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Dimensions of Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union

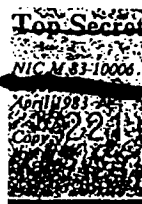
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National Intelligence Council
Memorandum

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Dimensions of Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union

National Intelligence Council
Memorandum

This Memorandum has been coordinated within the National Intelligence Council and with the Directorate of Operations. It has been discussed with the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments or queries are invited and may be directed to the author J- [REDACTED] Analytic Group, National Intelligence Council, on [REDACTED]
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April 1983

Preface

This paper presents the preliminary findings of an examination of all known reports of civil unrest in the USSR from 1970 through 1982. Some of the findings may challenge our image of the Soviet Union as an effectively repressed society. Thus, the larger significance of civil unrest in the USSR requires additional systematic and ongoing study by the Intelligence Community. This paper focuses primarily on defining and measuring civil unrest rather than attempting to assess its full implications. (U)

Civil unrest as defined in this paper does not, for the most part, involve the activities of dissident Soviet intellectuals whose efforts have been widely reported in the world's press. Rather, it refers to a broad range of actions by individuals belonging to a much wider mass of the Soviet public, who are either protesting specific policies of various levels of the Soviet government that affect them personally or who participate in spontaneous disorders even though they know that such action is strictly forbidden. We categorize and define these protest actions as follows:

- *Strike.* A collective action by workers at a jobsite to curtail economic production in support of specific objectives requiring redress by management to resolve.
- *Demonstration.* An activity of persons publicly assembled, or otherwise publicly identified, to protest a government policy or to advance a cause not supported by the government.
- *Riot.* A protest action that results in a temporary breakdown of public order involving property damage or injuries or that requires the mobilization of armed force to restore order.
- *Political Violence.* Acts of or attempts at violence in which political motives are readily apparent or can easily be inferred, including assassination of political leaders or state officials, self-immolation, and sabotage of state functions. (U)

Approximately 280 reported incidents from 1970 to the present are the data on which this analysis is based. These incidents do not necessarily indicate the existence of great subterranean political dissension or represent any acute threat to the regime. For Western democracies, some 280 events spanning more than a decade would represent nothing significant. Throughout Soviet history, however, public political activity, such as

protests and demonstrations, has been considered illegal and politically impermissible. Under Andropov, no less than his predecessors, *any* public protester takes a significant risk, no matter how peaceful the act, and at the very least must expect harsh treatment by the militia, including immediate arrest or forceable dispersal. Repeat offenders and strike leaders can expect a combination of KGB harassment, loss of pay or jobs, longer prison terms, forced labor, or confinement in mental institutions. The fact that civil unrest nonetheless occurs in the face of these constraints indicates the existence of a problem of some consequence for the USSR's leaders; at a minimum, Soviet elites are indeed more concerned now about the potential effects of popular discontent than they have been for the past 25 years or so.

Because these incidents represent a political problem for Soviet authorities, virtually no information about them is available from public Soviet sources. We are aware that reporting validity—knowing that an event actually happened as the report states—is a nagging problem in research of this type.¹ Most of the reports for this study have come from a variety of HUMINT sources: diplomatic reporting, travelers, emigres, defectors, and sensitive human sources.

Few of the incidents in this study can be considered "proven conclusively" in the sense that they have been reported by multiple, independent sources. We have used only those reports that appear to be credible, however, and we believe that the data base as a whole is reasonably sound.

Finally, the data base represents a thorough but undoubtedly incomplete compilation of incidents of civil unrest. In back-searching available reports for the period 1970-80, some have surely been missed. For 1981 and 1982 the compilation of available reports is probably more complete, but it is very likely that a larger proportion of incidents for these past two years is not yet covered in available reporting. This gap results necessarily from the time lag that occurs between actual events and subsequent reports that identify them. Nevertheless, if allowances are made for the uncertainties of reporting, the data base compiled for this study should provide a good approximation of the extent and nature of civil unrest in the Soviet Union since 1970.

In sum, care should be taken neither to overestimate the significance and potential of this study's data nor to assume that the cited examples have negligible political importance to the Soviet regime.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of data validity and related methodological issues, see the appendix.

Dimensions of Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union

Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 25 March 1983
was used in this Memorandum.*

Civil unrest in the Soviet Union takes many forms. Since 1970 intelligence sources report over 280 cases of industrial strikes and work stoppages, public demonstrations, and occasional violence, including sabotage, rioting, and even political assassination attempts. Virtually none of these incidents has been reported in the Soviet media, and only a few in the Western press. If there is error in the estimated total number of these incidents, it is almost certainly on the low side because of underreporting.¹

Such unrest is geographically widespread. Reported incidents have occurred in close to 100 Soviet cities (or oblasts) and in almost every republic during the past decade—from the Baltics to Siberia, Central Asia to the Arctic; in large cities, small towns, and rural areas. Apparently no place is immune: disturbances have occurred in huge factories and small plants, coal mines and food stores, and at government buildings and Communist Party headquarters.

A wide cross section of the Soviet populace, including industrial workers, coal miners, bus drivers, and construction crews, has been involved in civil unrest. In several instances, white collar workers, union leaders, families, and Party members also have been involved.

Much civil unrest is economically based. In particular, food shortages and dissatisfaction with the quality of life in the USSR account for more incidents of unrest than any other factor. Because consumer frustrations are rooted in the budgetary priorities of the regime and the inherent sluggishness of the Soviet economy and bureaucracy, they are not likely to subside in the near term.

The combination of economic grievances with ethnic nationalism in the non-Russian republics (especially in the Baltic states) accounts for most of the incidents of civil unrest observed since 1970 and for most of the apparent increase in unrest during the past four years.

¹ These data and the problem of underreporting have been discussed with CIA's Methodology Center, Analytic Support Group, whose view, based on an appropriate statistical model for this kind of problem, is that the actual number of incidents of unrest for the period is at least double the reported 280 cases (see text and appendix for elaboration).

In general, the regime has been careful to discriminate between strike actions and other forms of unrest, particularly if the issue is food shortages. Limited information suggests that striking workers are more likely to win concessions than demonstrators; the latter are much more likely to be arrested or dispersed. [REDACTED]

Even though political violence in the USSR is neither widespread nor organized, scattered reports since the late 1970s of sabotage, arson, and political assassination attempts suggest a depth of commitment in some antisystem individuals that has not been evident in earlier years. More than most kinds of civil unrest, political violence shatters tranquility and introduces a note of unpredictability in challenges to the public order. [REDACTED]

The regime is known to be concerned about the disruptive potential of civil unrest. Crash efforts to buy off striking workers with food supplies instead of outright repression, the scale of the food program itself, and various expressions of concern by midlevel and higher political elites as seen in HUMINT source reporting point to an apparent sensitivity that anything resembling a Polish-type Solidarity movement must not be permitted to develop. [REDACTED]

The scope and character of popular grievances that are suggested in recent civil unrest probably present a greater long-range challenge to the regime than the narrower intellectual dissident movement. These incidents of civil unrest imply a popular willingness to hold the regime more accountable for perceived shortcomings. Moreover, the spontaneity inherent in much of the unrest examined here may complicate the maintenance of public order. Further, a policy response primarily based on repression may be more likely to cause additional popular alienation than to reduce it. Such an outcome would undermine current Soviet efforts to increase substantially labor productivity, one of the government's most important economic priorities. For the Soviets, this may be a vicious circle of greater potential domestic significance for the 1980s than the regime has had to cope with anytime in the past three decades. [REDACTED]

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Five Glimpses of Keeping Order in Soviet Society

- *1978: On a spring day in a public park in Central Asia.* On 22 May a large-scale riot broke out between native residents and Russians in Dushanbe, the capital of Tadzhikistan. Relations between the two nationalities had been outwardly calm for years. This incident erupted when a Russian man beat up a Tadzhik youth in the city's central park. Before it was over, troops were brought in to restore order; about 60 rioters were injured severely enough to require hospital treatment. Several accounts were reported to a Western visitor that as many as 10,000 Tadzhiks and 3,000 Russians had been involved. [REDACTED]
- *1979: At a coal mine in the Ukraine.* In late May or early June a refrigerator train, which was loaded at the Baltic port of Klaypeda, Lithuania, with about 250 tons of imported meats, was diverted from its intended destination of Moscow. The train was then urgently dispatched to the Donetsk Oblast in the Ukraine where it was unloaded. Local workers explained that the meat was needed to settle a sitdown strike in a nearby coal mine. During the period of unloading, at least one or two other comparably loaded meat trains also arrived. In all, perhaps as much as 420 to 840 tons of fresh meat were delivered to the striking coal miners at Donetsk. [REDACTED]
- *1980: At a city square in Tallinn, Estonia.* On 8 October a crowd of about 4,000 to 5,000 students gathered at Voidsa Square and carried placards stating: "Where is bread and butter?" "Where is meat?" "Away with Brezhnev." Similar leaflets were distributed to passersby and at some schools. Dissidents said this action closely followed the example of Polish workers, and in fact it had been closely coordinated with Solidarity. [REDACTED]
- *1981: With an MVD special detachment in Serpukhov, near Moscow.* On 10 December Soviet authorities took steps to quell probable worker unrest in Moscow. Original plans to employ MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) troops garrisoned in Serpukhov for the Moscow operation had to be reversed because authorities feared possible worker disturbances in Serpukhov in support of the Moscow workers. All roads in and out of the

town were closed. No information is available on the activity of the Moscow workers that prompted the threat of a sympathy action in nearby Serpukhov and the apparent need for more than one MVD unit to preserve public order in nearby locations at the same time. C

- 1982: *In the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk.* Two strikes in this city were met with different responses. In January, when 200 workers demanded greater worker representation and improved plant conditions, the KGB broke up the strike and arrested the strikers. Later that spring, railroad workers struck for two days over food shortages, especially meat. Immediate deliveries were promised and the strikers returned to their jobs. Subsequently, meat and butter rationing were reported in that city.

[REDACTED]

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Dimensions of Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union

I. Gauging Civil Unrest

Introduction

Civil unrest in the Soviet Union appears to be widespread—and possibly is even growing. This contrasts with the prevailing condition of organized intellectual dissent, a movement whose vigor appears at least momentarily sapped by the current climate of repression. Currently, nearly all intellectual dissident groups are inactive, have disbanded, or have gone underground.¹ Suppressing the dissident movement and its quest for human rights, however, has not removed the basis for civil unrest in the USSR. And it is chiefly the spontaneous protest acts of ordinary citizens—workers, townspeople, and families—not organized activities of the Westernized intelligentsia that are the focus of this study.

Extent of Unrest

Approximately 280 incidents of civil unrest since 1970 have been identified for this study.² All of them represent challenges to governmental policies or protests against governmental performance. About three-fourths of these incidents have been public demonstrations or labor strikes. Nearly all the rest have involved some kind of violence. (See table 1. A more detailed discussion of incidents will follow in the next section.)

