, the availability of quality foods increased sharply in the Soviet Union between 1965 and 1975, but since the late 1970s agricultural failures have led to the decreased availability of milk, vegetables, and fruit, and the supply of meat has not grown. The result is acute spot shortages across the entire range of foodstuffs. The regime has attempted to channel a larger share of foods directly to industrial installations to prevent worker unrest, leaving food supplies in retail outlets severely strained.

The most serious consumer food problem is meat supply. At a time when meat has become a key indicator in the public mind of progress or stagnation in living standards, Soviet data show that the gap between meat supply and demand has increased at least 12 percent since 1975. An American [ ] observed on a [ ] 1982 trip through Soviet Central Asia that meat was of poor quality, rationed, and expensive. He also said that although the lines were orderly, they contained about a dozen people at each counter. The poor prospects for the 1982 harvest indicate that the food situation in the Soviet Union will worsen still more.

The Soviet leaders have been extremely successful in the past in persuading their people to defer gratifications, and to take less now in exchange for promises of a better future. This fact, along with the self-evident progress for most under the system, explains the Russian acceptance of the shopper's gauntlet, the long queues, the poor quality of merchandise, and the shortages of food, consumer goods, and housing. Political problems, however, are rooted in the prospects for an ever-receding fulfillment of the promise of a better future and, for some, a perceived decline in their standard of living.

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### Crime and Corruption

The Soviet Union appears to be facing an increasing crime problem. Ten years ago the Soviet media rarely acknowledged the existence of violence or hooliganism ("intentional actions crudely violating public order and expressing clear disrespect toward society," punishable by six months to a year of confinement). Today, however, the press is full of articles on violent crime. For example, in August 1981, *Pravda* reported on an upsurge of street crime in Eastern Siberia, blaming prosecutors, police, and the public for their laxity. In September and October of 1981, a Leningrad newspaper described a series of muggings that had taken place in the city.

Despite the protestations of official ideology, this upsurge in crime has little to do with bourgeois influence from the past or susceptibility to Western influence. Soviet crime, to judge from Soviet commentary, is associated with social problems found generally in modern society—alcohol abuse, low educational levels, broken homes, and the like. A 1971 study of crime in Moscow, for example, reported that 70 percent of those convicted of homicide committed their crimes while drunk. Studies of criminal behavior by the Institute for the Study of Crime in the 1960s and 1970s found a high correlation between crime and internal migration patterns. Crime has increased in the developing cities of the far east and far north, where the social infrastructure is weakest, making these areas more undesirable places to live.

*Economic Crimes.* Economic crimes have probably become the most vexing for the regime. The inefficiencies of the economic system and its failure to produce sufficient quantities of food, consumer goods, and services have produced a burgeoning black-market economy amounting by some Western estimates to perhaps 25 percent of the Soviet GNP. Legal restrictions on private economic activity are honored only occasionally. Illegal speculation (purchase and resale of goods for profit) is rampant. The most common forms of economic illegality include: theft of government property, large-scale cheating of customers by the managers of retail stores, private production on the job, the unregistered private practice of physicians and dentists, and underground manufacturing.

Bribes are viewed by the Soviet public as an effective method of solving one's problems in the social environment. In a series of interviews conducted [ ] in 1977, nearly half of those questioned selected "bribery, pull, and connections" as the most effective way of solving problems. Moreover, the prices of available consumer goods are often quite distorted and do not reflect demand, supply, or production costs.

Despite the pervasive nature of corruption within Soviet society, the leadership so far at least has not attempted to tackle it head on. Its rhetoric and occasionally well-publicized actions against corrupt officials have been largely cosmetic gestures that made little progress in reducing corruption within the elite or the society. Such half-hearted efforts, in the view of a Soviet lawyer who left the USSR in 1977, contrast sharply with the regime's stance on other kinds of criminal activity. Elite involvement in corruption has probably contributed to the regime's lack of vigor in combating this phenomenon. To actively attempt to root it out among the elite risks confrontation. The Brezhnev regime was probably also wary of damaging the reputation, and hence legitimacy, of the party by prosecuting important members for corruption.

The regime may recognize, in addition, that the "second economy" does satisfy demands in a system where state industry cannot or will not satisfy them. In this sense, the black market serves as a safety valve that helps to keep the entire system running. If the black market helps to meet some demands of the Soviet population, the dissatisfaction and discontent that might arise over the lack of consumer goods in the official economy are to some degree dampened.

Some recent reports of official corruption serve to illustrate the extent of the problems facing the leadership:

- General Zotov was removed as head of the Office of Visas and Registration recently after reportedly selling visas for as much as 12,000 rubles (1 ruble equals \$1.34).

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- In Georgia bribes are reportedly necessary to guarantee everything from admission to Tbilisi Medical Institute to letters of recommendation to join the Communist Party. The wife of a former party leader in Georgia was also reportedly involved in selling government jobs and icons to interested buyers.
- During 1982 in Azerbaijan the party press reported on endemic extortion and bribery connected with gaining admission to institutions of higher learning.
- Rumors of corruption touching Brezhnev's family proliferated in 1982. Soviet sources told Western correspondents in Moscow that Brezhnev's daughter, Galina, was involved with people recently implicated in a corruption scandal that concerned the smuggling of diamonds and hard currency. Two of Galina's associates were reportedly arrested for wrongdoing: Anatoliy Kolevatov, head of Soviet circuses and a deputy minister of culture, and Boris Buriyatov ("Boris the Gypsy"), a singer in the Bolshoy Opera Company. Rumors also circulated that Brezhnev's son Yuriy, a first deputy minister of foreign trade, was under investigation for misuse of funds.

*Punishment.* Soviet criminals are handled swiftly under the flexible provisions of the republic criminal codes. The Ministry of Internal Affairs enforces the codes; its militia maintains public order and arrests lawbreakers and its prosecutors bring and prosecute charge. ~~the militia itself is involved in stealing and corruption.~~ In October 1982 a Western newsman characterized the militia as the "dregs" of society.

The Ministry of Justice runs the court system. The criminal code gives the procurator (the Soviet equivalent of the district attorney) wide latitude in determining the specific charge under which a particular criminal act will be tried and permits the court wide latitude in determining the sentence. Legal punishments range from public censure, removal from office, deprivation of rank, and banishment or exile to imprisonment, forced labor, or even death. According to a March 1979 intelligence assessment, about half of all sentences involve confinement, and probably more

than 90 percent involve some form of forced labor, termed "correctional labor" in Soviet legal parlance.

*The Gulag.* According to [ ] estimates: [ ] approximately 1.5 percent of the Soviet population (about 4 million people) are now in the "gulag"—the Russian acronym for the Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps. (The United States in 1980 had a prison population of 314,000—considerably less than 1 percent of the population.) About 2.1 million Soviets are confined, some 400,000 in prisons and the rest in forced-labor camps (or "colonies" as the Soviet authorities prefer). About 500,000 have been paroled but still must perform compulsory labor. There are about 300 prisons and over 1,000 labor camps in the USSR.

The inmates of prisons and the harsher labor colonies live in cells, and the inmates of other camps live in barrack-type accommodations. [ ] who are former inmates have complained that the diet in prisons and forced-labor camps is inadequate, that medical treatment is poor, and that working conditions are dangerous.

The penal system includes three basic kinds of forced-labor camps: correctional labor, educational labor, and colony settlements. Correctional labor camps vary in their harshness with the severity of the term. Juvenile offenders are sent to educational labor camps, and most prisoners receiving only light punishment or who have been rewarded for good behavior are assigned to correctional labor colony settlements.

Persons convicted of "crimes against the state" receive the harshest punishment; the number of people being punished for such crimes is probably about 10,000. (Many of the offenses for which dissidents are commonly tried are classified as such—see section on dissent.)

The economic contribution of forced laborers to the Soviet system is probably substantial. They are assigned to work in a wide variety of activities, particularly those that are physically dangerous or taxing.

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including manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and mining. These individuals have also been utilized to develop the resource-rich areas of the Soviet far east and north. For example, [

indicates minimum security forced labor is being used in the construction of a compressor station on the domestic gas pipeline, which parallels the export gasline being built for the sale of gas to Western Europe.

*Justice in the Soviet Union.* In addition to the wide spread use of forced labor, the Soviet criminal justice system differs in several other respects from Western systems of justice. Law serves the interest of the party and state. Soviet justice is designed to protect socialist property, not primarily to protect the citizen, and the courts are treated as one of many controls to ensure implementation of party and state goals. Although the legal rights of Soviet citizens have been substantially increased since Stalin's death, many of the rights considered important in the West—such as habeas corpus (protection against illegal imprisonment) and presumption of innocence—do not exist. The regime has few constraints on its ability to use the law against its people. Nikita Khrushchev's reported comment to his Procurator General sums up this attitude: "Who's the boss: we or the law? We are masters over the law, not the law over us—so we have to change the law."

Soviet justice also emphasizes, to a degree not found in the West, the role of the public in the administration of justice and the use of social groups (vigilantes) rather than state organs to maintain law and order. The Soviets have relied on two voluntary organizations: the Comrades' Courts (ad hoc courts set up in factories, apartments, and so forth, with popularly elected judges) and the Peoples' Volunteers (*druzhiniki*, who cajole citizens into obeying the law).

*Effectiveness of Controls.* The sharp rise in juvenile crime indicates that the regime has fallen short of its goal to create "the new Soviet man." For example, in conversations with Westerners a Soviet criminologist stated that persons under 18 are responsible for more than half the crimes committed in the Baltic region. Furthermore, it was revealed that these youthful offenders, almost evenly divided between males and

females, are committing increasingly violent crimes as well as the usual property crimes.

Much of the criminal activity in the USSR is connected to the "second" economy and involves economic corruption. Soviet authorities, worried that public opinion will be adversely affected by shortages, have attempted to lay much of the blame on such criminals. For example, First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Yuriy Churbanov (Brezhnev's son-in-law, who reportedly has been involved in corrupt activities himself) recently charged in an interview on Radio Moscow that black-marketeers are artificially creating deficits to line their own pockets. (A new law adopted in September 1981 substantially increased penalties for withholding goods from sale or accepting money to procure goods and services not normally available or in short supply.) The recent report by the Soviet press of the execution of a deputy minister of fish industries for corruption was apparently meant to signal the regime's concern and warn against high-level corruption. The removal of a high regional party official in July 1982, reportedly for engaging in corruption with this deputy minister, tends to reinforce the idea that a strong signal is being given to corrupt officials. The campaign, however, is not likely to be very effective if other higher level officials who are involved in corruption are allowed to remain in office. In fact, the consumer remains unimpressed with official attempts to fight corruption and end shortages. As one cynical Soviet citizen remarked about the government's recent efforts, "Whenever things get really bad they start an anticorruption drive."

#### Youth Alienation

Soviet leaders devote considerable effort and resources to indoctrinating Soviet youth with the old socialist virtues of love of physical labor and a willingness to sacrifice one's personal interest for the party and state. The industrialization process has inexorably produced a reward system, however, that vitiates these ideals. Although young people are taught in party youth organizations to believe that all work is honorable, parents often attempt to pave their children's way through procurement of preferential treatment in university admissions and jobs. )

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**Materialism and Apathy.** In spite of the barrage of propaganda aimed at eliciting "socially productive labor," most Soviet young people apparently remain materialistic in outlook and are apolitical. In a poll conducted by *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya* in February 1982, Soviet youth clearly stated their preference for a stable career and material comfort. Success was defined by 34 percent of the respondents as the "quantity and prestige of their possessions," such as a new car or a summer house, and not as contributions to the "collective welfare." This emphasis on possessions is accompanied by a general cynicism toward larger political issues and a recognition of the impotence of individuals in influencing political affairs.

