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# USSR Report

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

(FOUO 14/81)

Deterioration of Soviet Economic Information Analyzed



FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

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USSR REPORT  
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DETERIORATION OF SOVIET ECONOMIC INFORMATION ANALYZED

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pp 3-30

[Article by Marie-Agnes Crosnier and Anita Tiraspolsky: "The Decline of Economic Information in the USSR: An Attempt at Explanation"]

[Text] In the domain of information, all societies are confronted with the same dilemma: to what point must one permit the publication and diffusion of data without causing injury to the interests of the government in power that is trying to justify government policy, to protect itself against foreign competition, and to preserve military secrecy?

The secrecy of information has always been a reason of state in the USSR, maintained more rigorously than elsewhere. In the last several years it has been particularly strengthened, whereas one might have hoped, after the Helsinki Conference of 1975, for an evolution in the opposite direction.

Consideration of the official statistics furnished by the Soviet Union since that date reveals quite clearly a serious impoverishment of the data published, both on the domestic economy and on relations with other countries.\*

It is a quantitative impoverishment first of all: between 15 and 20 percent less information on the USSR's economy between 1974 and 1979. More serious is the qualitative impoverishment, inasmuch as the new amputations affect key categories of information: structure of net national expenditure and of product created, regional distribution of the big production categories, exports of oil, imports of cereals, etc., in addition to the very numerous traditional omissions from Soviet statistics.

What explanations are to be offered for this systematic desire to obscure economic reality? Aggravation of internal difficulties has combined with a heightening of international tensions, leading the Soviet leaders to reduce information on their country even more.

Domestic Economic Information (by Marie-Agnes Crosnier)

Despite the improvements in the preparation and presentation of statistics, they remain an imperfect tool in all economic systems, even though there is nothing equiva-

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\* The detailed analysis of the annual reports as presented in table form can be consulted at the CEDUCEE [Center for Studies and Documentation on the USSR, China and Eastern Europe].

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lent to it for learning about an economic reality. This would hold true likewise for the economies of Soviet type. In them, the insufficiency--in all forms--of the statistical data is especially acute, and all the more so in that the means of investigation on the spot are extremely limited and are the essential and irreplaceable resort. Now the fact may not be ignored that the statistical apparatus of the socialist countries is above all the product of a political system in which the state retains a monopoly of the production of information and control over it; thus the role of this apparatus is, more than elsewhere, to serve this system: statistics are therefore an integral part of the flow of reasons for legitimization of the governmental power. Because of this fact, they can give of the Soviet-type system only an altered reflection of the image which the USSR--we shall limit our analysis to that country--wants to present to its population and to the outside world. It is therefore particularly necessary to handle the statistics furnished by the Soviet authorities with great prudence, to make use of a wide range of sources, and to rely more on the convergences and intersections of sources than on isolated indexes.

The Soviet statistical apparatus has not stayed in a fixed form during these last 60 years: it has bent under the various pressures of the USSR's domestic and external policy. Thus the periods of relative liberalization result in an increase in the volume of information diffused, and the opposite phenomenon can always be seen also. The first annual statistical report came of the presses in 1919 ("Statistical Compendium for the Period 1913-1917"), and it was followed by many publications that illustrated the New Economic Policy; the tradition was maintained, year in and year out, until 1938. But with the outbreak of WW II and the rise of Stalin, silence was abruptly imposed, and it was not until the 20th Congress that an annual statistical report for the USSR ("The National Economy of the USSR") appeared again, in 1956. The period extending to the mid-1970's and marked by both a certain ideological liberalization, many attempts at economic decentralization and a gradual opening-up to the outside world was characterized also by a better fate for economic information. Then another sharp turn was taken, and paradoxically, just after the Helsinki Conference on European Security and Cooperation (August 1975), which was intended to establish a new, closer form of cooperation between states and contribute to better mutual understanding of their realities.

It is tempting to relate this change of tack to the turning-in on itself which the USSR began as a result of the heightening of the world crisis, the impact of the crisis on its economy, and the continually worsening internal structural difficulties that it has experienced since the middle of the 1970's. This turning-inward, which was expressed by a hardening of the regime internally and externally, has had the consequence, in the statistical area, of systematically drying up the sources of useful information.