Close to 100 cities (or oblasts) in the USSR have reported civil disorder of one kind or another. Nearly half of these cities have experienced two or more

events. Incidents of unrest have been reported in every Soviet republic except Turkistan.³ In all but three republics, incidents have been reported in two or more separate locations. (See foldout map and table 2.)

Unrest is distributed unevenly; nearly two-thirds of it has been reported in just three republics—Russia, the Ukraine, and Estonia. When compared to other regions with ethnic minorities, the Baltic states show greater unrest. (See table 3.)

Because of longstanding and severe limitations on reporting activities of this kind, it is almost certain that the data for this study understate the true amount of civil unrest in the Soviet Union. We cannot know with any precision how much unrest occurs there that is not reported in the West (openly or secretly), but we can perhaps get some idea of its order of magnitude by using a statistical model that has proved credible for other intelligence problems of a similar kind. In general, by comparing yields of different collection methods, this model indicates that at least twice as much civil unrest may have occurred in the USSR during the period 1970-82 than is reflected in the data for this study.⁴

¹ The apparent absence of civil unrest incidents in Turkistan is more likely a comment on the paucity of intelligence reporting there than on any seeming tranquillity thereby implied. For example, one account reports acts of terrorism in the Soviet republics that border Afghanistan, in opposition to the Soviet intervention there. Turkistan is one of these three republics, and, following Tadzhikistan, has the longest border with Afghanistan, more than 400 miles.

² This conclusion is derived from a statistical equation, not hard data; however, it does suggest that the degree of civil unrest in the Soviet Union is not overstated in this paper. Statistical support for finding a solution to the problem of how to estimate numbers of incidents that may have occurred but were unobserved in our reporting was provided by Dr. John Irvine of CIA's Methodology Center, Analytic Support Group. Fuller discussion of this model and its application to this study is given in the appendix.

³ See CIA, Research Paper SOV 82-10206X (Secret NF NC OC), December 1982, *Soviet Society in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects*, pp. 25-32, especially table 6. (C)

⁴ The inclusion and counting rules for the incidents in this data base are discussed in the appendix. The rules favored a conservative tabulation.

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Table 1
USSR: Incidents of Reported Civil Unrest,
by Type 1970-82

	Number of Incidents	Percent of Total
Total	281	100
Demonstrations	113	40
Strikes	105	37
Political violence	39	14
Riots	24	9

Civil unrest appears to have increased in recent years; it is almost certainly not decreasing. Accurate comparisons between now and earlier periods, however, are difficult because reporting quality and completeness have undoubtedly varied over time. An overall increase in Soviet contacts with the West during the past several decades and the added contribution of emigrant reporting have surely enhanced our awareness of unrest in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, it is impossible here to quantify *how much* of the apparent increase in civil unrest is due to improvements in reporting. Thus, our improved sources of information in recent years may exaggerate the apparent *growth* in civil unrest data (but not, of course, the actual number of cases) observed in the trend comparisons that follow.

The increase in reported incidents of civil unrest appears to be both a short-term and a long-term trend. For the short term, the data clearly suggest (in terms of numbers of incidents) that more unrest has occurred in the period 1980-82 than in any other three-year period during the 1970s. Further, the late 1970s appear more active than the early part of the decade. For the long term, an increase is also apparent, although clear-cut trend lines are more difficult to establish. The lack of a developed data base (as yet) for most of the 1960s precludes direct comparisons here between the two most recent decades. However, comparisons to earlier CIA studies of unrest for the period 1953-63 suggest greater civil unrest in the

period of the present study than in the 1950s and early 1960s.¹

In comparing the past 11 years to this earlier 11-year period for which we have similar information, we find that we have nearly four times as many reports of civil unrest incidents for 1972-82 as for 1953-63. (See figure 1.) When these two periods are compared by averaging the number of incidents per year, this nearly fourfold increase (6.4 to 25.5 per year) appears to suggest that the last 11 years of Brezhnev's rule experienced more civil unrest than the 11-year period that followed Stalin's death. (See figure 2.)

More important, the surge in reported incidents during the last four years of the Brezhnev period also suggests that more recent trends may surpass the longer term growth rates. For example, average incidents per year since 1979 show an increase of about four and one-half times the amount of civil unrest reported for 1970-78. (Compare figures 2 and 3.) This suggests that civil unrest may pose more of a problem for the Andropov regime than it has for his predecessors.

Again, the reader should be cautioned that some of this increase—we cannot at this point reliably estimate how much—is attributable to improved reporting, and especially the contribution from emigres since 1980. Whatever the rate of growth, we can state with confidence that it has appeared in all four categories of civil unrest—demonstrations, strikes, riots, and political violence—studied (see figure 4), and that it has been stimulated primarily by economic and nationalist reasons. These causal factors are examined more fully in section II.

¹ A year-by-year breakdown of strikes, demonstrations, and riots for 1953-62 is provided in table 1 of CIA Economic Intelligence Report RR ER 63-7 (Secret), 1963, *Evaluation of Inflationary Pressures in the USSR*, pp. 7-8. Incidents for 1963 are noted in CIA Economic Intelligence Memorandum RR EM 63-40 (Secret), December 1963, *Popular Discontent over Soviet Cutbacks in Grain Consumption*, p. 8. The definitions used in these studies are virtually identical to those used here. Among the many implications for followup research is the need for a systematic comparison of trends in civil unrest over the entire post-Stalin history of the USSR, with full attention to the nature and causes of observed changes. This awaits completion of a more comprehensive data set, now in progress.

Table 2
USSR: Incidents of Reported Civil Unrest, by Republic and
City (or Region), 1970-82

Republic	Total Number of Incidents	Number of Cities Affected	Locations Experiencing Two or More Incidents		Locations of Single Incidents	
Totals	281	99	47		52	
Slavic USSR and Moldavia						
RSFSR	107	38	Moscow Tol'yatti Ordzhonikidze Chelyabinsk Brezhnev * Gor'kiy Leningrad Groznyy Tula Nal'chik	Noril'sk Orekhovo-Zuyevo Krasnoyarsk Kuybyshev Volgograd Pavlovsk Magnitogorsk Urals (3)	Angarsk Kalinin Kostroma Murmansk Novorossiysk Novosibirsk Palikhovo Nikel' Rostov	Perm' Ivanovo Ulyanovsk Voronezh Yaroslavl' Ufa Vyborg Vorkuta BAM
Ukraine	39	22	Kiev Zaporozh'ye Dnepropetrovsk Dneprodzerzhinsk	L'viv Donbas Donetsk Ivano-Frankovsk	Khar'kov Kalush Novovolynsk Krivoi Rog Marganets Ternopol' Kamenets-Podol'skiy	Kiliya Pripyat' Tyachev Kherson Kosov Beregomet Chernovtsy Unidentified
Belorussia	5	2	Minsk	Grodno		
Moldavia	2	2			Grigoriopol'	Kishinev
Baltics						
Estonia	38	5	Tallinn Tartu Parnu	Kohtla-Jarve	Foehma	Unidentified
Latvia	11	1	Riga		Unidentified	
Lithuania	16	7	Kaunas	Siauliai	Kapsukas Silute Vilkaviskis	Vilnius Varena Unidentified
Transcaucasus						
Georgia	12	4	Tbilisi	Unidentified	Abkhazia Mtskheta	Rustavi
Armenia	2	1	Yerevan			
Azerbaijan	2	1	Baku			
Central Asia						
Kazakhstan	21	12	Alma-Ata Issyk	Karaganda	Aktyubinsk Chilik Dzhambul Ekibastuz Khromtau	Bestobe Kaskelen Koktybe Temirtau Unidentified
Uzbekistan	4	1	Tashkent			
Tadzhikistan	5	1	Dushanbe			
Kirgiziya	13	2	Tokmak	Frunze	Unidentified	
Turkistan						
Several republics	4					

* Formerly Novyye Naberezhnyy Chelny.

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Incidents of Reported Civil Unrest in the Soviet Union, 1970-82

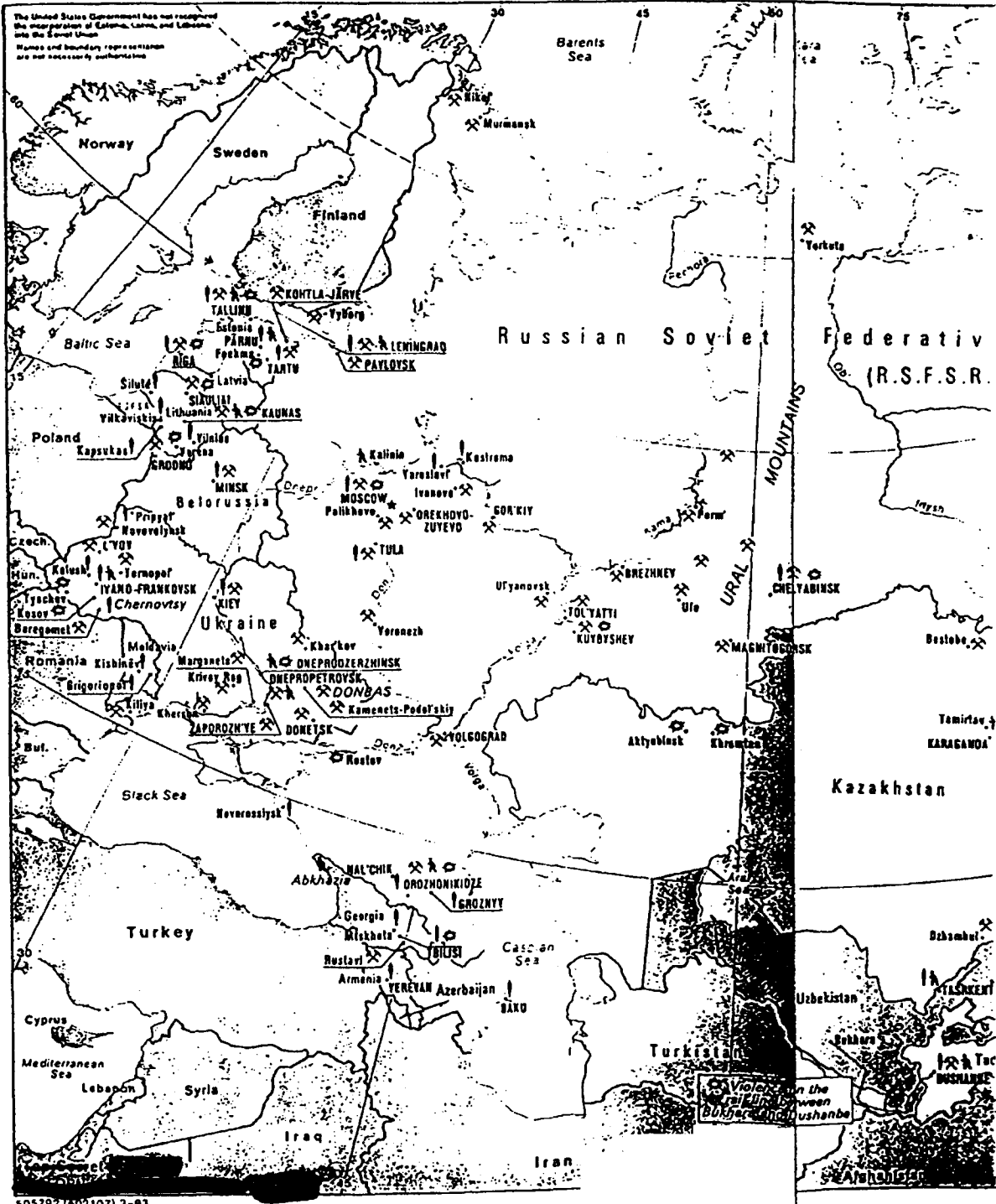


Table 3
USSR: Rank-Order of Incidents of Reported
Civil Unrest, by Republic and Region, 1970-82