Party officials have expressed concern over the loss of ideological vigor on the part of Soviet youth. The series of regional Komsomol Congresses in 1982 provided a recent opportunity for party leaders to address this issue. Ukrainian party chief Sheherbitskiy, for example, frankly acknowledged the lack of ideological zeal among Soviet youth. He berated young people not only for their theoretical shortcomings but also for their "social passivity and relapses into middle classness." Leningrad party leader Romanov stressed the same theme, noting that for most young Soviets, life may be getting too easy. Party leaders Shevardnadze and Grishin even admitted that drug abuse and alcoholism among youth were significant problems, a strong indication that ideological commitment is waning.

**Western Threat.** Soviet leaders continue to express concern, moreover, that this interest in material well-being is making people more vulnerable to Western influences and "alien" ideas. The most explicit warning of this type was voiced by Komsomol chief Boris Pastukhov in his speech before the All-Union Komsomol Congress in May 1982. Pastukhov stated that "moral and spiritual decline" can result from an uncritical acceptance of Western cultural models and fashions. He mentioned Polish developments to underscore the danger of allowing Western influences to go unchecked, declaring that more must be done to protect youth from acquiring a taste for the Western lifestyle.

Since the Polish crisis began, such warnings have been frequently repeated. Speaking at an April 1981 ideological conference, the now deceased party secretary Mikhail Suslov emphasized the need to combat "alien" influences at home. He attacked "consumerist" attitudes and noted "the extremely dangerous" consequences of allowing consumer demands to dictate state policy.

Soviet officials, moreover, indirectly admit that Western propaganda has been successful in exploiting the materialism of its youth and in stimulating other undesirable attitudes. An article by KGB First Deputy Chairman Viktor Chebrikov described the goal of "bourgeois propaganda" as nothing less than to "sabotage the Communist convictions of young people and push them into antisocial positions." In a June 1981 *Pravda* interview, Estonian Party First Secretary Vayno also stated that "bourgeois centers" are sparing no efforts to instill in the Soviet people the "bacilli of moral spinelessness, spiritual acquisitiveness, and national chauvinism."

**Competing "Ideologies."** Soviet officials must also contend with negative attitudes toward military service, revival of interest in religion, and nationalist expressions. *Pravda* on 20 March 1982 provided growing evidence of official uncasiness about creeping pacifism on the home front. In an article on films, USSR People's Artist Aleksandr Zarkhi reproached Soviet producers of war films for being heedless of the potentially demoralizing impact of these movies on Soviet audiences. Similarly, Marshal Ogarkov, Chief of the General Staff, in a speech given at an April 1981 ideological conference and in a followup article appearing in the party journal *Kommunist*, deplored "elements of pacifism" on the domestic scene. Ogarkov complained that the present generation of Soviet youth were underrating the threat of war emanating from the West. Such examples of domestic pacifism may signal popular dissatisfaction with the war in Afghanistan or indicate that this generation of Soviet young people is less willing to make the personal sacrifice necessary to maintain a high degree of military readiness.

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Religion is viewed as a special problem for youth. Pastukhov, in his Komsomol Congress speech, asserted that various religious sects were becoming more active and called for increased efforts to counter the growth of religion among the young. Central Asian leaders have also demonstrated their concern with this issue. Kazakh Party First Secretary Kunayev recently directed party workers to pay more attention to atheistic work. (Refer also to section on religious dissent, pp. 25-30.)

Linkages between growing interest in religion and unacceptable expressions of nationalism have been made as well. In Lithuania, Republic Party First Secretary Grishkyavichus warned at an April 1982 plenum that "clerical extremists" were using religion to promote "nationalist sentiments." Georgian leaders have also been particularly worried by the emergence of antinationalist trends among young people. The Georgian Komsomol chief cautioned students against "playing at politics and pseudonationalist heroics." He also expressed regret that an increasing number of young men were applying to enter the seminary. (Refer also to section on nationality problems, pp. 18-24.)

Although the attitudes among Soviet youth are a vexing problem for the regime, there is no indication that they represent a threat to regime control. As one young Soviet professional commented: "As long as the system presents the opportunity for advancement, no matter how slight, people will continue to work within the system. No one really cares about how bad conditions are throughout the country, as long as one can see hope for improving one's own life." At the same time, the regime's attempt to isolate materialism to a small number of young people has clearly failed. Massive improvements in education resulting in an overabundance of highly trained young people have only exacerbated the problem. Moreover, it is now more difficult to satisfy the youth by providing elements of the good life. Current ideological efforts directed toward the problem of youth alienation, rather than encouraging self-sacrifice, appear only to increase cynicism. The gap between the leadership and Soviet youth, therefore, remains and could grow.

Table I  
USSR: State Budget Expenditures for Health

	Current Rubles (billions)	Percentage Share
1965	6.7	6.6
1970	9.3	6.1
1975	11.5	5.5
1980	14.8	5.0
1981	14.8	5.0
1982 (Plan)	15.4	4.8

#### Soviet Health Care

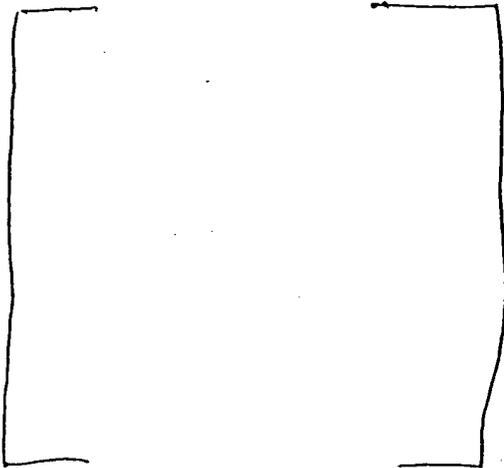
The Soviet Union made significant improvements in its health care system during the first 50 years of its existence, but the system seems increasingly inadequate to cope with changing health problems in the country. Investment in the system has not grown enough to head off problems. In fact, the share of the state budget spent on health has been declining (see table I). The regime has also failed to distribute medical care uniformly among various segments of the population.

The leadership has evinced growing concern about health care performance in the face of greater demands on the system. In August 1982 a comprehensive party Central Committee and Council of Ministers decree addressed the most important issues. It instructed the Ministry of Health to expand and improve health services in rural areas and directed the Ministry of Medical Industry to increase medical supplies in the country. The decree also called for improved training of medical workers and specified worker incentives to improve on the performance of the large medical service bureaucracy. Perhaps most important, the recent decree draws attention to the need to work on the prevention of illness in the USSR.

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The new decree was probably related to growing recognition of problems in health care that are demonstrated in official statistics. The leadership action comes as economic planners have looked to labor-force expansion and efficiency to help the ailing economy—health care impacts directly on the size and efficiency of the work force. According to Soviet data, the USSR appears to be the only nation in the world with a lower life expectancy now than 20 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Death rates rose significantly for every age group between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, increasing by 49 percent from its low point in 1964 of 6.9 percent per 1,000 to 10.3 percent per 1,000 in 1981. Males in their forties were hardest hit, with life expectancy for the average Soviet male falling from 66 years in 1965 to the present figure of 62. Infant mortality rates, moreover, are high, may have risen during the 1970s, and reflect sharp differences in health care between the European and non-European parts of the country. Poor health care in rural areas, high rates of alcoholism and abortion in urban areas, the effects of influenza epidemics, and environmental pollution are contributing factors.



**Differential Treatment.** Although the Soviet health care system is extensive (37 physicians per 10,000 compared with 19 per 10,000 in the United States) and available to everyone free of charge, the quality of service is uneven. The general public is served by a system of hospitals and outpatient polyclinics that provide a relatively low standard of care. According to several observers, drugs are difficult to find, hospitals are overcrowded and dirty, and a patient's family must often bring food from home to supplement the hospital diet. Facilities in rural areas are particularly inadequate, largely because qualified personnel find work in outlying regions unattractive. In contrast, a closed system of hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries with superior facilities is administered by the Ministry of Health's Fourth Main Administration for ranking party, government, and police officials. Some ministries maintain their own health service systems that presumably offer better care and serve as an incentive to attract workers.

**Systemic Problems.** Because of the disparity in health services, some Soviets are opening their pocketbooks to buy better, more personalized care than the state provides them free of charge. The few legal fee-for-service clinics are apparently heavily used, and under-the-table payments to medical personnel are pervasive. An illegal payment of 1,300 rubles, for example, may be necessary to ensure that a patient gets a surgeon with above-average skill. Beyond health care availability, the system faces other challenges: conflicting institutional goals, lack of preventive care, poor training, and technical bottlenecks. These are now being tackled, but whether successfully so remains to be seen. To keep hospital death statistics low, for example, a Western physician who has written a study on Soviet medicine reported that Soviet authorities have encouraged "hopeless" patients to check out and return home. At the same time, hospital stays are prolonged, providing employment for many through medical make-work, but this contributes to a higher incidence of hospital-induced infection.

A major difficulty is that the Soviet system has focused on curing illness rather than preventing it. Soviet statistical data show that diseases that are easily controlled in other countries run rampant in the Soviet Union. Influenza, for example, kills tens of thousands of Soviet babies annually, and rickets

<sup>1</sup> The publication of some statistical data useful as health indicators is restricted. The Central Statistical Administration has not released age-specific mortality rates or life expectancy data since the mid-1970s, probably because the regime is embarrassed by the results.

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remains one of childhood's scourges. Whereas 70 percent of cervical cancer cases in the United States are identified in their early, potentially treatable stages, 60 percent of Soviet cases are not recognized until they are terminal.

So far, the Soviet Union's economic plan has given low priority to developing and producing equipment that Western doctors associate with modern medicine. According to a published study by a US doctor, the USSR operates only a few dozen kidney machines, and its few hundred available pacemakers are imported. Disposable equipment—syringes, needles, tubing, and bedding—are in short supply. The low priority given to other consumer-oriented sectors results in additional shortages. When output goals in other sectors are not met, the supply to the medical sector of such nonmedical goods as automobiles, building materials, and textiles becomes erratic. Because of fuel shortages, for example, only 30 percent of the gas requirements for emergency vehicles are being met.

*Future Challenges.* The Soviet health care system will be facing growing demands in the coming decade. The age distribution of the population has changed markedly in the past 20 years, with the share of those 60 years and over increasing from 9.4 percent to 15.4 percent of the population. As the share of the elderly increases, disease patterns alter. Health planners will have to decide whether to distribute a larger share of medical resources to the elderly, who have a higher incidence of serious illness, or continue to focus health resources on the economically active population.

An August 1982 decree is the latest in a series of measures attempting to cope with problems in the health sector. In 1980 a decree banned women from 460 job categories involving heavy and hazardous work. A March 1981 decree aimed at stimulating the birth rate provides for one year of partially paid maternity leave. By encouraging mothers to stay at home to care for their babies, the decree could reduce the risk of exposure to disease at child-care facilities. A January 1982 resolution calls for the expansion of sanatoriums and health resorts to be sponsored by the trade unions.