The second basket of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference included a few lines about national statistical data (production, national income, budget, consumption, productivity); the participating states committed themselves to encourage publication and diffusion of them on a vast scale and within relatively short times.

As a new Conference, following upon those of Helsinki and Belgrade, is about to open in Madrid this month, November, it is being attempted to establish the types of information that the USSR now wants to conceal. It must be recognized that the Soviet statistical services have honored at least one commitment made at Helsinki: the time-periods for production of the principal statistical tool, the USSR's annual statisti-

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cal report ("Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR" for the year 19...), have been shortened by 2 months since 1975. Furthermore, the printing has increased by 10,000 copies between the 1974 report (45,000 copies) and that of 1978 (55,000 copies); but a new decrease, by 5,000 copies, was made for the most recent publication, the 1979 annual report. On the other hand, it appears that the information presented by the statistical annual is less and less abundant: the number of pages has been reduced from year to year, and the total loss can be pegged at 245 pages in 6 years.

	<u>1974</u> <u>Report</u>	<u>1975</u> <u>Report</u>	<u>1976</u> <u>Report</u>	<u>1977</u> <u>Report</u>	<u>1978</u> <u>Report</u>	<u>1979</u> <u>Report</u>
Date of legal filing	12 Sep 75	8 Sep 76	11 Jul 77	17 Jul 78	10 Jul 79	8 Jul 80
Print run (number of copies)	45,000	30,000	45,000	40,000	55,000	50,000
Number of pages	833	817	686	630	606	588

The present article does not present an exhaustive list of all the information that is now missing, and does not offer a detailed analysis of the nature of all the information censored. It is attempted rather to seek, in the mass of observations that we have been able to collect, some homogeneous elements that would make it possible to explain the present attitude of the Soviet government toward the publication of statistics.

## I. The Statistical Apparatus of the USSR

In the USSR, numerical economic information relative to the domestic economy goes through a single network: the Central Department of Statistics, under the supervision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. The statistical publications emanating from this administration are relatively varied:

- The annual statistical report of the USSR ("Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR" for 19...), published between 6 and 9 months after the end of the year concerned. It should be pointed out, though, that certain users are privileged (ministries, certain institutes, etc): they receive the annual report as soon as it has been prepared, whereas it is not available off the shelf until 2 months after its legal filing date. As for shipments abroad, they come even later (usually in December).
- A small annual report ("SSSR v Cifrakh v 19..." [The USSR in Figures for 19...], which presents in abridged form the principal statistical data reported later in "Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR." It has the advantage of being available in April, of having very wide circulation (200,000 copies), and of being translated into several Western languages.
- The annual statistical reports of republics, publication of which takes somewhat longer times than for the national annual and the printings of which are smaller. For Western researchers, access to them is therefore more uncertain and more difficult.
- The annual statistical reports of autonomous republics, of autonomous regions and of regions, diffusion of which is even more limited and preparation of which requires even more time.

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--The annual sector reports ("The Population of the USSR," "Transport and Communications in the USSR," "Industry in the USSR," "Construction in the USSR," "Soviet Domestic Commerce," "Labor in the USSR," "The Agriculture of the USSR," "National Education, Science and Culture in the USSR," etc); but publication of a number of these works seems to have been suspended in recent years, unless they have gone into a far narrower diffusion category and are now reserved only to certain departments.

--A monthly review ("Vestnik Statistiki"), in which partial statistics are published in appendixes and in no particular order (industrial production, data on agriculture, investment, etc). These data are for the most part complementary to those furnished in the annual national statistical report. They also offer the advantage of appearing rapidly: certain results from the past year are published in March.

In addition to these various publications, the Central Department of Statistics also communicates in the daily and weekly press the principal numerical targets of the 5-year and annual plans as well as, at the end of the operational year, the results achieved in each of the sectors of activity.