	Incident	Percent
Totals	281	100
By Republic		
Russia	107	38
Ukraine	39	14
Estonia	38	14
Kazakhstan	21	7
Lithuania	16	6
Kirgiziya	13	5
Georgia	12	4
Latvia	11	4
Tadzhikistan	5	2
Belorussia	5	2
Uzbekistan	4	1
Several republics	4	1
Armenia	2	1
Azerbaijan	2	1
Moldavia	2	1
Turkistan		
By Region		
Russia	107	38
Baltic states	65	23
Ukraine and Belorussia	44	16
Central Asia	43	15
Transcaucasus	16	6
Several republics	4	1
Moldavia	2	1

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II. Profiles of Unrest: From the Bottom Looking Up

Given the way the Soviet Government reacts to public rejection of its policies, nearly all incidents are doubtless viewed by the USSR's leaders as overt acts of political defiance that place the participants *outside* the political system. Nearly all incidents represent a dissatisfaction with the policies or performance of the Soviet Government sufficiently strong that the participants are willing to risk harsh consequences for their actions. Some examples and causes of these actions—demonstrations, strikes, riots, and political violence—are discussed below. (U)

Demonstrations

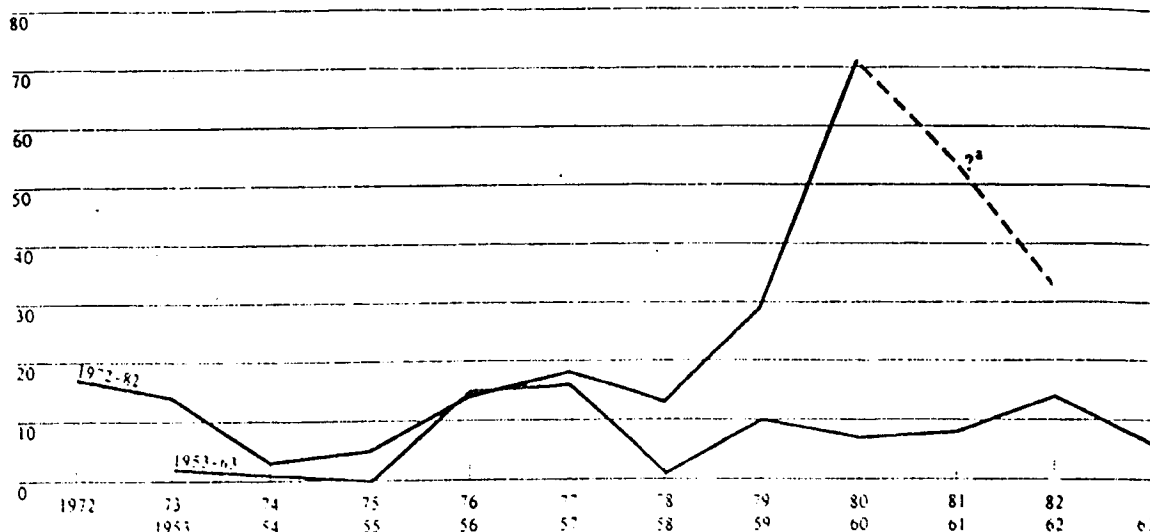
Public protests of Soviet policies or performance constitute the most frequent kind of civil unrest reported in the USSR. More than 100 demonstrations have been reported since 1970. For example:

- In 1978, when the taxi rates were doubled throughout the USSR, cabdrivers in Minsk protested. Fearing that higher rates would result in fewer fares, several hundred of them reportedly drove their taxis to the Belorussian Party Central Committee Building and honked their horns indignantly. The ring-leaders were arrested.
- Numerous spontaneous demonstrations in Estonia between 1979 and 1981 revealed strong ethnic nationalism and anti-Soviet hostility. During the turbulence in October 1980, for example, several major protests brought out thousands of demonstrators. The issues involved anti-Russian sentiments, food shortages, and opposition to educational and cultural policies. Several demonstrations turned into riots.
- Groups of ethnic Germans have recently traveled long distances to Moscow to press their claims to emigrate, chiefly to West Germany. Protests in Moscow's Red Square or in front of embassies probably have not brought these demonstrators any happier results than back home in Central Asia or the Caucasus. However, they are persistent and appear little deterred by repeated arrests and KGB harassment.

Soviet protestors demonstrate for many reasons. Two causes—expressions of ethnic nationalism in the non-Russian republics and the pursuit of exit visas—account for about 60 reported demonstrations, that is, the majority of cases where reasons for those incidents are apparent. Nationalism has figured most prominently in demonstrations in Estonia and to a slightly lesser degree in Lithuania and Georgia. It has appeared as a distinct factor, though perhaps less virulently, in demonstrations in the Ukraine, Tadzhikistan, and Uzbekistan. Often nominally cultural issues

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Figure 1
USSR: A Trend Line Comparison of Reported Incidents
of Civil Unrest in the 1950s and the 1970s



^aThe steep decline as depicted for 1980-82 is almost certainly more apparent than real. Known incidents for this period are shown with a dotted line to illustrate their tentative character. While all available reports are included here, the large time lag that characteristically occurs between the happening of events and our learning about them makes coverage of this most recent period necessarily incomplete. This reporting lag occurs in virtually all sources for this research. Sources of data for 1953-63 are cited in footnote 7.

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become nationalistic causes in these non-Russian republics: demonstrations over a new Minister of Education, for example, or university language requirements are better understood when it develops that the new minister is alleged to be pro-Russian (as was the case in Estonia) or the language requirement is for Russian (as in Georgia).

Shortages of food and other basic necessities have emerged as an additional important cause of demonstrations.¹ Somewhat more than a dozen of these can

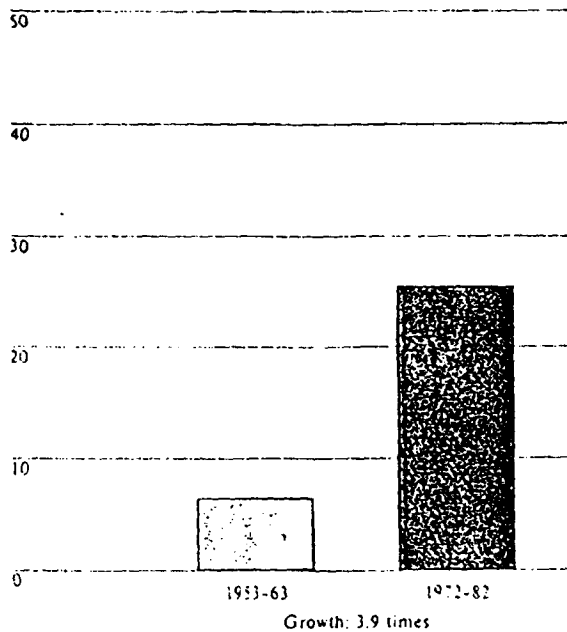
¹ The political importance of popular economic satisfactions in the USSR—and a persuasive forecast of growing civil unrest in the 1980s if the economic decline continues—is found in CIA Research Paper PA 79-10389C, August 1979, *Consumer Frustrations and the Soviet Regime*. (U)

be identified since 1970, mostly in the Russian Republic (RSFSR), but in all major regions of the Soviet Union as well. About the same number of other demonstrations—isolated cases to be sure—have resulted from an array of political grievances, including the intervention in Afghanistan, the arrest of other demonstrators, a perceived government role in a rise in crime rates, an attempted village relocation, rights of invalids, and even the fall of the Shah. A rather bizarre phenomenon has occurred on three occasions when self-identified Nazis, some in uniform, reportedly demonstrated in Moscow's Pushkin Square and Red Square; several distributed leaflets from the top of the Novosti Press Building before they were arrested.

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Figure 2
USSR: Average Incidents Per Year of
Civil Unrest in 1953-63 and 1972-82

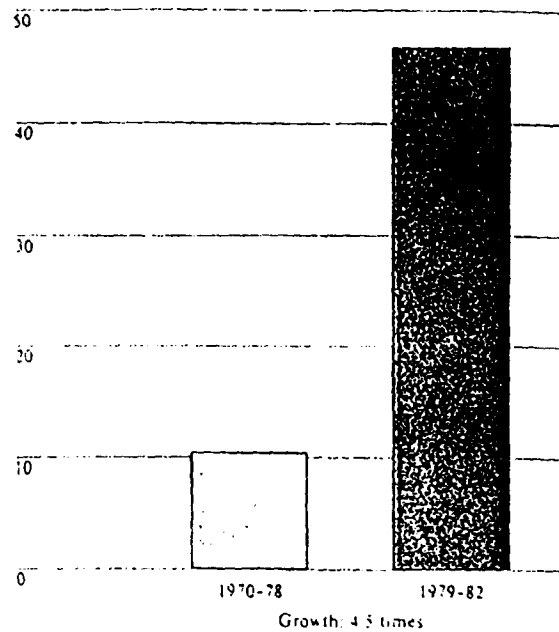


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A demonstration of about 120 students (presumably Soviet students) at Moscow State University on 13 December 1981 was probably related to the establishment of martial law in Poland. Sixty arrests were made. []

Although the data on duration are sparse, demonstrations apparently do not last long; several in Red Square have been broken up in one minute or less. Further, protesters are typically arrested or otherwise forcefully dispersed. Rarely is a public demonstration met with a conciliatory response by the regime, although a few of these exceptions have occurred in