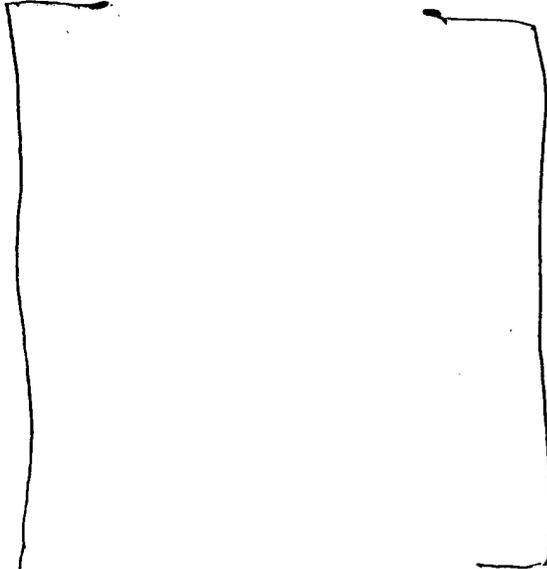
The regime has put more pressure on the managers of the health care system by dramatically airing the failures of the Ministry of Health at the March 1982 meeting of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. The Ministry was criticized for neglect of outpatient polyclinics and emergency care as well as the insensitive and uncaring attitude shown by health service personnel. The press has also extensively publicized the shortcomings of medical care in rural areas and the need for greater responsiveness to the population's requests and complaints regarding health services. Regardless of these resolutions and decrees, unless the regime spends more money on health services, there is little likelihood for significant improvement in the future.

#### **The Family and the Role of Women**

Lenin hoped Soviet rule would significantly improve the status of women in the USSR. In reality there has been much progress in achieving greater equality between the sexes and of social advancement of women under the Soviet system. Yet, Soviet women cannot be said to be "liberated" in the Western sense. Moreover, the Soviet family as an institution is also in trouble. The high divorce rate, part of the price of increasing industrialization and urbanization, shows no signs of falling. It is especially high in urban regions. Soviet sociologists continue to lament the personal costs of marital breakups in their writings. The leadership, whose prime interest lies in the success of the economy, is chiefly dismayed by the adverse effect on the birth rate and, consequently, on the country's labor resources.

*Women in the Workplace.* The call of early Marxists for women to enter the labor force did not actually represent a radical break with the Tsarist past. By 1917 women constituted 40 percent of factory employees in Russia. What changed, of course, was the spread of an ideology supportive of women working outside the home. Work was portrayed not only as a means of contributing to the national economy but also as a source of personal development and even as a prerequisite for a woman to serve as an appropriate role model for her children. Expanding educational opportunities facilitated women's employment prospects.

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This work ideology fit well with the leadership's goal of rapid economic development, the result being that women's labor today represents the backbone of the Soviet economy. According to published data, the Soviet Union has the highest female labor force participation rates of any industrial society; over 51 percent of all workers are women. The questionable work ethic among Soviet males has led to key jobs in industry and construction being filled more and more by women.

Despite the important economic role women play in the economy, however, Soviet data indicate that women have not moved up the career ladder on a par with men:

- Salaries for women are only 65 to 75 percent those of men.
- Women predominate in low-skilled, low-paying occupations including service industry work and clerical positions.
- Women fill a disproportionately low share of the more prestigious and powerful positions in Soviet society.

Although women constitute 40.6 percent of all science workers, only 10.9 percent of those holding the title of academician are female. In the political arena, no women are on the Politburo, and only 8.5 percent of Central Committee members (full and candidate) are women.

Beyond the professional restrictions Soviet women face, they continue to bear most of the burden for running Soviet households. Soviet men show little inclination to share household duties, thus perpetuating a highly unequal division of domestic labor.

According to Soviet data, although men and women devote equal time to paid employment, women devote an extra 28 hours a week to housework compared with 12 for men. Child-care facilities, moreover, remain inadequate, forcing women to take additional unpaid maternity leave despite the loss of earnings and job opportunities involved.

Efforts by women to improve their quality of life have centered mainly on limiting family size, with abortion representing the primary method of birth control.

Western demographers estimate that, on average, each Soviet woman has six abortions in her lifetime—12 times the US figure. Even this estimate may underestimate the actual figure in the European sections of the country, because Muslim women have fewer abortions than their European compatriots. Discontent among Soviet women takes more destructive forms as well: female alcoholism and drug abuse are on the rise, according to Soviet studies discussed at a June 1981 psychiatric conference in Moscow. Recent press articles have warned about the adverse effects of alcohol and drugs on the health of both women and infants.

*The Family.* The Soviet family is also coming under stress. The Soviet divorce rate—3.5 per 1,000 population—is exceeded only by that of the United States. According to a number of Soviet sociologists, the family is shrinking, dissolving, and doing a poor job of creating the "new Soviet man." An article in *Literaturnaya gazeta* sums up these shortcomings in the four major roles attributed to the family:

- The birth rate in the majority of Soviet families is down sharply with the average family size now between one and two children.
- The home takes too much energy, requiring some billion hours of labor a year and an army of 120 to 130 million service workers.
- The family is falling short in its role of educating the young.
- The family is not adequately satisfying the needs of the individual for love and humanism.

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The task of creating a stable family environment appears fraught with so much difficulty that many Soviets are opting out of the process altogether. Singles now number in the tens of millions according to a recent article in *Novy mir*, and some Soviet authorities see a trend toward rejection of marriage and child-bearing in favor of a more independent and carefree lifestyle.

In explaining the deterioration of the family unit, Soviet experts point to several causes including urbanization, industrialization, alcoholism, and the feckless attitude of men toward marriage and family. Soviet writers have only recently begun to recognize that female liberation, rising levels of female education and labor force participation, and family stability may not be compatible. Living conditions, particularly shortages in housing for newlyweds, scarcities of daily consumables, and the deadening chore of searching and standing in line for them, are also pinpointed as obstacles to stable family life and having children.

*Help for the Family.* The key problem for the leadership is how to achieve an optimal balance between the contribution of women to the labor force and their family roles. The irreplaceable contribution of women to both production and reproduction militates against measures that would seriously limit their roles in either domain. The ongoing controversy is reflected in the Soviet academic literature. Some family sociologists favor the present balance of work and family roles and focus on reducing the tension between the two by expanding the availability of consumer goods and services. A number of Soviet scholars and journalists who are more concerned about present demographic trends, including Soviet demographer V. Pervedentsev, advocate an all-out effort to increase the social status and material rewards of motherhood. For now the Soviet leadership appears to be leaning in this direction. The present Five-Year Plan, with its paid maternity leave provisions, is designed to get Soviet women, particularly in the European areas of the Soviet Union and Siberia, to have more children.

Yet, the institutional resources committed to studying and solving the problem remain skimpy. Two years ago it was suggested that a "family council" be established under the Academy of Sciences to encourage discussion of the ailing Soviet marriage and

family institutions. According to *Pravda*, this plan still awaits implementation. As one British sociologist has suggested, Soviet scholars are caught trying to find Marxist-Leninist explanations for problems that in theory should not exist under socialism. Empirical research on this topic is also hampered by samplings that are too small and uncoordinated to provide reliable conclusions. Such shortcomings suggest that the Soviets have an uphill battle to remedy this problem.

#### Alcoholism

Almost every event or celebration in Soviet life, such as a wedding, a funeral, a pay raise, or a bonus, is marked by intense drinking. The press contains frequent complaints about drinking bouts on payday of factory workers that often end in public brawls or domestic disturbances. Heavy drinking causes significant disruptions in work, reduces labor productivity, leads to industrial and traffic accidents, has a high correlation with crime (including juvenile delinquency), contributes to family instability, and impacts negatively on the health of the population. Although Soviet authorities have on many occasions expressed deep concern about the effect of alcohol abuse on Soviet society, the regime's vested interest in the sale of alcoholic beverages conflicts with measures designed to reduce consumption. Moreover, alcohol consumption functions as a kind of safety valve for pent-up social discontent. Such discontent would be more troublesome to the regime if it took different forms such as demonstrations or strikes.

The seriousness of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union is implied by the paucity of statistical information available on the subject. Since the 1960s, much of the statistical data that had been published, including information on the production, consumption, and distribution of alcoholic beverages, has disappeared from standard reference sources. Using Soviet technical sources and regional statistical handbooks, however, Western scholars, principally Vladimir Treml, have been able to construct estimates of alcohol consumption patterns.

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alcoholic beverages and the inadequacy of medical attention to the problem (death from alcohol poisoning can usually be prevented by prompt medical attention).

Soviet press accounts affirm the dimensions of the problem. For example, an article written jointly by an economist and a sociologist recently argued that "drunkenness is a threat to the social well-being of the entire nation and is a threat to the vital capabilities of the population." In a recent issue of *Moloday kommunist*, R. Lirnyan, a professor at the Academy of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, reported that 37 percent of the male work force is chronically drunk, compared with 11 percent in 1925. The number of drinkers under the age of 18 has also risen sharply. In 1925 only 16.6 percent of those under age 18 drank, whereas the proportion of today's under-age-18 drinkers exceeds 90 percent. Alcoholism among women is growing as well. A study appearing in *Literaturnaya gazeta* found that, in 1970, one in 10 alcoholics was female—a jump from the rate of one in 15 women at the beginning of the century.

Published statistics based on consumption of state-produced alcohol do not give the full picture, however. Illegal *samogon* (Russian slang for moonshine) has traditionally contributed a major share of the total alcohol consumed in the USSR. Although the real magnitude of this consumption is not known because the Soviets do not publish data on the subject, Trembl and at least one Soviet academician estimate that the daily consumption of *samogon* increased from less than 1 liter per urban adult in the period 1955-57, to over 2 liters per adult in the late 1970s.

*Alcohol's Toll.* The social consequences of drinking are evident in Soviet publications, which have reported that more than half of all crimes in the USSR in 1971 were committed by intoxicated people, including 90.9 percent of the cases of hooliganism, 76.4 percent of reported rapes, and 73.9 percent of all murders. In the case of teenagers, according to an April 1979 edition of *Trud*, 70 to 80 percent of crimes committed were linked to drinking.

The principal conclusion emerging from Trembl's estimates is that alcoholism is on the rise in the Soviet Union. According to his figures, per capita consumption of state-produced alcohol reached 9.23 liters in 1979, an increase of 285 percent since 1955. According to reliable estimates based on demographic data and forensic medicine reports, moreover, deaths from acute alcohol poisoning have been rising very rapidly since the late 1960s and reached 40,000 in 1976 or 15.9 deaths per 100,000 population. (In the same year, deaths in the United States from alcohol poisoning were recorded at 400 or 0.18 per 100,000 population.) Such grim statistics are believed to reflect both the low quality of ethanol used in the production of

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Consumption of alcohol is also a major contributing factor to the rise in the divorce rate in the USSR. In a study conducted in Orel (a region of the Russian Republic) in the early 1970s, 71.4 percent of the women who filed for divorce cited their husbands' drinking as the primary cause for this action. A similar study completed in Riga in 1977 found that approximately 30 percent of the couples filing for divorce mentioned alcohol abuse as the main reason for the dissolution of their marriage. A recent study by Soviet demographer V. Pervedentsev deemed that nearly half of all divorces initiated by women were on the basis of their husbands' drunkenness.