1. From Secrecy to Statistical Poverty

It is generally granted that the statistics published by the Central Department of Statistics are not different from those used by the economic officials and the planners at the time that the plans are worked out; but in the statistics made public, there are obviously omissions whose nature leaves no doubt as to the reasons for the absences. In several industrial sectors more or less directly connected to the defense industry, information is nil: thus there are no data available on the capacities and production figures of the aeronautical industry, including the civil sector, on naval construction, the electronics industry (components, computers and related equipment), on the manufacture of rubber, the refining of oil, and all reserves and production of nonferrous metals and ferroalloys, without exception. It should also be noted that the USSR has a law on secrecy of information dating from 28 April 1957 that lists all information coming under state secrecy. In addition to information of a military character, the law concerns the reserves of radioactive elements and the mining of uranium, as well as the enterprises that do the processing of it, the reserves and production of nonferrous, rare and precious metals, diamonds and piezoelectric metals, and the reserves of oil, production of which comes under the Minister of Petroleum Industry. It also relates to the foreign-exchange reserves, the balance of payments and the stocks of precious metals and stones. The Council of Ministers may add to this list; nothing enables one to say that it has been added to since its promulgation, but at least certain signs suggest that the notion of state secrecy has been broadened. Bulgaria, in fact, has just published a new law on the secrecy of information; its area of application is far broader than that of the Soviet law of 1956, and it extends in particular to certain information that has ceased to be published in the USSR. One is tempted to think that Bulgaria's initiative is not peculiar to it but rather falls into the framework of a concerted policy within the CEMA [Council for Economic Mutual Assistance].

Nor have any numerical data ever been provided on industrial accidents, drug addiction, suicides. The statistics relative to the monetary mass in circulation were published only for a very brief period, from 1928 to 1936.

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But there is something more serious than these statistical "gaps." Indeed, the Soviet statistical apparatus as a whole has turned away from its very vocation, which is to be above all the vehicle of economic information, and this perversion doubtlessly is largely responsible for the fact that planning is so often detached from reality. This, moreover, is what the Poles have recently noted: by the admission of the directors themselves, a good many of the errors in decision committed by their predecessors are to be laid at the door of statistics unfaithful to reality or to the holding-back of information whose publication would have caused social tensions, such as the cost-of-living index, for example. This phenomenon of disinformation is not, to be sure, based on a deliberate choice; but it is the logical outcome of many years of excessive centralization and bureaucratization that have blocked all circulation of information between governors and governed. It is hard to see how the enterprises accustomed to hiding from their overseeing organisms the exact figures for their production capacities, so as not to have planning objectives imposed on them that are too high, would hand over to the statistical services information far more indiscreet (turnover, production personnel, investments, etc).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, even though the statistical services have obvious information links in the ministries and the various administrations, it is implausible that they would be capable, in so short a period of time, of processing such a mass of information collected through agents scattered over a particularly vast territory.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, why should the statistical services be immune from the absenteeism, negligence, carelessness and incompetence so often denounced in the official statements when it is a matter of explaining the lack of success in agriculture, industry, transportation or construction, or the miscalculations of the administrations?

In the area of statistics, as in the other sectors of the economy, it is appropriate also to stress the force of habit: apart from the fact that the number of data published has increased quite considerably since the annual report for 1956, apparently very few improvements have been made in the Soviet statistical apparatus since that time. The result of this is that the USSR, as also, for that matter, its partners in the CEMA, but with the exception of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, is quite a bit poorer in good-quality statistical data than are the market-economy developed countries--which is not among the least of the paradoxes of a country with a "directed economy." The Soviet statistics seem on the whole to be done--without implying that this represents a deliberate choice--to control the execution of a plan rather than to enable it to be worked out or to guide decision-making.

The low reliability of the Soviet statistics was very early brought to light by the American Sovietologists, who have tried to remedy this defect by setting up a parallel national accounting system, working out models based on their own statistics,<sup>3</sup> etc. Less well-known but more seriously accusatory is the defiance shown likewise by certain Soviet researchers toward the statistics furnished by their country's authorities. Indeed, certain institutes, turning up their noses at the official data, are said to be now basing their work, concerning mainly the distribution of incomes, on their own samples and their own statistics.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Methodological Mysteries

When one has recourse to Soviet statistics, the first obstacle one encounters is of a methodological nature: indeed, the deepest mystery shrouds the rules governing the preparation of them. A few explanatory notes serve as an epilogue to the annual statistical report, to be sure, but they are of the most summary kind and do not provide

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the clarifications that one would have a right to expect. Is this an acknowledgement of their uselessness or a concern to save paper? In any case, such notices were simply left out of the 1979 annual.