Figure 3
USSR: Average Incidents Per Year of
Civil Unrest in 1970-78 and 1979-82

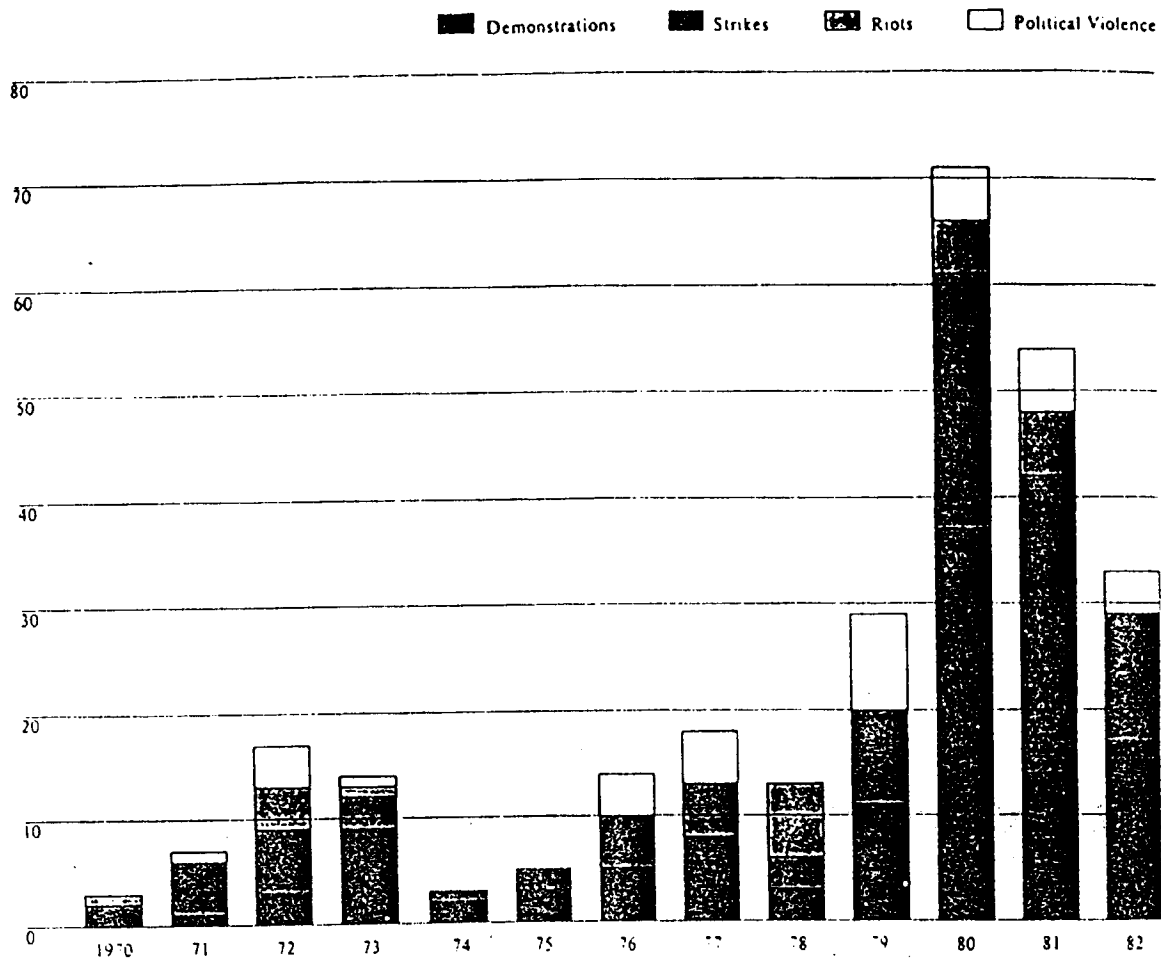


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the non-Russian republics; two involved protests over food shortages. The overwhelming majority of demonstrations have been suppressed by authorities, cause or jurisdiction notwithstanding. []

Information is far too scanty to profile a "typical" Soviet protestor. However, at least in the Baltics, youth appears to be a factor. High school- and college-age youth have participated with strong consistency in the disturbances in Estonia and Lithuania. []

Figure 4
USSR: Civil Unrest by Type and Year, 1970-82



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Also, no patterns concerning the size of demonstrations are discernible in the data. All sizes have reportedly occurred—from as few as three or four participants to as many as 5,000. About 20 major disturbances have involved more than 1,000 participants (see table 4); these include demonstrations that turned into major riots in eight separate locations (see table 5).

Riots

Mass civil disturbances resulting in injuries or deaths of participants, causing property damage, or necessitating the use of armed troops or vehicles to restore order are defined here as riots. Typically, though not always, these are large demonstrations that have gotten out of control. Of the 24 riots identified here, at least half probably involved more than 1,000 participants, and several more than 10,000. Nearly all appear to have occurred spontaneously. For example:

- According to a former Leningrad resident who based his account on numerous conversations with participants or witnesses to the event, a riot was forceably quelled in Leningrad by tanks and troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) during the summer of 1978. The cause of the rioting was the cancellation of a rock concert scheduled with the Rolling Stones and Joan Baez. A crowd, which numbered about 1,000, assembled anyway; it prevented the police from making mass arrests. Rioters shouted political slogans, and a few carried signs with "Freedom" written on them. Some injuries and arrests resulted.
- The three days of rioting in Ordzhonikidze, a large city in the Caucasus region of the RSFSR, in late October 1981 reportedly involved mass assaults with bricks and clubs against the police. A government building was occupied. Many arrests and massive property damages occurred. A recent account by a reliable source offers a different interpretation of these events than that described in earlier Western press reporting. While earlier coverage described ethnic tensions between minority Caucasus groups as the catalyst for the disturbance, this source heard

Table 4
USSR: Size Estimates of Reported Demonstrations and Riots, 1970-82

Estimated Number Participating	Number of Occurrences
1 - 10	9
11 - 25	5
26 - 50	9
51 - 100	5
101 - 999	19
1,000 - 10,000	14*
More than 10,000	5*

* This figure also includes riots. Note that number of incidents with size reported amounts to less than one-fourth of total cases.

from residents that public reaction to the thoroughgoing corruption of local government officials was the cause of the outbreak. When a senior political official was sent from Moscow during the rioting (probably M. S. Solomentsev, Politburo Candidate and RSFSR Premier), his attempts to address the crowd were met with shouts of "you don't tell us—you listen, and we will tell you."

The above account of the Ordzhonikidze rioting suggests a significant popular reaction to the widespread corruption that many believe to characterize the Soviet political system.⁹ However, the causes of rioting in the USSR are diverse. Two cases appear

⁹ See especially Konstantin Simis, *USSR: The Corrupt Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). Simis is a former Soviet attorney who wrote the manuscript while in the Soviet Union; he now lives in the West. Corruption may enhance stability by giving its beneficiaries a stake in the system, and by affording some flexibility to an otherwise rigid bureaucratic structure. A reliable Soviet source believes, however, that the pervasive corruption throughout the Soviet system will eventually prove to be politically destabilizing because of the growing gap that it facilitates between the haves and have-nots and the growing resentment it will assuredly foster on the part of the have-nots. The events at Ordzhonikidze surely support this view—and may help to explain the anticorruption themes beginning to emerge under the Andropov regime.

Table 5
USSR: Reported Demonstrations and Riots Involving
More Than 1,000 Participants, 1970-82

Demonstrations	Date	Riots	Date
1,000 to 10,000 participants		1,000 to 10,000 participants	
Tbilisi, Georgia (3)	March 1981	Ordzhonikidze, RSFSR (3)	October 1981
Tallinn, Estonia (2)	October 1980	Tallinn, Estonia (2)	October 1980
Tallinn, Estonia	March 1981	Kalinin (Ministry of Internal Affairs labor camp)	February 1978
Tartu, Estonia	September 1982	Abkhazia, Georgia	June 1978
Vilnius, Lithuania	September 1982	Leningrad, RSFSR	Summer 1978
Moscow, RSFSR	1981	Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine	1972
Karaganda, Kazakhstan	September 1973		
Groznyy, RSFSR (3)	January 1973		
More than 10,000 participants		More than 10,000 participants	
Hunger strike: mass action by 30,000 Pentecostals	November 1980	Tallinn, Estonia	September 1980
		Dushanbe, Tadzhikistan	May 1978
		Kaunas, Lithuania (2)	May 1972

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directly related to recent food and consumer goods shortages (Estonia and Lithuania). Nearly all of the rioting in the non-Russian republics has involved nationalist sentiments. The eight known riots in the Baltics are the clearest cases of ethnic nationalism inspiring major civil disturbances—or fueling them if the outbreaks result from other causes such as food shortages. (S) (C)

Riots have also been reported in Central Asia and in Georgia. At least two smaller incidents were related to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan—one at a military induction center in Uzbekistan; a second involved the violation of Muslim burial rights in Kazakhstan when the closed coffins of Muslims were returned from the Afghan front. A summary of recent rioting is found in table 6. (S) (C)

Strikes

In the Soviet Union, a strike (*zabastovka*) means essentially the same as it does anywhere else: a collective action to curtail production in support of specific objectives. In the West, where strikes are an

accepted means of collective bargaining, strikers routinely carry placards and man picket lines. In the USSR, however, workers typically report to their employment station, but then sit down and refuse to work. Work stoppages may thus take the form of a "sitdown" strike. Alternatively, workers sometimes use a work slowdown. In other instances, workers en masse may simply refuse to show up. Whatever the tactics, the larger objective is always the same: to exhibit a collective will and cohesiveness in forcefully seeking redress of specific grievances from management. These may or may not be job related. For example:

- At the Volga Motor Plant in Tol'yatti, striking busdrivers in August 1979 forcefully blocked buses from leaving the bus garages, disrupting essential mass transportation for factory workers. Their demands—pay raises and the removal of a hated supervisor—reportedly were met. In May 1980 the

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Table 6
USSR: Summary of Reported Rioting, 1970-82

Location	Number of Riots	Date	Size	Probable Causes
Estonia				
Tallinn	4	22 September 1980	10,000	Food shortages, nationalism
		2 October 1980	2,000-6,000	Nationalism
		3 October 1980	1,000-3,000	Nationalism
		Summer 1981	Several hundred	Food shortages, living conditions
Parnu	1	June 1973		Reaction to militia abuse
Lithuania				
Kaunas	2	18 and 19 May 1972	Tens of thousands	Anti-Soviet nationalism; reaction to self-immolation
Unidentified	1	1981	NA	Food shortages
Ukraine				
Ivano'-Frankovsk	1	January 1981	Large scale	Nationalism
Dnepropetrovsk	1	October 1972	Thousands	Nationalism
Dneprodzerzhinsk	1	1972	NA	Reaction to militia abuse
RSFSR				
Ordzhonikidze	3	23, 24, and 25 October 1981	Thousands	Official corruption; protest attempt to charge extra payment for administrative action
Kalinin	1	February 1978	1,300	Unknown (MVD labor camp)
Leningrad	1	Summer 1978	1,000	Concert cancellation
Georgia				
Abkhazia	1	June 1978	Thousands	Economic and cultural grievances of Abkhazis against Georgians
Tadzhikistan				
Dushanbe	2	May 1978	200	Demand for independence for Muslims
		22 May 1978	10,000-13,000	Anti-Russian hostilities
Kazakhstan				
Alma-Ata	3	August or September 1980	NA	Asiatic resentment against alleged discrimination in university admissions
		Summer 1978 (2)		Anti-Russian nationalism; continued for several days
Temirtau	1	1970	NA	Reaction to rise in prices
Uzbekistan				
Tashkent	1	1980	NA	Resistance at military induction center for Afghanistan-bound conscripts

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busdrivers went on strike again. This time they protested a lengthening of bus routes without an increase in pay. Of significance, they were supported by assembly line workers apparently angered by food shortages. Exact figures are not known, but according to Western press accounts as many as 70,000 workers may have participated in this strike. More strikes in Tol'yatti over food shortages followed in the fall of 1980 and again in the spring of 1981.