Losses to the Soviet economy caused by alcoholism are significant as well. According to Western scholars, total medical and rehabilitation expenditures for alcoholics approximate 2.2 billion rubles annually. In addition, alcoholism is responsible for losses in productivity, reduced quality of output, industrial accidents, and high turnover of personnel. A Soviet journal has reported that drinking on the job reduces productivity up to 30 percent. Regarding the impact of alcohol abuse on the quality of output, one study in *Eko* (the journal of the Siberian branch of the Academy of Sciences) concluded that 40 grams of alcohol decreased a worker's precision of movement by over 10 percent. Every fourth industrial accident in the Soviet Union, moreover, is the result of drinking as are approximately 37 percent of all traffic fatalities. In 1975 nine out of 10 cases of tardiness or absenteeism were reported to be caused by drinking.

Economic losses also result from the diversion of ever larger amounts of the country's agricultural output to produce alcohol. In addition to the agricultural products used by the state to manufacture alcoholic beverages, the production of *samogon* preempts a significant share of the agricultural output as well. Particularly wasteful is the distillation of *samogon* from such ingredients as bread - the price of which is heavily subsidized by the state and thus less costly than other ingredients for moonshiners to use.

Infant mortality is another serious consequence of overconsumption of alcohol. F. Ugllov, a full member of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences, has called attention to this danger and also to the relationship between alcoholic mothers and the increase in

Table 2  
Personal Income and Expenditures on Alcoholic Beverages Per Person Age 15 Years and Older, by Republic, 1970<sup>a</sup>

	Personal Income	Expenditures on Alcohol	Expenditures on Alcohol in Personal Income (percent)
USSR	1,124	146.5	13.0
RSFSR	1,174	185.9	15.8
Ukraine	1,033	108.2	10.5
Belorussia	1,054	119.9	11.4
Uzbekistan	1,078	92.3	8.6
Kazakhstan	1,118	162.1	14.5
Georgia	1,027	65.1	6.3
Azerbaijan	942	61.3	6.5
Lithuania	1,289	141.9	11.0
Moldavia	1,012	86.9	8.5
Latvia	1,276	179.1	14.0
Kirghizia	993	131.1	13.2
Tajikistan	941	65.0	6.9
Armenia	1,145	74.9	6.5
Turkmenistan	1,142	104.7	9.2
Estonia	1,365	189.4 <sup>b</sup>	13.9

<sup>a</sup> Personal income data converted to income per person 15 years old and older. Expenditures on alcoholic beverages include public dining markup.

<sup>b</sup> Estonia is the only Soviet republic for which sales of "other foods" including alcoholic beverages have not been published since the early 1960s. The value used here is a rough estimate.

Source: Vladimir G. Treml, *Alcohol in the USSR*, 1982. Duke University Press.

percentage of retarded children. According to the Moscow Psychiatric Research Institute, among alcoholic women the frequency of miscarriages, stillbirths, and deaths of babies in the first two years of life is three to five times the national average. One-third of all children born to alcoholic mothers are mentally retarded.

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*Dealing With the Problem.* Both Western and Soviet experts attribute the severity of alcoholism in the USSR to urbanization, industrialization, boredom, and the lack of consumer goods. The regime has not fought the problem by addressing fundamental causes. Rather, authorities have relied on propaganda, medical treatment, and price increases. Soviet officials use the media, film, and lectures to publicize the various negative effects of heavy drinking, but such propaganda campaigns have fallen on deaf ears.

Although the Soviets maintain an extensive system of treatment facilities for alcoholic patients ranging from sobering-up stations to labor-treatment camps, the effectiveness of these treatment strategies remains low. At the All-Union Psychiatric Congress in June 1981, it was reported that in the Ukraine between 85 and 90 percent of those treated revert to alcohol abuse. A Soviet medical report issued in 1974 also revealed that at least half the patients at labor-treatment camps resort to former drinking patterns soon after release. The lack of success of the Soviet medical establishment in treating alcoholism is explained by both the absence of a national program to coordinate treatment and the fact that, according to a study by a Soviet Ukrainian in 1981, 90 percent of all alcoholics receiving treatment have had the problem five to 10 years before receiving initial therapy.

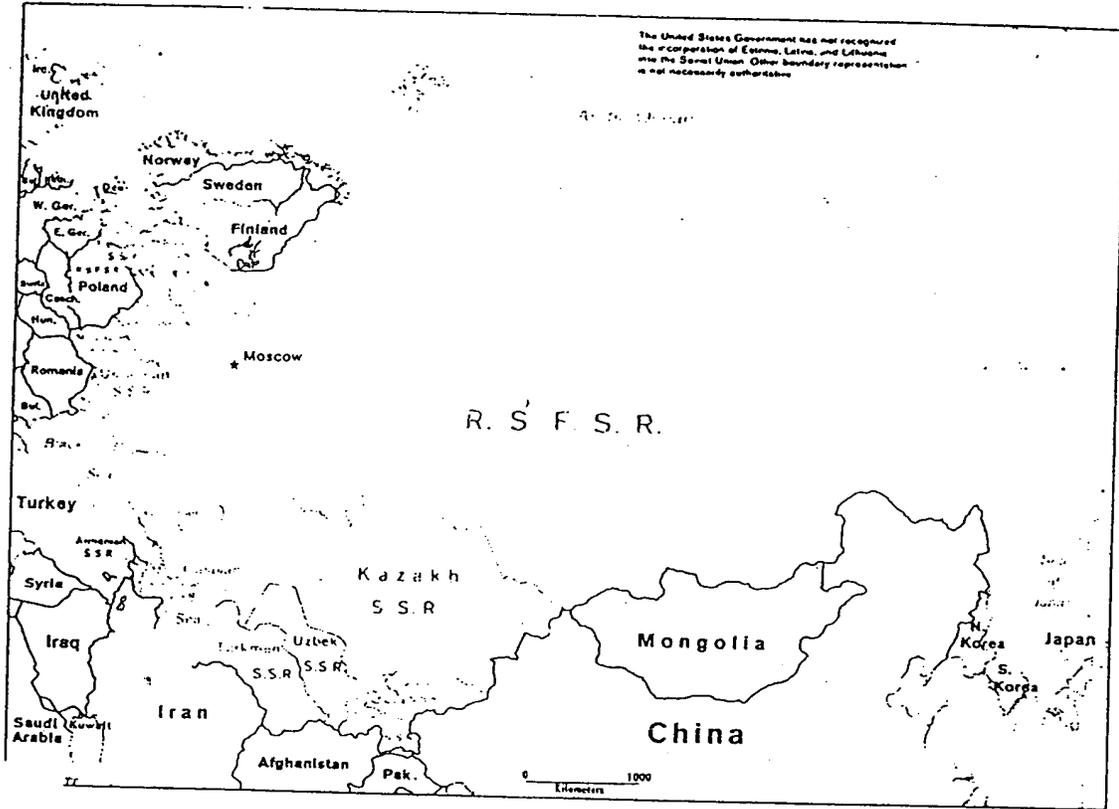
The Soviets have also sought to enact stricter laws against those who are found intoxicated at work, including deprivation of bonuses and denial of permission to use recreation centers. The effectiveness of these laws has been minimal, however, because labor shortages often force employers to cover up for alcoholic workers.

Along with the monopoly on legal production and sale of alcohol, the regime has attempted to use pricing to control consumption as well. A September 1981 decree raised the retail price of alcohol by an average of 17 to 27 percent. Soviet figures indicate that, on average, about every tenth ruble in the family budget is spent on alcohol and that in some rural areas purchases of spirits consume nearly 30 percent of family incomes (see table 2). In fact, the distilling industry provides the largest income (10 to 12 percent of all state revenues) to the Soviet treasury of any single production enterprise in the country.

Rather than curbing Soviet citizens' intake of alcohol, the price increases appear to have led to more of the family budget going toward the purchase of alcohol or, in some cases, individuals switching to the cheaper, illegally distilled *samogon*. How the regime copes with costs of alcohol abuse in the USSR is a continuing dilemma, with important socioeconomic dimensions.

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# Soviet Union



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## The Nationality Issue

Soviet nationality policy—the granting of nationalist linguistic, territorial, and, to some extent, cultural and administrative autonomy; raising the standard of living; expanding the education base; and using police force when needed—has been largely successful. Currently, there is no widespread, politically disruptive protest or dissent among the 20 major nationality groups. Recent social and economic trends that are not readily responsive to policy, however, provide the basis for development of nationality discontent in the country: a rising national consciousness among the many ethnic groups, demographic change and economic problems, and the erosion of the supranational Communist ideology as a legitimating force. Accordingly, nationality discontent represents a latent though potent vulnerability of the Soviet regime.

### Sources of Conflict

Some aspects of Soviet nationality policy create tension between the regime and its minority peoples. Efforts to promote bilingualism—use of Russian as a second, if not a first, language—have created some resentment, and recent demographic policy has seemed to favor Slavs. Ethnic issues have, moreover, become interconnected with the party's efforts to allocate scarce resources among competing regional claimants.

### Russification

Language policy is a sensitive issue in the USSR. Soviet authorities have consciously sought to make Russian the *lingua franca* of the Soviet Union both to facilitate communication and, most importantly, to integrate, if not assimilate, many diverse people into a common culture. Such linguistic Russification has been partially successful. The 1979 census shows that use of Russian as a second language is increasing (see table 3), but complete linguistic assimilation is far in the future. Only 13 percent of the non-Russian population use Russian as a first language. Soviet efforts to push it, moreover, have produced a backlash of resentment. Western correspondent [ ] reported that in Georgia, for example, there were protests in 1978 against dropping Georgian as the

state language of the republic (the government-backed down). In 1980, 365 Georgian scholars issued a public appeal for the retention of the native language in academic life, and Western observers reported that in March 1981 more than 1,000 Georgians staged a public demonstration to express their concern about language policy. In the Baltic republics there have been similar protests over Soviet language policies. Foreigners—mistakenly thought to be Russians by Georgians and Balts—have often been treated with hostility according to accounts from travelers.

### Demographic Policy

Demographic trends are also likely to increase nationality tensions and complicate Soviet decisions on resource allocations. According to published Soviet data, the Russians are losing their majority status, and the Slavic and European areas of the USSR are short of labor. Although the regime has adopted a differentiated demographic policy designed to spur population growth first in the Far Eastern, Siberian, and European regions of the Soviet Union and then in Central Asia and the Caucasus, this effort can have an impact only in the long run. The policy, moreover, will not allow the regime to avoid the important economic, social, and political choices that will cut across nationality concerns during this decade.

### Centralization Versus Decentralization

Economic administration and decisionmaking are also made more difficult because of the multinational character of the Soviet state. The need for greater economic effectiveness generates pressures for decentralization, which in turn could diminish the party's political control. Khrushchev's decision to decentralize economic management under *Sovnarkhozy* (regional economic councils) was quickly reversed in the early 1960s, at least partly because it appeared to encourage localist tendencies. Decentralization, nonetheless, still has its proponents, with Georgian leader Shevardnadze among the most vocal. The issue is especially contentious now as aspects of the new

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**Table 3**  
**Native Language Affinity and Knowledge**  
**of Russian As a Second Language**

	Percentage Regarding Language of Given Nationality as Native Language			Percentage Claiming a Good Knowledge of Russian as a Second Language	
	1959	1970	1979	1970	1979
Russians	99.8	99.8	99.4	0.1	0.1
Ukrainians	87.7	85.7	82.8	36.3	49.8
Belorusians	84.2	80.6	74.2	49.0	57.0
Uzbeks	98.4	98.6	98.5	14.5	49.3
Kazakhs	98.4	98.0	97.5	41.8	52.3
Tajiks	98.1	98.5	97.8	15.4	29.6
Turkmens	98.9	98.9	98.7	15.4	25.4
Kirghiz	98.7	98.8	97.9	19.1	29.4
Azerbaijanis	97.6	98.2	97.9	16.6	29.5
Armenians	89.9	91.4	90.7	30.1	38.6
Georgians	98.6	98.4	98.3	21.3	26.7
Lithuanians	97.8	97.9	97.9	35.9	52.1
Latvians	95.1	95.2	95.0	45.2	56.7
Estonians	95.2	95.5	95.3	29.0	34.2
Moldavians	95.2	95.0	93.2	36.1	47.4

Soviet food program (May 1982) are being debated—with proponents of regional control of agriculture at odds with Moscow-based proponents of centralized control.

#### Resources

Allocation of resources among competing administrative and regional claimants is difficult in the best of times. This issue has become particularly sharp in the last decade and will undoubtedly be a highly contentious issue in the 1980s as resources become increasingly scarce. Put simply, the Soviets do not have the resources to invest huge sums equally and simultaneously in the sparsely populated but resource-rich areas of Siberia, the older industrial areas of European Russia and the Ukraine, and the USSR's rapidly growing, but underdeveloped, Muslim areas. The regional investment issue contributed in part to a leadership purge in the Ukraine in the early 1970s.

#### Problems on the Periphery

Nationalism has not lost its political or emotional force in the USSR. The main forces of integration, modernization, and industrialization have themselves contributed to the growth of discrete ethnic feelings. Several areas—Central Asia, the Baltics, the Caucasus, and the Ukraine—have populations that exhibit aspects of ethnic self-assertion that could, over the very long term, lead to ethnic unrest and nationalist turmoil.

#### The Baltic Republics

Long-term demographic, economic, and social trends in the Baltic republics—particularly in Estonia and Latvia—favor gradual assimilation of these groups

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**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Russian and Baltic Population**  
**Growth, 1959, 1970, and 1979**

	Number of Persons of Given Nationality (thousands)			Percentage Increase	
	1959	1970	1979	1960-70	1971-79
Russians	114,114	29,015	137,397	13.1	6.5
Lithuanians	2,326	2,665	2,851	14.6	7.0
Latvians	1,400	1,430	1,439	2.1	0.6
Estonians	989	1,007	1,020	1.8	1.3

into the dominant Russian mold. The pressures generated by these developments, nonetheless, have led to sporadic violence and dissident activity and will make Moscow's relationship with the Baltics peoples contentious for some time to come. Moscow appears to believe that these problems are manageable and allows its local prefects some leeway in appealing to local concerns. The Soviet leadership, however, has done little to alter policies that endanger the identity and native languages of the Baltic republics, and continued social strife over this issue is likely.

*Population Trends in the Baltics.* Demographic developments pose a significant threat to the preservation of a distinctive national identity among Estonians and Latvians (see table 4). Both groups have very low birth and marriage rates, and high divorce and abortion rates. The favorable economic conditions in these areas—a comparatively high standard of living, a good technical base, and relatively higher productivity—combined with a manpower shortage have, furthermore, attracted huge numbers of Russian immigrants. As a result, both native groups are likely to become minorities in their own republics by the end of the century. Ethnic Latvians comprise only 54 percent of their republic's population, and Estonians represent less than 65 percent of theirs. In both republics, moreover, Russians enjoy majority status in major cities including the capitals of Riga and Tallinn.

*Local Hostility.* Latvians and Estonians recognize the link between industrialization, Russian immigration, and Russification pressure. Petitions have circulated

protesting various industrial projects and hydroelectric and mining enterprises. In the late 1950s, even party officials in Latvia opposed expansion of heavy industry in the republic on the grounds that it would require the importation of Russian workers and lead to a further dilution of Latvians. This nationalist opposition led Moscow to purge the native Latvian party leadership.

the recent economic slowdown and the subsequent deterioration in food supplies have also had a souring effect on relations between the Balts and the Russians. The Baltic republics have traditionally enjoyed a relatively plentiful supply of meat and dairy products and blame the Russians for the reversal in the situation, dating from the mid-1970s. In late 1976 meat virtually disappeared from Latvian markets. Residents of the republic were convinced that locally produced foodstuffs were being exported contrary to republic needs. A rash of violent incidents during 1977-78, including the sabotaging of trains headed for the Russian Republic and the setting of fires at meat warehouses, suggested widespread resentment. By 1979 public discontent had also reached serious levels in Estonia. Western visitors to the capital were struck by the bitter public mood, and there were persistent rumors that assassination attempts had been made against party first secretary Vayno.

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Language policy has become an even more sensitive issue. The migration of Russians into the Baltics has brought with it increased demand for Russian language schools and increased pressure to use Russian in business transactions. In at least some areas of Latvia and Estonia, Russian has become a prerequisite for getting a good job or a good education. This threat to local languages has spurred the development of anti-Russian feeling and led to civil disturbances protesting the heavy promotion of Russian at the expense of native languages. (

Agitation over the language issue reached crisis proportions in Estonia in the fall of 1980. According to European press reports, several thousand students staged protests in Tallinn and other cities against the compulsory use of Russian, the scarcity of Estonian language publications, and the replacement of the Estonian Minister of Education with a Russian. Sixty Estonian intellectuals later sent a letter to officials calling for the removal of restrictions on the use of Estonian and for measures to redress the heavy influx of Russians to their republic.

The protests appear to have had some impact. Republic leaders seem more solicitous toward Estonian culture and language usage, and an all-union conference on nationalities held in Latvia received wide publicity.

*Lithuania Is "Different."* Russification pressures are much less severe in Lithuania. The population growth rate among Catholic Lithuanians is much higher than in the other two Baltic republics (see table 4). The republic remains predominately rural, and immigration of Russians has been limited. Lithuanians, as a result, still make up 80 percent of the republic's population.

Lithuanian nationalism, nonetheless, is very strong and is directed against the Russians. As is the case with Polish nationalism, the Roman Catholic Church is closely identified with Lithuanian nationalism. Despite regime pressure on believers and restrictions on the training of new priests, officials acknowledge that 75 percent of Lithuanians identify with the Catholic faith. Regime harassment has, nonetheless, driven much of the Church's activity underground. This underground activity includes the publishing of the

*sanit-dai* (illegal) periodical *Chronicle*, the longest standing dissident publication in Lithuania. In 1979 the Church even spearheaded a petition drive (collecting 350,000 signatures) demanding Lithuanian independence. (

#### *Ambivalence Over Poland.* [

] developments in Poland appear to have aroused mixed feelings in the Baltic area. On the one hand, many native residents admire the courage and initiative of Polish workers in pressing the regime. On the other hand, they believe that Poland already has a higher standard of living than the USSR and resent Soviet assistance that subsidizes Polish consumption. There appears to be widespread agreement, moreover, that Solidarity-type movements are simply not possible in the USSR.

Local authorities, nonetheless, apparently believe that Polish developments could produce some sympathy and made some largely symbolic adjustments in policy in the first months after worker unrest in Poland in August 1980. Officials in Latvia and Lithuania exhibited a new concern for workers' rights and interests in an attempt to head off any local agitation inspired by the Polish model. In both Latvia and Lithuania, workers were elevated to membership in each republic's Central Committee Bureau, an unusual honor.

Despite the manifestations of nationalist discontent, the nationalist movements in the Baltic areas appear to suffer from a lack of formal leadership. Nationalist groups lack consensus on goals, and they have failed to attract a broadly based membership. Most of these groups have quickly evaporated in the face of KGB pressure. Although the Baltic peoples tenaciously cling to their language and culture, political autonomy or independence is not a realistic option, especially in the face of long-term demographic trends. Given this situation, the strategy of permitting some degree of religious and cultural freedom while at the same time dealing harshly with political dissent should serve to isolate nationalist groups and undermine their popular appeal.

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### The Ukraine

The Ukrainians are the largest and most influential national minority in the USSR. Their republic is the most populous, politically powerful, and economically important of the 14 minority republics. According to the 1979 census, Ukrainians comprise 16 percent of the USSR's population and 74 percent of the population of the Ukrainian Republic. Politically, Ukrainians have fared well in Moscow, gaining substantial political representation since Stalin's death. On the local level, the Ukrainian party is the largest regional party organization in the USSR, and its upper echelons are dominated by Ukrainians.

Although the Ukraine is relatively well integrated politically and socially into the Soviet state, potential problem areas remain. There has never been a strong Russian presence in the western part of the Ukraine, which was annexed by the Soviets during World War II. Less than 5 percent of the population in most western oblasts and under 8 percent in all of the western oblasts are Russian. The Uniate Church, moreover, a symbol of Ukrainian ethnic identity, is also centered in the western part of the republic. Despite the antireligious pressures on it and the periodic repressions of the Stalin and Khrushchev years, the Church remains loyal to Rome and maintains ties with coreligionists in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. It could serve as the focus of nationalist activity in the future.

The active promotion of the Russian language has been bitterly resented by Ukrainian dissidents as well. Khrushchev's proposal in the late 1950s making Ukrainian an elective (rather than required) language in Russian schools in the republic generated considerable local opposition. *Samizdat* (illegal) publications have continued to protest the regime's handling of Ukrainian language and culture.

Recent reporting indicates that language assimilation pressures have not abated. Russian remains the predominant language in higher education; in 1980 apparently only 34 percent of lectures at universities in the republic were offered in Ukrainian. A significant portion of literary and scientific publications in the Ukraine, moreover, are only offered in Russian

Ukrainian dissent has evolved away from the armed anti-Soviet resistance of World War II and the immediate postwar years toward a nationalism that is avowedly Marxist in content and appeals to Ukrainian elites. Oles Honchar, for example, published a novel critical of the Russification process while retaining his position as head of the Ukrainian Writers Union. The Ukrainian party leadership (under former party leader Pyotr Shelest) has even used Ukrainian nationalism as a manipulative tool to get the most from Moscow while fostering relative toleration of such sentiment at home. Shelest protected some Ukrainian nationalists in the 1960s while he championed economic decentralization and pushed to get the most for the Ukraine's coal sector, while publicly complaining that his republic was not receiving its fair share of resource allocations in comparison with the Tyumen oilfields. Shelest even wrote a history of the Ukrainian people that veered away from heretofore traditional Soviet interpretations of Ukrainian nationalism. Such actions made Shelest vulnerable to charges of bourgeois nationalism and led in part to his removal as Ukrainian party leader in 1972 and dismissal from the Politburo in 1973.

*Regime Crackdown.* Although there remains a pervasive sense of Ukrainian ethnic identity and pride in Ukrainian language, history, and culture, nationality-based separatism is a more latent than actual threat now. The authorities have been very successful in controlling all kinds of dissent in the Ukraine by arresting the dissenters. Vladimir Shcherbitskiy, the current party head, moreover, has moved effectively to rein in the nationalist manifestations tolerated by his predecessor through extensive personnel changes among administrators of cultural affairs.