- In mid-June 1982 two managers in Noril'sk and three officials in Moscow during a lengthy telephone call discussed ways to break a sitdown strike of a military construction unit. Civilian workers were protesting the delay of a promised pay bonus. No amount of cajoling, promises, or threats from management officials seemed sufficient to break the impasse. The strike leader was a Party member, and he evidently enjoyed the support of the local trade union. The apparent subordination of the strikers to the Ministry of Defense evidently made no difference. This strike involved 20 to 25 workers and continued for two weeks. (See excerpts of the telephone conversation in the box.) It was resolved to the workers' satisfaction. E J

We have reports of about 105 strikes in the Soviet Union in the past dozen years, slightly fewer than the number of demonstrations. These two forms of unrest are similar in the directness of their challenge to Soviet authorities; but they differ in causes and in probable outcomes.

In general, Soviet workers strike over relatively few issues in contrast to demonstrators who take to the streets for a variety of causes. Workers usually strike over food shortages, inadequate pay, and poor working conditions. About 50 strikes have involved consumer demands, mostly for food supplies, especially meat. These have occurred primarily in the RSFSR, the Baltic republics, and in the Ukraine. Typically, the regime will promise more food—and often supply it, setting up food distribution systems within factories.

Second in importance is pay disputes; about 20 strikes have been reported involving pay and salary issues. Often a cut in piece rates or an increase in production norms will cause a strike. In one case, when paychecks were not available on payday because of a bureaucratic snafu, workers seized the plant and prevented the next shift from entering. Authorities relented, opening a Moscow bank after hours to settle the dispute.

Unpleasant or unsafe working conditions have inspired fewer strikes than food and pay, but workers can be adamant on these issues too. A cold air vent, a faulty grating causing injuries, and a lack of fuel for heating have been the cause of strikes. At least one strike involved demands for greater worker representation.

Information on numbers of participants, and followup actions against them, is sparse; but two characteristics seem to stand out. First, and not surprisingly, strike actions continue to be risky for workers. Some reports indicate strike leaders were later arrested (for example, in Tol'yatti); some strikes are crushed by militia, MVD, or KGB troops (for example, Krasnoyarsk, Kuybyshev, and Kohtla-Jarve).

Second, even if strike leaders are often punished, strike actions seem to get better results than demonstrations. To judge from incomplete information, where regime responses to these incidents of unrest can be discerned (about 93 out of 218 or so cases—roughly 42 percent of those included here), the pattern favors strikers unambiguously: by an approximate 4-to-1 ratio, demonstrations result in repression (arrests,

¹⁰ According to a thirdhand account, one notably brutal attempt to break a strike is alleged to have resulted in the deaths of 300 coal miners. The issues were pay and working conditions. The work stoppage occurred in the mine shaft, which the authorities decided to flood. All strikers drowned. The action was intended to serve as a deterrent to like-minded workers but was officially reported as an accident. The location is not clear, but it was probably a coalfield in Kazakhstan or Siberia. The report is unconfirmed.

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getting roughed up, or forceable dispersals); in contrast, by a nearly 3-to-1 ratio, strikes result in concessions from the regime—food supplies are rushed in, new food distribution systems established, vents fixed, and pay scales adjusted. By no means is this the only outcome (and strike leaders probably know the risks), but limited data suggest it is the most likely one.

Finally, strikes differ from demonstrations in their geographic concentration. Worker unrest occurs most often in the RSFSR (especially the Urals region), the Ukraine, Estonia, and Latvia, that is, the more industrialized parts of the Soviet Union. The industries most affected are transportation (for example, the auto factories in Tol'yatti, Gor'kiy, and Kharkov and the Kama River truck plant in Brezhnev) and coal mines, especially in the Ukraine (notably, the Donbas region and in Donetsk Oblast). The principal industrial areas having experienced at least two strike actions are noted in table 7.

Political Violence

Few incidents of violence have been reported in the Soviet Union that are attributable, implicitly or explicitly, to political motivations. However, reports of train sabotage and subway bombings, shootings of police, and efforts to assassinate top Communist political leaders in at least five different cities suggest a high degree of commitment in some Soviet political opposition. As a manifestation of civil unrest, such violence shatters tranquillity and introduces a note of unpredictability in challenges to the public order; it may thus represent an increasingly important dimension in the Soviet political equation. Nearly 40 such incidents have been reported in the past decade:

- On 14 May 1972, in an extreme act of nationalism, an otherwise unknown Lithuanian youth named Roman Kalanta committed self-immolation in a public park in Kaunas. In the nationalist turmoil that followed, including two days of mass rioting,

Table 7
USSR: Locations of Reported
Multiple Strike Actions, 1970-82

RSFSR	Ukraine
Tol'yatti	Kiev
Gor'kiy	Donbas
Brezhnev*	Donetsk
Chelyabinsk	Zaporozh'ye
Moscow	
Krasnoyarsk	Belorussia
Kuybyshev	Minsk
Noril'sk	Grodno
Orekhovo-Zuyeva	
Pavlovsk	Baltics
Volgograd	Tallinn, Estonia
Ordzhonikidze	Kohtla-Jarve, Estonia
Magnitogorsk	Riga, Latvia
Pavlovsk	Kaunas, Lithuania

* Formerly Novyye Naberezhnyy Chelny.

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three more self-immolations were attempted, two successfully."

- In a rare glimpse of activity that may involve more than one republic simultaneously, a good source reported acts of sabotage and assassinations of Soviet soldiers in 1979 and 1980 in the republics bordering Afghanistan. These acts were reportedly carried out by Soviet Asians protesting the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

"Other self-immolations have occurred in the Soviet Union, but were not necessarily political acts. The most recent case occurred in Red Square in July 1982, but no political motives seem apparent. Two Leningrad artists, who were evidently despondent, also committed self-immolation in 1981."

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- Reports have identified two attempts in 1971 and 1977, to assassinate the late General Secretary Brezhnev and attempts against Communist Party leaders in four republics: P. Grishkavichyus in Lithuania in 1976; K. G. Vaino in Estonia in 1979 (three times); A. E. Voss in Latvia in 1977 and 1979; and E. Shevardnadze in Georgia in 1973 and 1976.¹²
- Violence in the Baltic states in 1979-81 reportedly included the sabotaging of a TV tower, the burning of a government furniture warehouse, and an attempt to blow up a bridge in Estonia. Six fires were set simultaneously in Latvia, including one at the Supreme Soviet building in Riga. In Lithuania, the electrical power supply to a large factory was sabotaged.
- In Georgia 45 terrorists were recently sent to prison, and four were executed, for a series of raids against the militia and military installations committed during the past eight years.
- Shootings of police have been reported in two areas. In Kazakhstan, in what one source described as part of a series of assassinations of state officials, two policemen were shot to death at their homes; for the most part, the victims have been Russians. In the Russian city of Rostov, several policemen were machine-gunned, one of whom was killed, when unidentified assailants opened fire with an automatic weapon.
- Three trains reportedly have been sabotaged in recent years. One was blown up in Chelyabinsk, RSFSR, resulting in many casualties, in December 1981; no motive was apparent. In Latvia, a food train bound for Russia was delayed in 1977 when its wheels were sabotaged. In 1979 a military convoy was damaged by a Molotov cocktail while en route to Afghanistan, between Bukhara and Dushanbe.
- In Moscow, a train station and a subway station were bombed in 1977 resulting in injuries and several deaths.

The political motives for much of this recent violence do not appear to differ greatly from the motives for other forms of civil unrest; but the intensity of feelings that prompts this violence is doubtlessly significant. Extreme nationalism and perennial resentment against Soviet rule in the Baltics, for example, almost surely provided a more volatile basis for escalating reactions to food shortages there during 1979-81 than elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Similarly, Central Asian ethnic and cultural affinities for Afghanistan probably played a role in the violence that accompanied other unrest following the Soviet invasion. (See table 8.)

Patterns of Unrest

Civil unrest in the USSR is geographically widespread; it is expressed in different ways, and much of it is economically based. To be sure, only a tiny fraction of the Soviet population has reportedly engaged in these forms of political challenge; but its messages to the Soviet leadership are clear—the quality of life here is poor; food, especially good food is often scarce; pay is low; and working conditions are disagreeable. In the non-Russian republics, many want greater autonomy from central control; others simply want to emigrate from the USSR.

¹² The incidents included here, like most others in this study, are not based on "fully confirmed" reports; but the weight of detail or source reliability is sufficient to establish them as entirely credible. For illustration, these may be contrasted with four incidents *not* included here: two apparent assassination attempts against Andropov (1973 and 1982) lack sufficient detail (at this writing) for inclusion. Additionally, two apparently successful assassinations were excluded for reasons of motive: rather than civil unrest, it was more likely that the KGB and a Mafia-style killing, respectively, account for the murders of S. I. Ibraimov, Chairman of the Kirgiz Council of Ministers in 1980, and the Azerbaijan Minister of Interior in 1978. Another reported assassination attempt, against Brezhnev in 1974, was excluded because it occurred in Poland; the perpetrator was probably a Polish national.

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Table 8
USSR: Summary of Reported Political Violence, 1970-82

Incidents	Dates	Incidents	Dates
Assassination attempts (10) *		Sabotage and bombings (10)	
Brezhnev (2)	1971, 1977	Car bombing, Moscow	1981
Vaino in Estonia (3)	1979	Train, Chelyabinsk	1981
Shevardnadze in Georgia (2)	1973, 1976	Factory electrical supply, Lithuania	1981
Voss in Latvia (2)	1977, 1979	Bridge (attempt), Kosov, Ukraine	1980
Grishkavichyus in Lithuania	1976	Military train, Uzbekistan	1979
Shootings of police (3)		TV tower, Tallinn	1979
Kazakhstan (2)	1980, 1981	Bridge (attempt), Tallinn	1979
Rostov, RSFSR	1977	Food train, Latvia	1977
Self-immolations (5)		Train and subway stations, Moscow (2)	1977
Moscow (unsuccessful)	1980	Arson (4)	
Lithuania (4, including 1 unsuccessful attempt)	1972	Ukraine store, Tyachev	1982
		Produce market, Riga	1982
		Six sites in Riga, including Supreme Soviet	1979
		Warehouse, Tallinn	1979

* The number of incidents appears in parenthesis.

This table is [REDACTED]

Only a few incidents of unrest appear to involve more than one republic simultaneously. One report (discussed above) mentioned violence along the Afghanistan border. Two other incidents, both hunger strikes, apparently occurred in several republics simultaneously. They were occasioned by the 1980 opening in Madrid of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. One hunger strike involved 50 Jewish refuseniks in various Soviet cities (at the least, cities in the RSFSR and the Ukraine were involved) to protest Soviet emigration policies. A larger strike reportedly involved 30,000 Pentecostals protesting Soviet religious oppression. [REDACTED]

A variety of reasons explain recent civil unrest. The following discussion is based on 80 percent of the cases for which causal information is available. In general, three main causes—consumer frustrations,

ethnic nationalism, and workplace grievances—account for about two-thirds of the incidents reported for 1970-82. (See table 9.) [REDACTED]

Consumer frustrations, that is, dissatisfaction with living standards, is a major cause of civil unrest. These explicitly account for about one-third of all cases where specific causes have been reported or are readily apparent; food shortages clearly head the list. Similarly, other incidents have been caused by shortages of consumer goods or other basic necessities (for example, "the shelves are bare," or "there is nothing to buy"), which probably, although not necessarily, involved food. [REDACTED]

Table 9
USSR: Summary of Causes of Civil Unrest Incidents,
1970-82^a

Issue	Russia		Non-Russian Republics		USSR Totals	
	Number of Incidents	Percent of Total	Number of Incidents	Percent of Total	Number of Incidents	Percent of Total
Totals	84	100	147	100	231	100
<i>Main causes</i>						
Consumer frustrations	35	42	39	26	74	32
Of which:						
Food shortages	25	30	33	22	58	25
Consumer shortages	10	12	6	4	16	7
Ethnic nationalism			48	33	48	21
Emigration	17	20	21	14	38	16
Job-related issues	11	13	20	14	31	13
Of which:						
Pay and salary	6	7	18	12	24	10
Working conditions	5	6	2	1	7	3
<i>Minor causes</i>						
Political issues	16	19			16	7
Afghanistan	1	1	7	5	8	3
Religion			6	4	6	3
Cultural	2	2	1	1	3	1
Other	2	2	5	3	7	3

* This table is based on only those cases of civil unrest for which specific causes were cited or are readily apparent from the event report. It includes 231 of the 281 total cases, or about eight out of every 10. Although many events had multiple causes, only *one* cause—the most important one—was tabulated for each incident in this table. There is no double counting. Causes for incidents in the non-Russian republics were tabulated as “nationalist” if ethnic nationalism appeared to be the *primary* reason for the event, even while other

factors were frequently involved. Issues tabulated as "political" include protests over arrests, human rights, or dissident causes; several involving apparent Soviet Nazis; and protests over government corruption, martial law in Poland, and rights of invalids. Those categorized as "other" include such miscellany as a village relocation, a rise in crime rates, an ethnic dispute not involving Russians, and poor water availability.

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While consumer frustrations, especially food shortages, have accounted for more labor unrest than other causes, the related issues of pay and working conditions are also important to workers. These workplace grievances have prompted fewer strikes than food shortages, about one-third of the strikes included here.

Ethnic nationalism in the non-Russian republics is a significant, though complex, source of unrest. In practice, it is often analytically difficult to separate nationalist causes from other causes as a basis for

incidents in these republics. In the Baltic states, for example, where civil unrest appears greater than in other minority republics, nationalism has been an overriding element that gets mixed into other issues that spawn demonstrations, violence, and often strikes. In general, because of the added factor of ethnicity, some issues offer a greater potential for fueling unrest in the minority republics than in the RSFSR. Issues exhibiting this potential range from

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those concerning living standards, such as food or pay, to those impinging on ethnic autonomy, such as educational or cultural administration. The tendency to interpret these grievances from a nationalistic perspective appears more pronounced in Estonia, Lithuania, and Georgia than elsewhere in the Soviet Union, although it is possible that we may simply know more about these areas. At the same time, those few ethnic disputes that are not targeted against Russians lack the greater destabilizing potential of most minority nationalism in the USSR.¹¹

The main causes of overall civil unrest, that is, those that together account for about eight out of 10 of all incidents for which we have causal information (or two-thirds of the total cases studied here), are cross tabulated by type of incident in table 10. It is notable that consumer frustrations—especially food shortages—have figured in all types of unrest, particularly the strike. When job grievances (such as pay and working conditions) are added to consumer issues, the strike emerges as the preferred instrument of protest for bread-and-butter concerns. In contrast, ethnic nationalism appears prominently in demonstrations, violence, and riots, but not in labor unrest. Finally, although demonstrations result from all major causes of unrest, they are used more by those seeking visas (especially ethnic Germans) than by protesters motivated by any other issue.

The recent upswing in civil unrest during the past four years (figures 1 and 3) reflects a combination of grievances and cannot be explained by any single factor. As discussed above, some of this increase is the result of improved reporting, but we cannot know precisely how much. Leaving aside the issue of how much of this growth is real or artifact, we can still compare the causes underlying most of these recent incidents to the reasons for incidents before the apparent upswing. All four of the principal causes for unrest (tables 9 and 10) are reflected in the growth of the past four years, but some more so than others.

¹¹ Two incidents involving tensions between smaller minorities are included in this data base. In one, longstanding economic and cultural grievances of Abkhazians erupted into anti-Georgian demonstrations and rioting in northwest Georgia in June 1978. In the second, tensions between Ossetians and Ingush apparently provided the basis for the Ordzhonikidze riots in October 1981 in southern Russia (discussed earlier in the paper). According to one account, the demand of government officials for extra payment to press a murder investigation touched off the incident. Three days of violent antisystem rioting followed.

When the main causes for incidents during the period 1970-78 are compared to those for 1979-82, those stimulated by consumer frustrations and by ethnic nationalism showed a greater increase (3.8 times each) over this period than incidents caused by other factors. Job issues, namely pay and working conditions, also grew as a cause of unrest, although the amount of increase (3.3 times) was somewhat less than for consumer and nationalist unrest. Emigration issues also contributed to some of this growth, but the increase in emigration protests (2.9 times) during this period accounts for the smallest share of this surge when compared with the other major causes. (See figure 5.)

In sum, economic factors—as evidenced in consumer frustrations and the bulk of the workplace grievances—account for more incidents of unrest, and for more growth in unrest, than any other single cause. When nationalist unrest in the non-Russian republics is added to these economic issues, the basis for most of the known civil unrest for the period 1970-82 is thus explained, as well as for the apparent growth in this activity during these past 12 years.

III. Interpreting Unrest: From the Top Looking Down

As is shown by the example of certain socialist countries, especially Poland, if the Party does not promptly note conflicts in societal development and fails to concentrate the efforts of society on overcoming them, this can lead to serious social and political crises. At the same time, profound knowledge by the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] of the conflicts in our society enables it correctly to determine the direction and character of ideological and organizational work, to overcome these conflicts in a prompt and timely manner, and to ensure this country's unswerving advance along the road to communism.

—Historian V. Orlov, in the Ukrainian language party daily, *Radians'ka Ukrayina*, 26 October 1982. (JPRS, *USSR Report*, No. 1371, 17 February 1983, p. 23.) (U)

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Table 10
USSR: Type of Incident by Main Causes of
Civil Unrest, 1970-82

	Consumer Frustrations (Especially Food Shortages)	Ethnic Nationalism	Emigration	Job Issues (Including Pay and Working Conditions)	Totals
Demonstrations	15	25	37	2	79
Strikes	51		1	29	81
Political violence	5	12			17
Riots	3	11			14
Totals	74	48	38	31	191

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At its present levels, civil unrest has not visibly endangered Soviet political authority. It has not precipitated a political crisis, and Soviet leaders are not acting as if it has. Civil unrest, however, is not primarily a short-term problem. (U)

The real significance of popular unrest is its potential to disrupt political stability in the USSR. Soviet leaders apparently are sensitive to this danger. A recent CIA intelligence study has concluded that Soviet elites are more concerned now about the potential consequences of popular discontent (and official corruption) than in the past 25 years.¹⁴ Evidence for this concern can be deduced from the public press, private commentary of Soviet officials, and from recent policy initiatives clearly responsive to the threat that civil unrest may grow. (U)

What Soviet Officials Are Saying

Some midlevel Soviet officials have privately admitted to foreigners within the past year that all is not well at home. Officials from various Soviet ministries, state committees, institutes, and party bodies collectively portray a troubled Soviet society: domestic morale is down and the public's outlook pessimistic; the populace has become more demanding, youth undisciplined, and workers restive. Several Soviet

insiders conclude that more civil unrest is not only possible but that it could even get out of hand. (U)

A Soviet official confided to a US diplomat in late November 1982 that Andropov's priority would be to restore order in the country. The workers are losing their incentive and ambition, he noted, with more widespread drunkenness and corruption the result. (U)

About the same time, two Soviet officials privately told Polish officials that the Soviet Government was seriously concerned about the emergence of a Solidarity-type worker's movement in the USSR because of ongoing economic problems. These Soviet officials added that the leadership was particularly worried, since it fully realized the economic situation would not improve substantially in the near future. (U)

Such private commentary about the prospects of a Polish spillover effect in the USSR exhibits a candor that the Soviet press cannot match. The Soviet press, however, has not been restrained in its condemnation of "free" labor unions and in portraying Soviet unions

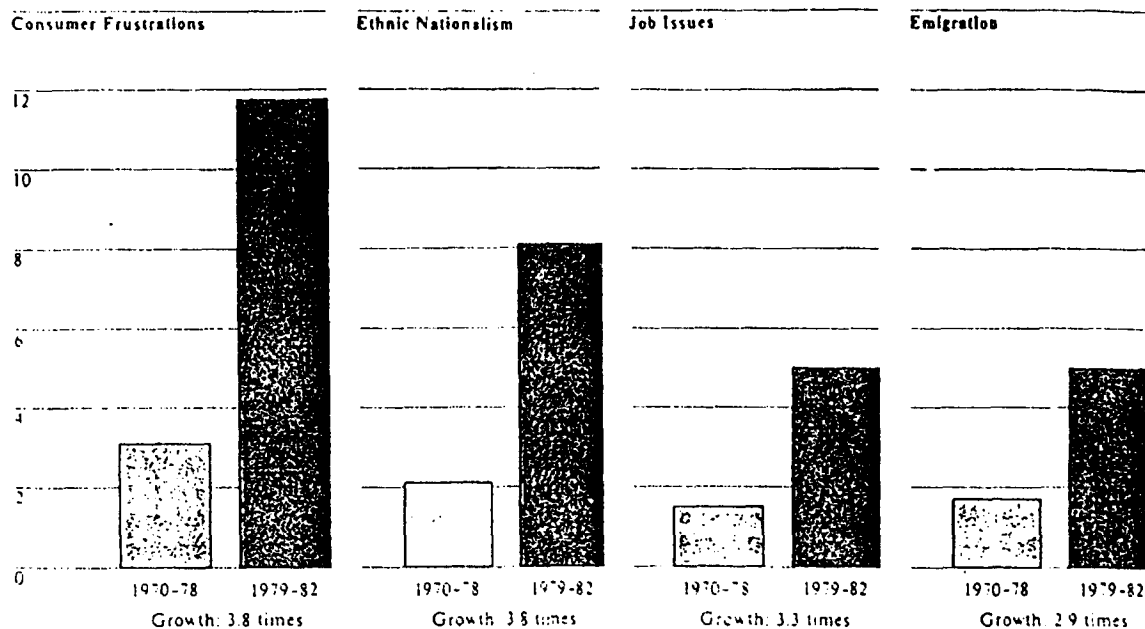
¹⁴ CIA Intelligence Assessment SOV 82-10192X (SECRET) December 1982, *Soviet Elite Concerns About Popular Discontent and Official Corruption*.