*Impact of Poland.* The Ukraine, like the Baltics, is susceptible to East European influence. The western Ukraine has historical ties with countries of this region, and Ukrainians are on both sides of the Soviet border. As with the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968, Soviet Ukrainians have shown interest in events in Poland. Ukrainians followed events in Poland by listening to Polish television and radiobroadcasts and by reading underground

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of Russian and Central Asian**  
**Population Growth, 1959, 1970, and 1979**

	Number of Persons of Given Nationality (thousands)			Percentage Increase	
	1959	1970	1979	1960-70	1971-79
Russians	114,114	129,015	137,397	13.1	6.5
Uzbeks	6,015	9,145	12,456	52.9	35.5
Kazakhs	3,622	5,299	6,556	46.3	23.7
Tajiks	1,397	2,136	2,898	52.9	35.7
Turkmen	1,002	1,523	2,028	52.2	33.0
Kirghiz	969	1,452	1,906	49.8	31.3

newspapers. A report received during 1981 indicates that Polish activists were trying to influence labor actions in the Ukraine by sending in leaflets and pamphlets and directing broadcasts to inhabitants of the western portion of the republic. The result of such activity is hard to gauge. Although events in Poland, prior to martial law, may have raised the vague hope for eventual change in the Ukraine, the regime has sought to counter the impact by stepped-up propaganda efforts.

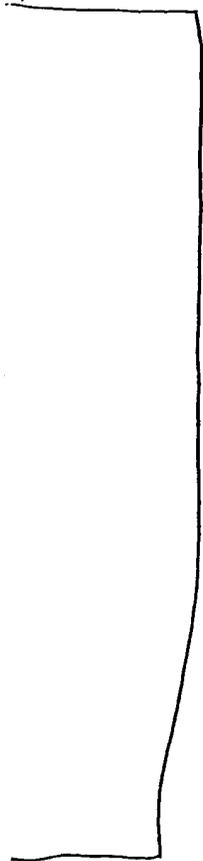
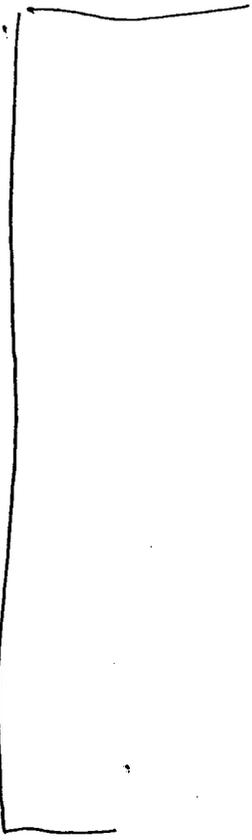
#### Central Asia

This area remains culturally and socially resistant to Soviet assimilation. Islam, despite regime efforts, continues to have a strong influence on the way of life in Muslim areas and serves to preserve a strong sense of national identity. This distinctiveness has complicated Soviet demographic policy, resource allocation decisions, and military conscription. It does not seem likely, however, to produce significant violent opposition to the regime in the near future.

*Demographic Trends.* A demographic explosion is occurring in Central Asia (see table 5). Birth rates in the Muslim republics are from 1.5 to 2.5 times those in predominantly Slavic republics. By the year 2000, these republics will contain some 20 percent of the Soviet population, up from some 15 percent at present. Moreover, by the end of the century 40 percent of all Soviet children under age 10 will come from Muslim areas

Census data for 1979 indicate that Muslims are strongly inclined to concentrate in their native areas. For the major Muslim ethnic groups, at least 77 percent and as many as 93 percent reside in their own republics. This stay-at-home attitude has complicated the regime's efforts to use excess Central Asian labor in European Russia and Siberia. The Kremlin apparently will not be able to use this surplus labor pool effectively without making significant cultural concessions and providing more material incentives or using coercion.

*Allocation Demands.* The growing population in Central Asia is already increasing pressure on the regime to increase allocations for industrial development and for services to avoid a decline in the standard of living and employment. Soviet planners have recently acknowledged that such demographic considerations should play a greater role in central planning. A Gosplan deputy department chief even argued that all new industries should be located in regions with high population growth. Central Asian leaders (Kunayev, Rashidov, and Gapurov), moreover, lobbied hard for more funds for water diversion projects at the 26th Party Congress. Yet, the Soviet economy is already overburdened by defense expenditures, the need to modernize increasingly obsolete industrial plants and equipment in the European USSR, and the desire to exploit the resources of the Far East and Siberia. In Tashkent in March 1982, Brezhnev, in fact, went out



of his way to dampen demands for more resources and to call for Central Asians to migrate to areas where they are needed more.

*Implications for the Military.* The demographic problem also has ramifications for the military. The increasing non-Slav share of the draft-age population will alter the composition of the Soviet armed forces. A recent CIA study estimates that, in 1980, non-Slavs had risen to about a third of the draft-age population for the first time Russians were in the minority and it projects that nearly 40 percent of 18-year-olds will be non-Slavs by the end of the decade. The Muslim republics will contribute some 30 percent of the draft-age population in that period. This growing

number of Muslim conscripts in the Soviet military could affect the army's capability, morale, and reliability.

The Soviet military requires educated soldiers who are proficient in Russian, but Central Asian recruits do not have such proficiency. As a consequence, Muslim soldiers have been relegated to rear services, menial positions and construction troops.

The presence of a higher percentage of Central Asian troops in the coming years will also place pressure on the regime to integrate these troops into the military more effectively. The military leadership has already demonstrated sensitivity to nationality tensions in the



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armed forces and Russian chauvinism among its officers. An article published in *Krasnaya zvezda* in 1980 appeared aimed at countering discriminatory practices suffered by enlisted men and officers of minority origin. Defense Minister Ustinov's Armed Forces Day address (23 February 1982) echoed this theme, stressing the need to increase non-Slavic representation in the officer corps.

Early in 1982 a new conscription law essentially eliminated educational deferments. This stop-gap measure will have only a marginal effect on the "yellowing" of the Soviet military, however. It also will add to the Soviets' difficulty in providing an educated civilian labor force.

The Afghan experience, against the broader backdrop of social and ethnic friction between Russians and non-Slavs, suggests also that the Soviet General Staff may become less confident about the loyalty or obedience of units in the event of potentially unpopular future military interventions. The invasion, particularly in its early stages, appears to have aroused some resentment among Central Asians. Riots were reported at a Tashkent induction center, and spontaneous demonstrations against the intervention also occurred at the military commissariats in Issyk and Chilik, Kazakhstan. Muslim reservists in Afghanistan, moreover, may have refused to fire on their Muslim brothers in Afghanistan and in some cases reportedly deserted to the other side. The rapid replacement of Central Asian reservists in Afghanistan by regular and mostly Slavic troops suggests in any case that they were not effective in dealing with the situation the Soviets encountered there.

*Islamic Fundamentalism.* Moscow has always viewed religion as a competitor for the loyalty of the Soviet people and has dealt directly with this threat in Muslim areas. The regime has been fairly successful in controlling the public manifestations of Islam by limiting the number of mosques, supervising the practice of the faith through police and governmental administration, and restricting the number of admissions to its theological seminaries located in Bukhara and Tashkent.

Islam, nonetheless, maintains a strong grip on the culture of the Central Asian peoples and hinders the creation of a uniform national culture. According to Soviet sociologists and Western newsmen, virtually all Soviet Muslims continue to marry within the faith, circumcise their sons, bury their dead in their own cemeteries, and observe a host of distinctive customs that the regime has struggled for years to eradicate. To judge by articles in the press and leadership speeches, local officials are troubled, moreover, by the number of "unofficial mosques" and the continued existence of Sufi brotherhoods (semisecret religious groups), which once formed the backbone of the most militant anti-Soviet movement in the Caucasus. The sensitivity to Sufi influence was indicated in a recent article in a party journal by a Muslim party leader who inveighed against "the acts of religious fanatics and self-appointed mullahs."

The revolution in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, moreover, have made Islamic fundamentalism a current issue for the leadership, and these events play on the psychological fears of the Moscow-based leadership. Numerous public statements demonstrate official anxiety on this score. In

1980

then Azerbaijan Party First Secretary Geydar Aliyev emphasized the need for tighter security measures on the Soviet-Iranian border. Aliyev's speech followed a tough statement by the republic KGB head warning that American intelligence services would attempt to use the situations in Iran and Afghanistan to influence Soviet Muslims. The regime has also responded to the potentially destabilizing effects of Islamic fundamentalism with an upswing in antireligious propaganda specifically aimed at Central Asia.

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### Dissent in the Soviet Union

The range of political, religious, and cultural discontent that is expressed in the Soviet dissident movement does not now seriously challenge the regime's political control, but the regime deals with it as if it does. The KGB has moved against "antisocialist elements" with considerable zeal, and many dissident activists have been arrested and harassed.

Although the government has succeeded in isolating and repressing dissident activity (see table 6), the regime's harsh reaction almost assures that the dissident problem will continue. The regime's actions, moreover, reflect its own psychological insecurity and its unwillingness to allow any hint of challenge to its authority. The party, aware of its own evolution from a small conspiratorial group enjoying little popular support to a powerful body in control of the revolutionary process, feels it can take no chances. The leadership is also well aware that popular discontent over issues involving living standards—food, housing, and consumer goods—could in time form the basis for new, and potentially more challenging, dissident movements.

Aside from official repression, the dissident movement has been hampered by its own internal divisions; it has been fragmented, with various groups appealing to diverse internal audiences. The human rights movement, for example, has been unable to broaden its appeal to include workers. Religious and national minorities, moreover, have tended to define their goals narrowly, failing to relate them to the broader struggle for civil liberties. The movement has also lacked a charismatic leader who might through force of personality rally the disparate religious, nationalist, and human rights groups into a cohesive whole.

#### Religious Dissent

Soviet Marxists assert that religion should have no role in a socialist state. The Soviet Communist Party, in turn, has been unwilling to tolerate any rival claim on the loyalty and behavior of Soviet citizens, and it has tried since the first decree on religion in 1918 to suppress religious activity and belief. Although the constitution provides for freedom of religious worship,

it provides no procedural guarantees for exercising this right. The constitution also endorses the right of antireligious propaganda (Article 124) to combat religious beliefs. All former church property is owned by the state, and state permission is required to use it for religious purposes. Religious organizations wishing to hold services must register with the Council for Religious Affairs, the watchdog organ of the Council of Ministers.

According to [ ] church groups—particularly the Russian Orthodox Church—are closely monitored and even penetrated by the KGB. Religious groups that are not sufficiently compliant are not registered by the regime, effectively denying them legal status. Members of such unregistered groups are subject to harassment, and their leaders risk arrest and imprisonment. According to [ ]

[ ] various religious dissenters (especially Pentecostals, whose sects are not officially recognized by the state) have been arrested in large numbers. Jewish emigration has slowed to a trickle—this probably has meant a growth of the "refusenik" (one who has been refused permission to emigrate) ranks—and the small opposition group operating within the Russian Orthodox Church has been decimated by arrests.

Religious belief, nonetheless, remains alive in the Soviet Union. Although no firm count exists, Soviet officials have admitted that as much as 15 to 25 percent of the population are believers. According to [ ] party chief Andropov is concerned, moreover, that young people are being increasingly attracted to religious teachings. The regime has launched a vigorous antireligion campaign to counteract this trend.

#### Protest

In some Soviet republics the traditional religious faith is reinforced by minority nationalism. The local church often acts as a catalyst for nationality movements and as the guardian of a cultural tradition that resists assimilation into the Soviet mainstream. The

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Lithuanian Catholic church and the Ukrainian Uni-ate church, for example, have played central roles in nationality struggles in their respective republics (see pp. 20-21)

Government policies to repress and control religious activity have generated resistance as well. Although the creation of religious councils has allowed the regime to keep tight rein on officially sanctioned religious activity, it has driven many religious groups (for example, the Christian evangelists) underground. Baptists and others have sought the right to establish new religious councils free from government interference, and they have petitioned international organizations to gain the world's attention to improve the lot of their imprisoned coreligionists

More recently, recognizing that any change in regime policy was unlikely, many evangelical Christians have pressured the government for permission to emigrate. The Vashchenko family, residing in the US Embassy in Moscow for four years while seeking to leave the Soviet Union, is perhaps the best example of such discontent. Moreover, according to US Embassy reporting, some 30,000 Pentecostals and Baptists have applied for exit visas, with only a few families being granted approval.