¹⁵ See CIA Intelligence Assessment SOV 82-10192X (SECRET) December 1982, *Soviet Elite Concerns About Popular Discontent and Official Corruption*, pp. 1-3.

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Figure 5
USSR: Growth in Average Incidents Per Year of Civil Unrest
by Major Cause, 1970-78 to 1979-82



as fully representative and responsive to workers' interests.¹⁶

Where Soviet Policies Are Aiming

Beyond private and public acknowledgments of a basis for growing unrest, a variety of Soviet policies appears to be aimed at addressing this problem directly. In Soviet terms, each policy is fully defensible on its own merits; together they amount to a broad approach to stemming further popular unrest.

¹⁶ See *USSR Monthly Review* (Secret NF NC OC), March 1982, "The Impact of the Polish Crisis on Soviet Domestic Policy," pp. 23-25; FBIS, *Trends in Communist Media*, 8 April 1981, pp. 10-11; Elizabeth Teague, "Workers' Protests in the Soviet Union," *Radio Liberty Research* (RL 474/82), 29 November 1982, pp. 9-11; and Betsy Gidwitz, "Labor Unrest in the Soviet Union," *Problems of Communism*, November-December 1982, pp. 39-40. (U)

Problem: Food shortages cause strife. The single most important cause of the incidents reported here, especially industrial unrest, is the popular reaction to food shortages. **Policies:** Upgrade food supplies and defuse hostilities:

- The Central Committee approved a comprehensive food program at the May 1982 plenum, which Brezhnev had publicly advocated as early as October 1980.¹⁷

¹⁷ This is a costly and apparently controversial initiative. Intelligence analysts are skeptical that this ambitious program will meet its goals. See CIA, *Intelligence Assessment SOV 82-10130* (Confidential NF NC), September 1982, *The Brezhnev Food Program*.

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- Authorities have generally been conciliatory where unrest has been food related. The pattern in labor strikes has been to rush in food supplies, and, in two rare instances, public demonstrators were met by officials—rather than arrested—when the issue was food.

Problem: Industrial unrest is widespread, and could get worse. **Policies:** A nuanced carrot-and-stick approach is in evidence:

- The carrot, beyond rushing in food during strikes, has been to institute new food distribution systems in factories and plants (often resulting in food rationing in nearby cities); to change union leadership and refurbish the image of labor unions through favorable media portrayals; to publicize blue-collar promotions to higher party offices; and even to publicize recent sessions of the Politburo devoted to discussion of letters from Soviet workers.
- The stick policy has been selective arrests of strike leaders after the dust has settled (we have very limited data on this); to crush SMOT—a miniscule but independent trade union movement—with an uncompromising forcefulness even by recent Soviet standards; and to campaign for improved labor discipline.

Problem: Greater public awareness of popular unrest could lead to more of it. **Policies:** Constrict relevant information in every possible way:

- An unbroken official silence has been maintained on civil unrest—not a word has appeared in the Soviet public media about strikes, food-related disturbances, or acts of political violence. In one revealing instance, a popular Soviet poet was allowed to travel to the Urals for poetry readings only on the strict

"See John B. Dunlop, "Dissent in the USSR: Its Role and Significance," a paper presented to the National Intelligence Council, 19 August 1982, pp. 7-10; and Betsy Gidwitz, "Labor Unrest in the Soviet Union," *Problems in Communism*, November-December 1982, pp. 35-37. SMOT is the acronym for *Svobodnoe Mezhproufessionalnoe Obiedinenie Trudiashchikhsia*, or Free Inter-professional Union of Workers. See DIA Intelligence Appraisal, DIAIAPPR 33-83 (Secret), 29 March 1983, *USSR: Andropov's Labor Discipline Campaign*. (U)

condition—which he accepted—that he not make reference to any strikes there (five were apparently in progress at that time).

- KGB repression against all forms of public dissent has escalated. The campaign, which really began in 1978, was further intensified in mid-1982, especially targeting those groups that had been successful in getting the attention of Western media (Helsinki Monitoring Group, the fledgling peace movement, and Jewish refuseniks).
- Communications of dissidents with Western news reporters and tourists have been disrupted; Western reporters with "unapproved" citizen contacts have noted increased harassment (one reporter was recently expelled). Foreign visitors have observed a tightening of customs controls at border crossings. Even telephone transmissions to the West, including direct dialing, have been substantially reduced within the past year.

None of these policies is out of character with the customary management of Soviet domestic problems by the Communist Party. However, taken together—and especially given the priority these initiatives appear to enjoy—they clearly suggest a top-level concern about the public mood and an anxiety that it could become even more sour. Thus, to judge from these recent policies, and against the background of civil unrest and the Soviet private commentary examined here, the new leadership is acting as though it perceives the emerging dimensions of the little publicized, but definite, political problem of civil unrest.

IV. Implications

The data we have examined show that declining standards of living—real or perceived—are clearly associated with civil unrest in the Soviet Union. Intelligence studies show that the earlier growth in per capita consumption in the USSR has declined in

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recent years and that real growth in consumer welfare will be jeopardized in coming years as the Soviet economic slowdown continues." Thus, we may surmise that there are no ready remedies for much of this recent unrest. Further, it is possible that there could be an increase in civil unrest—a development that would have important domestic implications. (U)

Domestic Political Stability

A significant feature of the Soviet political culture is the apparent distinction Soviet citizens draw between the economic and the political aspects of their system and the differing levels of support they accord to each. In general, Western scholarly studies have shown that there probably has been a high level of uncoerced support for the Soviet system, but it is limited and conditional. Much of this support has been based on the generally creditable performance of the economic system—even many who have left the Soviet Union for largely political reasons have retained a high regard for its welfare policies. Popular support for the political system, however, has been much more shallow. This finding, first made in the major Harvard emigrant survey project of the 1950s, has been supported by new data in more recent investigations. A recent study of the Soviet political culture summarizes the implications of this finding as follows:

Liberal democracies, buttressed by the "come rain or come shine" legitimacy which their political institutions confer on them, may find it possible to survive a period of static or even falling living standards; a regime whose legitimacy is based more narrowly upon "performance" criteria may find it rather less easy.¹⁰ (U)

¹⁰ See *USSR Monthly Review* (Secret NF NC PR OC), June 1982, "Material Well-Being in the USSR," pp. 7-11. The steady decline in average annual growth in per capita consumption can be seen in these five-year averages: for 1966-70, slightly over 5 percent; for 1971-75, almost 3 percent; for 1976-80, just above 2 percent. In 1981, growth in per capita consumption had dropped below 2 percent. (U)

¹¹ Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 189-190. (U)

Recent reports from Soviet sources also support this finding. A reliable Soviet establishment source with varied contacts in Soviet society has observed that continued economic discontent has tended to make Soviet citizens more politically conscious. They regard food shortages as the key indication that the system has failed them. (U)

Another Soviet source, who predicted an increase in political violence, has noted discernible erosion in the legitimacy of the regime. For 35 years, he stressed, there has been neither terror, nor war, and living conditions had improved. *All three have changed:* repression has been increasing, the arrival of coffins from Afghanistan is extraordinary, and agricultural reverses have led to food rationing for the first time in many years. (U)

The growing malaise in Soviet society is now widely recognized in the West—and civil unrest represents only one of its manifestations. An important issue is whether the change in public morale in the Soviet Union is shallow and therefore manageable or whether it is deeper and more politically significant. If what we are observing is merely a temporary mood shift, then speculations about any erosion in the regime's political legitimacy are probably wrong or premature. If, on the other hand, the problem is more deeply rooted—and the scope of civil unrest surveyed here suggests that this may be the case—then the ingredients of significant future Soviet political problems may be in the making. (U)

Implications for Intelligence

If civil unrest is accepted as being a greater problem for Soviet leaders than is consistent with our prevailing images of an effectively repressed society, it behooves us to pay more attention to its manifestations, causes, and implications. We should review and

upgrade our collection efforts where possible, establish a comprehensive data base of civil unrest activities to serve as a continuing resource for analysis, and revisit the issue on a continuing basis. The present effort is just a beginning. This study has surely missed some data for the years examined, has not gathered data for earlier than 1970, and has not fully explored the many implications that growing unrest may suggest. Readers of earlier drafts have offered many potentially lucrative suggestions for further research that could not be pursued in this initial investigation. Much work on this subject remains to be done.

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Appendix

A Note on Methodology

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Definitions, Data, and Caveats

The problem. In this study, *civil unrest refers to the activities of individuals and groups that challenge the authority, policies, or performance of the Soviet Government and that risk or incur a coercive response by the regime.* The following activities are included as cases of civil unrest: public demonstrations, strikes, riots, and violence that appear politically motivated (operational definitions given below). Activities commonly associated with intellectual dissent—such as petition signing, meeting with Western reporters, publishing *samizdat* at home or books abroad, or even individual hunger strikes—are not included in this study.

Sources of data. The information base for this study consists chiefly of intelligence reporting on incidents of civil unrest since 1970. As noted in the Preface, although the data compilation does not claim to be exhaustive, the present coverage of incidents is sufficiently complete to permit analysis. This reporting comes from a wide variety of sources, including emigres, diplomatic reporting, defectors, travelers to and from the USSR, and sensitive human sources.