Although the Russian Orthodox Church has long occupied a privileged position in the Soviet state, its obsequious submission to state interests and police

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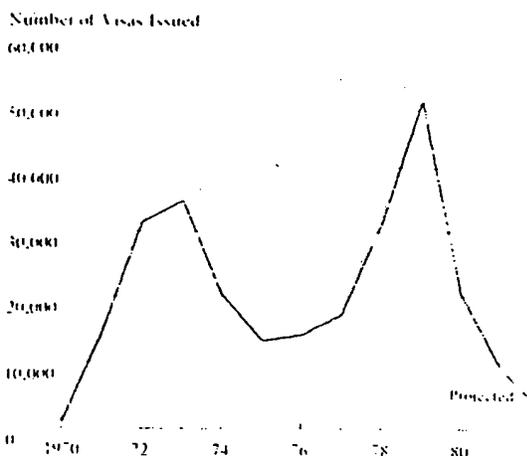
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control has led to dissident activity among some of the Church faithful. Some observers report that unofficial study groups and religious seminars, organized by activists and functioning entirely outside the formal Church structure, have succeeded in awakening interest in the Orthodox faith among young people. So close has been the Church's cooperation with Soviet authorities that small groups of Orthodox believers have charged the Patriarch (leader) with neglecting pastoral duties and responsibilities. The Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers Rights, for example, founded by Father Gleb Yakunin in the mid-1970s, indicted the Church hierarchy for attempting to serve two masters, God and the atheistic state. In a 1978 letter to Church officials, Father Dmitriy Dudko, another activist priest, also attacked the Church for accepting officially imposed limitations on its growth, lacking "independent" bishops, and not recruiting sufficient clergy. (Dudko was subsequently forced to withdraw his criticisms.

The consciousness of Soviet Jews rose during the 1970s, and many of them began to concentrate their efforts on a new goal, emigration. The Soviet Government allowed increasing numbers to emigrate to win trade concessions with the United States, in response to lobbying from the outside, and also because it hoped to defuse Jewish dissidence at home without resorting to internal repression. The downturn in US-Soviet relations, especially after the invasion of Afghanistan, has apparently minimized Soviet concern over outside opinion. In 1979, 50,000 Jews were permitted to leave the Soviet Union, but the number declined to 9,100 in 1981 (see figure). Local Jewish activists from a number of cities including Moscow reported recently that emigration officials had stopped accepting applications altogether. If the trend of visas issued to Jews through September 1982 continues, the number of Jews permitted to leave in 1982 will be about 3,000

According to [ ] the regime has responded to religious protest by arrests of activists, by use of the media to discredit religion, and by the imposition of overt legal controls on the activities of believers. The arrest of Father Yakunin and the public recantation of Father Dudko are typical of the kind of pressure that both the official church leadership and the state exert to keep the clergy and the

### Jewish Emigration From the USSR, 1970-82



religious membership under strict discipline. Viktor Belikh, bishop of an unregistered Pentecostal congregation in the Ukraine, was reported [ ]

[ ] to have been summoned to KGB headquarters in March 1982 and warned that some 70 of his colleagues throughout the Soviet Union faced arrest unless they complied with registration requirements. Nikolay Goretoy, another Pentecostal bishop, was sentenced to seven years in a labor camp and five years of internal exile for helping his parishioners to emigrate. According to *samizdat*, the Western press, [ ] a number of priests and nuns active in the underground church in Lithuania are under arrest, and three priests have been murdered since 1980; their deaths, in the opinion of many believers, officially condoned.

The antireligious theme has been prominent in the press as well. Much of the recent media attack has stressed the linkage of growing religious interest and

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nascent pacifist tendencies among Soviet young people. Religion is also depicted as a Western-inspired threat to the military strength of the USSR. Anti-religious lectures and propaganda have picked up this theme emphasizing that:

- Religious interest among youth is not compatible with security requirements.
- Encouragement for religion comes from "Western bourgeois circles."
- Religion is a form of psychological warfare inspired by the Vatican and the CIA.

Soviet sources report that the CPSU Central Committee adopted a secret decree recently on atheistic education aimed at the Muslim and Catholic populations. The regime has also encouraged the use of secular rituals including formal wedding ceremonies in the Palace of Culture to replace the ceremonial aspects of religion.

The revival of religion is not solely spiritual in content but springs from a desire to rediscover national identity and escape from the barrenness of official ideology. It is, thus, likely to continue. The security organs and party apparatus appear confident that they can control religious discontent, but any increase in repression could engender even more frequent conflict and disturbances.

#### Intellectual Dissent

Like the Soviet religious activists, many Soviet intellectuals have risked harassment, imprisonment, psychiatric detention, and forced exile to express their views about political, economic, and social conditions in the USSR. Their perspectives are diverse, ranging from the Westward-looking internationalism of Andrey Sakharov to the introspective Slavophilism of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Their tactics—letters and petitions, public demonstrations, and *samizdat* publications—have also been varied. Regardless, the regime has been flexible and sophisticated in bringing this activity under control. Although dissidence embarrasses the regime and captures international attention, it does not threaten, at present, Soviet control.

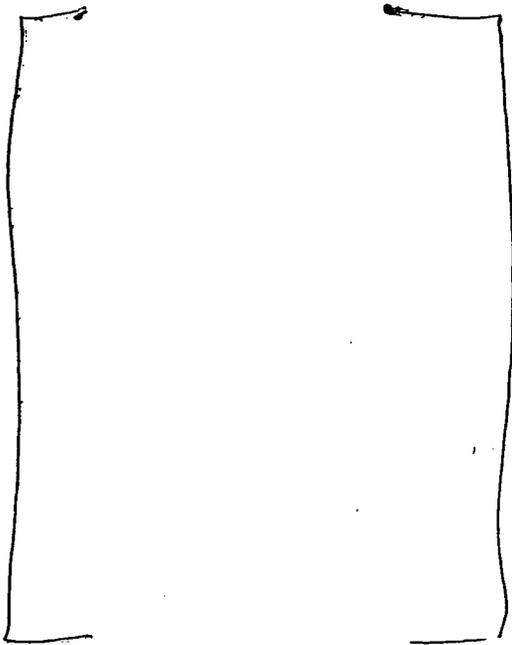
#### The Dissidents

The Soviet dissident movement got its real start in the post-Stalin political thaw. Stalin's successors permitted novelists, poets, and historians to publicize their views and, in a limited way, to criticize past state policy. Khrushchev even used some of these intellectuals—notably Solzhenitsyn—in his campaign to discredit Stalin. ( )

Although the domestic environment became more hostile to such activity under Brezhnev, international conditions have provided dissidents with more opportunity to disseminate their views to a wider audience, and initially with some protection against reprisals. Sakharov particularly has used his visibility in the West and his prestige within the USSR to good advantage. He has spoken out against Soviet foreign and domestic policy, criticized the Soviet human rights record, and organized a Human Rights Committee. In 1982 he staged a hunger strike that forced the regime to allow his stepson's wife to emigrate. ( )

Although Sakharov is the most visible symbol of intellectual discontent in the USSR, others have joined him in dissent by using the human rights provisions of the Helsinki accords. The first such group was established in Moscow in 1976 by physicist Yuriy Orlov. Branches quickly followed in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Armenia, and Georgia. Orlov's group established extensive contacts with other protest groups, and it was especially supportive of various ethnic groups, particularly Jews and ethnic Germans in their efforts to emigrate, a right guaranteed by the accords. ( )

An offshoot of this Helsinki Committee, the Psychiatric Abuse Working Group, headed by Aleksandr Podrabinek, researched psychiatric abuses in the USSR. It collected and publicized information about the uses of psychiatry for political purposes and the confinement of dissenters in mental hospitals as a form of punishment. The resulting work, a 265-page dossier entitled *Punitive Medicine*, was subsequently published in the West by Amnesty International. It detailed over 200 cases of forced confinement and the



widespread use of drugs to "cure" these patients (for instance, get them to recant their views). This book was instrumental in bringing condemnation of Soviet psychiatric practices at an international psychiatric conference held in Honolulu in 1978.

Although the Helsinki groups had concentrated primarily on human rights issues and generally ignored the economic grievances of the populace, two organizations were formed in the late 1970s to protect the rights of workers and to address this previously neglected constituency. The Free Trade Union founded by Vladimir Klebanov in 1977 attempted to offer blue-collar workers some protection against the poor working conditions found in the Donbas region. In 1978 SMOT (Free Inter-Professional Association of Workers) was started by Vladimir Borisov to defend worker interests and to protect employees from arbitrary dismissal and other punitive measures. The organizations were hampered by the lack of a specific political program and by the failure to involve a sufficient number of workers. Shortly before his arrest in April 1981, Vsevolod Kuvakin, the Moscow head of SMOT, noted that the organization had mainly attracted intellectuals, not rank-and-file workers.

#### Reaction and Suppression

The regime has not hesitated to move quickly against opposition groups to ensure their isolation from one another and from the population at large. Although sensitive to Western criticism in the past, the downturn in relations with the West and particularly with the United States has seriously diminished the limited foreign leverage on the regime in the human rights area.

In their efforts to prohibit unsanctioned political activity, the Soviet authorities are greatly aided by legal restrictions on freedom of speech, a judicial system that does not recognize fundamental rights of the accused, and a compliant medical establishment that is willing to label dissidents as sociopsychopaths. Although the Soviet constitution guarantees freedom of speech, press, assembly, and demonstrations, Article 70 of the RSFSR criminal code qualifies these freedoms by prohibiting both "fabrications which defame the Soviet state and social system" and "propaganda carried on for the purpose of weakening the Soviet regime." This article is supplemented by another (190), which forbids the circulation in oral or written form of fabrications that defame the Soviet state and social system. Conviction under these articles can entail imprisonment for up to seven years, with an additional term of internal exile running from two to five years.

These articles have been interpreted so broadly that almost any statement or action can be considered illegal. During Stalin's tenure, even the defacing of a statue or the telling of a political joke could be prosecuted under Article 70. Post-Stalin regimes have generally instituted legal proceedings only as a last resort, preferring to use lesser penalties and frequent visits by the KGB to make the point that an individual's activities could have unhealthy consequences. If warnings are not heeded, sanctions can be progressively tightened from searches of apartments by secret police, to loss of job, to arrests. Often, would-be emigrants are fired from their jobs upon applying for exit visas, denied other work in the field for which

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they are trained, and threatened with punishment under Article 209 (parasitism—illegal failure to work or be employed).

Once dissent has reached the point where legal action is contemplated, the regime has several strategies to choose. Prominent activists like Anatoliy Shcharanskiy and Orlov may be sent to a strict-regime labor camp. Under the ambiguous provisions of the correctional labor code, these individuals are routinely denied visits from relatives, medical treatment, and proper diet. The regime may choose to avoid trial publicity altogether—as it did with militant civil rights leader Gen. Petr Grigorenko and many others—by sending dissidents directly to psychiatric hospitals. In those establishments administered directly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs rather than the Ministry of Health, political activists are treated to the full array of therapy, including drugs and shock treatment, as if they were truly insane. Upon completion of prison terms, the dissidents are frequently exiled. Some unofficial Western estimates of "political" prisoners (a characterization not recognized in Soviet law) range as high as 10,000, but a prominent political dissident suggests a figure half as large. Most imprisoned dissidents are in Vladimir Prison (about 160 kilometers west of Moscow) or in strict and special-regime correctional labor colonies in Pot'ma or Perm. Political prisoners are reportedly kept at 80 psychiatric institutions in the Soviet Union (there are about 300 ordinary psychiatric hospitals in the USSR and some 20 special psychiatric hospitals or prisons run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs).

Forced exile abroad is another remedy that the regime employs, usually after the dissident has served in prison. For example, by the end of 1981, such dissidents as Aksekov, Borisov, Daniel, Ginzburg, Grigorenko, Kopelev, Litvinov, Maksimov, Plyushch, Sin'yavsky, Solzhenitsyn, and Voinovich were in exile in the West.

In some cases Soviet dissidents are harassed without ever being charged. They lose their jobs, their children are denied a higher education, and their property is confiscated. Soviet authorities on occasion have incarcerated dissidents for up to a year without bringing them to trial. (Human rights activist Anatoliy Shcharanskiy, for example, was arrested in March 1977 and tried in July 1978.) By 1982 such dissident groups as the Psychiatric Abuse Working Group and the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Committee had been rendered inactive, the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group was forced to disband, and the unofficial trade union SMOT had been driven underground (although some of its activity may persist, according to a recent report). Andrey Sakharov has been exiled to Gorky since 1980, effectively isolated from contact with Western correspondents, and continually harassed by the KGB.

In the recent past the regime has been at least partially responsive to the foreign criticism of its treatment of dissidents, but it has never relaxed internal control. In the early 1970s, for example, the regime tacitly moderated its repression of dissidents to provide a more favorable atmosphere for reaching agreements with the West, especially with the United States, for its own reasons. It might be willing to do so again if there appeared to be some foreign policy gain. The leadership, however, remains insecure and overly sensitive to internal discontent, and it will never voluntarily relax its vigilant stance on dissent.

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### Conclusion

Although the wide array of Soviet social and economic ills is evident and well documented, observers differ in their assessment of the ultimate consequences of these problems for the Soviet regime. Some scholars—notably Columbia University Sovietologist Seweryn Bialer—believe that the regime has been generally successful in keeping popular expectations within bounds and will continue to do so. In the judgment of these scholars, the older generation is still optimistic about the future, and, more importantly, most Soviet citizens are so politically apathetic that the pressure on the regime for significant political, economic, or social change is not great. The regime's coercive powers are so massive, moreover, that development of organized resistance to Soviet policies would be exceedingly difficult. Thus, although these observers believe the regime probably will make some change at the margins, they do not think it will produce fundamental or radical transformation of the political system.

Some other analysts, among them John Bushnell of Northwestern University, believe that social and economic forces are coming together that could produce pressure over the long run for profound political change. This school of thought holds that the popular perception of progress, upon which the regime's legitimacy rests so heavily, is eroding. Even the Soviet-created middle class, according to this view, is becoming more pessimistic and apprehensive about the future. The younger generation in Bushnell's view, moreover, makes its judgments of Soviet performance by comparing standards of living in the USSR with those in the West and even Eastern Europe—a comparison in which the USSR comes up short. Gradually and subtly, according to this analysis, such perceptions may influence the political establishment or ultimately even lead to a fundamental change in the political system.

Both of these assessments, of course, are highly speculative. This type of analysis is fraught with uncertainty, very incomplete information, and widely divergent assumptions. It is possible, nonetheless, to obtain a more systematic and integrative look at the problems themselves, focusing particularly on how the Soviet regime views, manages, and deals with these problems.

The Soviet leadership, in effect, has formulated its own assessment of its societal problems, and this evaluation has guided its policy response. Its priorities have been set by judgments concerning the immediacy, seriousness, and solvability of the social and economic ills it faces. Clearly, the regime gives priority to problems that:

- Are political issues (dissidence) as opposed to mainly social phenomena (crime).
- Have immediate potential for producing popular discontent (consumer frustrations) as opposed to possible longer term threats (ethnic tensions).
- Are susceptible to new policies (health care) as opposed to being largely intractable (alcoholism).

### Top of the Agenda

The rhetoric and actions of the current Soviet leaders, as well as other evidence from intelligence reporting, indicate that the regime is most concerned now about economic problems and their effect on the Soviet populace. The leadership recognizes that economic problems have the potential for creating popular discontent and political disorder—something the Politburo sees as a serious threat, particularly in light of developments in Poland. Such problems also adversely affect popular morale and worker performance, which tend to make economic performance in the highly labor-intensive Soviet state even poorer. Economic difficulties, in addition, exacerbate other internal problems such as crime and corruption and make it difficult for the regime to find the resources to deal with such politically less significant issues as alcoholism and health care. As a result, the economy is central to achievement of the regime's goals, maintenance of popular support, and control of many endemic social problems.

The regime, to judge from its actions, does not view many of these social ills as politically important. The leaders may also feel that if they get the economy moving, even the endemic social problems could be better controlled.

### Nationalities: A Problem on the Horizon

The regime has, from its inception, been very sensitive to the nationality dimension in Soviet politics, and its carrot-and-stick approach has generally been applied most effectively. Today, for example, there is no widespread, politically disruptive protest or nationalist dissent among the Soviet nationalities. Moreover, it is difficult to envision any serious political difficulty for the regime in this area in the near term. Although demographic trends and regime economic policies could exacerbate ethnic tensions in the Baltics and produce sporadic violence, Baltic grievances have little impact elsewhere in the USSR, can be controlled, and, if necessary, suppressed.

Over the long term, however, the nationality problem will assume much greater importance and become a potentially significant vulnerability. Demographic trends, for example, will have the greatest impact in the next few decades, adversely impacting on labor distribution and probably increasing conflict over regional resource allocation—developments that will heighten nationality tensions. Thus, the regime's presently rather successful approach toward dealing with Soviet nationalities will come under increased strain in the decades ahead, and it will require more adroit handling and perhaps changes in policies.

### Political Dissent: Suppressed for Now

The regime treats any political challenge to its internal authority seriously. Although dissent in the Soviet Union does not constitute a threat to the regime, the regime goes to considerable effort to make sure the dissident movement remains impotent. Thus far the Soviet leadership has been very successful in isolating and repressing political, religious, and cultural dissent through widespread arrest and imprisonment of dissident leaders, confinement in psychiatric hospitals, and exile. Over the next decade or so the dissident movement has little prospect for developing a sufficiently broad social base to challenge the regime. In the long term, however, dissidence could become more widespread—because of dissatisfaction with living standards, a continuing decline in ideological commitment, and an apparent resurgence of interest in religious faith.

### Coping With Problems: Present Policy and Future Options

From the perspective of the Soviet leadership, economic difficulties impact on the entire range of social problems that it must manage. Unless it can find a successful economic strategy, there is every likelihood that economic growth will stagnate, consumer frustrations will grow, ethnic tensions will intensify, and discontent will become more threatening.

The Brezhnev regime, although concerned about the economy, apparently believed its course would be successful over the long run and felt no need to alter it. Although the new Soviet leadership would probably prefer to continue Brezhnev's course for a while (and has so far signaled its intention to do so), it is not likely to have this luxury for very long. Reduced economic growth—between 1 and 2 percent for this decade—will probably compel the new leaders to consider other options more seriously. The Politburo will have to deal more directly with whether:

- Changes must be made in resource allocation strategy that now favors defense and consumption over investment.
- Serious management reform should be undertaken that allows some decentralization, increased use of material incentives, and a greater role for market forces.
- More draconian and orthodox measures would rein-still discipline in society and stimulate more productive labor.
- The regime should fall back on its Slavic base and raise the banner of Russian nationalism as the basis for political legitimacy.

These choices and other related ones are interdependent and define two broad policy directions future Soviet leaders are likely to consider. A reformist package would probably involve:

- Diversion of funds away from defense budget growth to investment and, possibly, consumption.
- Movement toward greater decentralization in economic management (perhaps including greater reliance on market mechanisms to move resources and labor).
- More political and cultural decentralization along nationality lines.

No Soviet leadership has permitted such a permissive course. The regime could opt, on the other hand, for a more draconian approach that emphasized discipline, sacrifice, and order. This path in its extreme form would probably lead to:

- Continued high priority for military spending.
- A shift in allocations away from consumption toward investment.
- Much greater discipline in the workplace.
- Linkage of pay to work and performance and perhaps increased sanctions against absenteeism and idleness.
- Even more centralization of power in Moscow.
- Forced migration of labor and a more assertive reliance on Russian nationalism to generate political legitimacy.

These policies could also be coupled with a return to a form of one-man rule as well. Such a choice would require a commitment to use harsh measures to repress the popular backlash and discontent that it would be likely to generate.

Both options entail significant risks and uncertainties, but both would probably address some of the problems the regime faces. A tilt in favor of the consumer and economic reform, for example, might address some of the root causes of the social malaise, spur higher productivity, strengthen popular support for the regime, and make societal problems more manageable. At the same time such a course could initially be both economically and socially disruptive. Economic managers would lack clear and consistent guidance for their decisions, and workers would be forced to accept a greater measure of responsibility for their livelihood. The authoritarian approach, on the other hand, would increase control and preserve the regime's resource allocation preferences at the expense of a deepening social malaise, declining productivity, possibly declining economic growth, and perhaps the exacerbation of ethnic tensions.

Given the political realities--the controversy surrounding either program and the difficulty reaching consensus--some middle-range course involving elements of both options could be adopted. Various economic reform measures might be coupled, and are consistent, with a more demanding attitude toward work; defense spending growth could be cut back at the margin; and heavy investments in agriculture

might no longer be favored (such investment had depended on Brezhnev's strong support). Investment to spur long-term heavy industrial growth--the key to economic revival--would get additional funds.

It is by no means certain which course or combination of policies the new leadership will adopt. Too little is known about its own preferences, perceptions of current problems, and the impact that succession politicking will have on its deliberations. To judge from reporting, however, many middle-level officials long for a more forceful Soviet internal policy and believe greater discipline and order are sorely needed. A policy slant in this direction, thus, would seem more likely. As the new leadership consolidates its position and as younger officials enter the secondary ranks of the Politburo, we should get some clues as to the new leaders' perceptions of the problem and the course that has the greatest support. (

#### Implications for US Policy

US and other Western influence on the evolution of the Soviet political system and its internal policies is quite limited. The forces supporting "liberalization" are weak and will probably become a factor only in the very long term. Moreover, despite the evident weaknesses of the system, Soviet history demonstrates that the regime can still call upon deep patriotic roots. It can probably also count on continued relative passivity of the population, particularly to external appeals.

Western policies, nonetheless, may be able to exacerbate continuing Soviet weaknesses. Although trade does not determine Soviet internal policy, its denial could force more difficult resource allocation choices on the leadership, making it pay a higher domestic price in terms of quality of life to continue the present priority for defense or leading it to some cutback in the rate of military growth. Western trade, in addition, would probably be essential to any major effort at economic reform. The attraction some Western values hold for the Soviet people, moreover, can probably be marginally exploited to increase popular pressure on the regime, but the regime's reaction would be likely to be more harsh repression.