Are the data valid? Incidents discussed here are seldom "confirmed" reports or fully substantiated by multiple sources—impossible under Soviet conditions—but all were evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Inclusion rules (below) ensured that all incidents are credible; all are plausible. Care has been taken to omit dubious cases and to avoid double counting. Any data compilation discrepancies will be more likely to err on the conservative side. As might be expected, details surrounding most events are sparse. Frequently we learn of the incident, general location and date, and often some reasons for the occurrence. Less often do we learn about the participants, their numbers, or outcomes. Hence, inferences about these latter factors are much more tentative.

Do the data convey an accurate picture? In general, because field collection efforts have always been severely constrained and reporting fragmentary, the data give us only a partial picture. First, these data almost certainly understate the phenomenon of civil unrest in the USSR rather than exaggerate it. And second, some distortions of time and place inevitably result. Hence, statistical generalizations about this data are hazardous. In this sense, the incidents compiled here necessarily amount to more of a "sample" than the total picture. Assessing precisely how representative that "sample" is poses difficult methodological issues. Two of these—scale and skew—deserve further comment.

How much of the total picture of civil unrest does our reporting pick up? We cannot answer this question with any precision, but we can gain some insight into the degree of underreporting through the use of a statistical technique suitable for problems of this kind. A methodology known as "capture-recapture" modeling has been successfully used by statisticians for estimating animal and human populations and for limited application to intelligence problems. The basic idea is to compare two (or more) data collection methods. Intuitively, if both methods produce data on the same events, and very few events are reported by only one collection method, then the data collection is probably fairly complete. Conversely, if the overlap in reporting is small, then clearly each method is recording events that the other is missing. This suggests that neither method is gathering all the data and that there is a good chance that a number of events were missed by both sources. Using some probability theory, it is possible to estimate the number of events missed by both sources. The major assumption used in deriving such an estimate is that the two reporting sources are independent.

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In this study, we compare reporting on civil unrest from classified and unclassified sources. For our purposes, labor unrest provides the best area for comparison because recent studies of strikes in the Soviet Union by Western scholars have brought together a wide range of unclassified materials against which we can compare strike data derived from classified sources. Using this capture-recapture model, we may say that, if we observed 106 strikes in these two distinct collection methods (31 in open sources, 82 in classified sources, with seven cases reported in both), standard probability equations would indicate that another 257 strikes also were unobserved by either method. (See table 11). Thus, by assessing the amount of overlap in these two collection methods, this model predicts that the actual number of strikes is closer to 363, or 3.45 times the number reported from available sources. If expressed as a range, we would have a fair amount of confidence—the odds are 4 to 1 (a 75-percent confidence interval) that we would be right—that the true number of strikes in the Soviet Union ranged between 231 and 495 during 1970-82 as compared to the 106 for which we have actual reports. (We can increase the odds of our being right to 10 to 1 by using a 90-percent confidence interval; to achieve this higher level of confidence, we would have to expand the range of total strikes to between 173 and 553 for this period.)

Lacking comparable Western studies based on unclassified source material for demonstrations, riots, and political violence, we cannot apply the capture-recapture model to these data. However, if the *overlap ratio* of classified to unclassified reporting for these events does not differ markedly from that observed in strike activity, we can similarly derive a more likely estimate of actual civil unrest in the Soviet Union. By broadening the model's prediction for actual strike activity to the full range of civil unrest (that is, to include demonstrations, riots, and political violence as well as strikes), we estimate that about 970 actual incidents of civil unrest occurred in the period 1970-82. Again, expressed as a range, we would allow ourselves 4-to-1 odds (75-percent confidence interval) that the actual amount of incidents of civil unrest for this period ranged from 510 to 1,425, on the basis of the assumptions above. (Again, with a 90-percent confidence interval, affording us 10-to-1 odds that we would be right, we may project the actual range of

Table 11
USSR: A Capture-Recapture Model of
Unobserved Strike Activity Based on Two
Collection Methods, for 1970-82

		Classified sources		
		Reported	Not reported	Totals
Unclassified sources	Reported	7	24	31
	Not reported	75	257	332
	Totals	82	281	363

Observed strikes 106
Unobserved strikes 257
Total strikes 363

Probable range of strike activity

at 90-percent confidence interval 173 to 553
at 75-percent confidence interval 231 to 495

right, we may project the actual range of incidents to vary between 320 and 1,620 during this period.) (C)

A cautionary note. The real value of these computations is heuristic: they should help us better appreciate the limitations of our reporting and, perhaps, also help us to better gauge a more valid picture of civil unrest in the Soviet Union. However, because these figures are derived from statistical modeling and not actual reporting, they cannot be more than rough *approximations* and should not be interpreted as valid substitutions for reliably acquired information.

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How much distortion does our reporting introduce into this study? Collection gaps and spotty coverage—of time and place—have introduced some distortions that are even less amenable to statistical corrections. For example, coverage of Moscow and some Baltic areas surpasses other regions. Rural areas and southern republics receive very uneven and very inadequate coverage. Skews from emigrant reporting deserve note: for example, virtually all of the unrest in Kirgiziya consists of activity by ethnic Germans seeking emigration. This gives a picture, and probably a misleading one, that this is the only kind of unrest in that republic. Similarly, emigrant reporting contributed much to our picture of the upswing in 1980—but better reporting from different sources could lead us to modify the date, magnitude, and apparent abruptness of this notable surge. The considerable activity in Estonia also reflects to a degree our better and more diversified coverage of that republic when compared to other areas. (S, M, R, C, U)

In sum, reporting skews such as these again remind us of our gaps, but also caution us against overgeneralizing from these data. We cannot know how faithfully or unfaithfully civil unrest in the Soviet Union is being mirrored in this information; we can only be sure that we are not getting the full story. (U)

Rules for Gathering and Tabulating Information

A quantitative study of this sort is problematical, but it should enable inferences that no other methodology can produce and at the same time tell us where our confidence—or diffidence—is justified. The building of this data base required developing several basic methodological rules—none exotic, but all fashioned around those special problems posed in using reporting from the USSR—which the reader may want to review as an aid to evaluating this study. (U)

In practice, all incidents were evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Inclusion and coding rules were developed to answer three key questions of every potential event of civil unrest considered in this study: (1) Did it happen? (2) What was it? (3) How much of it was there? (U)

(1) Did it happen? Whether some events included here actually occurred could be disputed. Most were reported by a single source. Few are "confirmed" reports or substantiated by multiple accounts (if restricted to these events, there would probably be too few cases to warrant a study of them). In all cases, the *criterion of credibility* was applied. Two considerations prevailed: richness of *detail* in the report(s), in conjunction with *reliability* of source(s). For example, a fairly detailed description from a source of unestablished reliability would probably be counted; so also would a sketchy report from a source believed to be reliable. The mere assertion of an event by a source of unknown (or apparently dubious) reliability would not be counted, nor would "probable" events. In questionable cases, the case was discarded. (U)

While only credible events are included, it is also possible that one or several of them never really happened. However, for every false event included in this data base—in spite of the precautions exerted—at least one or two others (probably more) were missed in the fragmentary and shackled reporting, and hence eluded this study completely. In addition, all of the key conclusions in this study were designed to remain valid even if their supporting evidence is read with a plus-or-minus 10-percent error margin. (U)

(2) What was it? All events included in the study were tabulated in accordance with the following operational definitions:

- **Demonstration.** A public event reported as a demonstration or disturbance against the government or its policies, or consistent with the following description: the activity of persons publicly assembled, or otherwise publicly identified, to protest a government policy or to advance a particular cause not supported by the government.
- **Riot.** A public event reported as a riot, or consistent with the following description: a breakdown of public order resulting in property damage or injuries or requiring the mobilization of an armed force or

armored vehicles to restore order. A public disturbance is either a riot or a demonstration, never both. If an event is coded as a riot, it will not be counted also as a demonstration, even if it grew out of a demonstration.

- **Strike.** A labor action reported as a strike, work stoppage, or labor disturbance, or consistent with the following description: a collective action by workers at a jobsite to curtail economic production in support of specific objectives requiring redress by management to resolve.

- **Political violence.** Acts of violence for political motives or objectives, including:

- Assassinations of political leaders and state officials, as well as attempts.
- Self-immolations, also attempts.
- Use of firearms, explosives, incendiary devices, arson, or other violent means to sabotage state functions.

Typically, political motives or objectives are readily apparent or can be inferred from reportage. (Examples of cases of self-immolation and assassination that failed the criterion of credibility or the test of political motive are noted in footnotes 11 and 12.)

~~(C)~~

In practice, two issues were problematic: whether to include incidents that were threatened or attempted but not carried out; and whether a hunger strike constituted a valid demonstration of civil unrest. Both issues were resolved on a case-by-case basis, but generally only the most exceptional cases were included. Attempted acts of political violence (for example, assassinations, self-immolations, and sabotage) were recorded, other attempted incidents were not. Similarly, one strike threat was included as an exception because the report was highly reliable, it involved

more than 3,000 workers, and management offered concessions to avert the strike. Hunger strikes were rarely included. Three were recorded as demonstrations, which were notable because two involved several republics (and reportedly 30,000 participants in one case); the third case, a hunger strike, followed repeated demonstrations by a group and appeared to have influenced the group's early prison release. No hunger strikes by individuals were included. (TS D)

(3) **How much of it was there?** Arriving at quantitative answers regarding the duration and incidence of civil unrest poses special, but not insolvable, problems. The rules worked out were fairly arbitrary, but they were applied consistently:

- **Event duration.** Demonstrations and riots were treated as one-day events. If they occurred for two days or more, they were counted as separate events for as many days as they reportedly occurred, on the principle that participants renew the political risks of the initial event each day they protest publicly. A strike lasting for more than one day, no matter how long, however, is regarded as a continuing activity and is therefore tabulated as a single event. For example, two successive days of Nazi demonstrations in Moscow, or three successive days of rioting in Ordzhonikidze, are counted as two and three incidents, respectively. A 14-day strike in Noril'sk is counted as one incident, not 14.

- **Plural events.** If an incident is credibly reported to have occurred a specific number of times, it is tabulated for that number of occurrences. However, plural incidents reported for unspecified numbers of occurrences are counted for two, but never more than two. For example: a credible report of three demonstrations will count as three incidents. However, the following unspecified examples—which

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imply a great deal of activity—were tabulated only for two instances each: "repeated demonstrations on Saturdays" (Nal'chik); "numerous recent strikes" (Pavlovsk); "many strikes" (Zaporozh'ye); "at unknown times over the last 10 months" (Donbas); "spread to every mine in the area" (Kohtla-Jarve); or "a series of raids over an eight-year period" (Georgia). (S)

In sum, the data base is imperfect, but the procedures outlined above should help minimize the impact of error. The key conclusions are not based on any single event but rather on the cumulative effect of all events. A comprehensive data set now in progress will allow a more systematic procedure (index of intercoder reliability) to be developed for subsequent studies. (U)