Thus one is completely ignorant of the nature of the prices used for evaluation of the principal indicators. Since prices are supposedly stable, the indexes present only minor variations, which can always be justified by administrative measures. Now it has been established, and even by certain Soviet economists, that wholesale prices increase regularly by way of innovation, improvement of quality, or increase in the objective costs of mining extraction, oil extraction, etc. These rises are never registered in the price indexes, and it is improbable that they are taken account of in evaluation of the various indicators either--all the more so in that some of them even escape the control of the administration. By being based on a near stability of wholesale prices, the Soviet statistics can thus show industrial growth, for example, considerably higher than it is in reality.

Furthermore, certain indicators are evaluated at current prices and others in comparable prices; but the statistical services keep carefully hidden the method that enables them to go from the one to the others. It would seem that the comparable prices are established by the aid of a price index calculated on the basis of a product sample whose composition is not known and the prices for which are quite obviously those that figure in the official schedules; but this sample has little value since it is not at all necessary for the products belonging to it to be actually available in the commercial network. It is doubtlessly revised periodically, and this could be one of the explanations for the corrections made, from one annual report to another, in the series established in terms of comparable prices. Thus, for example, the figures for provision of everyday services to the population show, for the series as a whole, a drop of 0.2 percent if one compares the data furnished in 1979 with those published in the annual report for 1978. It is therefore probable that a new sample was established in 1978 and that it encompasses services less expensive than those that were taken into account for the preceding years.

### 3. The Deliberate Omissions

The gaps in the statistical data and the defects of the apparatus cannot be subjected to exhaustive analysis here. We shall nonetheless highlight the most notorious of them.

The USSR's statistical annuals abound in particularly long series of indexes that may go back to times well in the past, such as 1913, 1928 or 1940, and that trace the evolution of the principal aggregates (Net National Production, Industrial Production Offered, Agricultural Production, fixed capital, etc). The successive series of indexes are connected to one another by the chain-index method. It goes without saying that this type of data is without great interest, and in any case, unusable in its totality, since the content of the indexes necessarily changes over so long a period and one does not know how the statistical services update the situation. To take just one example, what can be the value of a growth table for industrial production offered between 1940 and 1979 when the range of products offered has been entirely replaced? This is what A. Nove<sup>5</sup> humorously stresses when he asks the question: how many DC-3's made in 1950 is the presently produced DC-9 equivalent to?

In 1979, the figure for agricultural production offered is still calculated in 1973 prices, which makes it possible to overestimate this indicator considerably. Thus



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the Western experts have calculated that by the aid of this statistical manipulation, the Soviets were able to announce a 3-percent increase in the value of agricultural production in 1977, whereas it actually fell by 5 percent. Furthermore, the agricultural statistics are on the whole inflated in relation to reality. The quantities of cereals ultimately usable are lower than the volume of the harvest as recorded in the statistics. There are several reasons for this: losses in transport and in storage, especially high humidity rates for grains, etc, and depending on the year, such losses represent from 10 to 15 percent of the harvest.

The distribution of production among the various types of farming operations, as it appears in the statistical annual, does not give an exact picture of the contribution of the small individual plot; in fact, the figure for individual-plot production sold by the peasants to the kolkhozes and to the sovkhozes is accounted for by them as if the production came from the collective and state farming operations.

Because of their partial and ambiguous character, the social statistics do not make it possible to conduct very detailed investigations. The figure for the working population is never given, so as to make impossible any precise calculation of the personnel strength of the armed forces. All the statistics on industrial employment relate to "industrial productive personnel," but no indication is given about the different categories of workers covered by this concept, and the distribution of these personnel among the different industrial branches, which was very incomplete up to 1975, was eliminated as of 1976.

The statistics on wages and incomes make impossible any comparison among the various occupations, between men and women, between city-dwellers and rural-dwellers. As regards wages, in fact, only averages by branches are published; the pay of high-ranking officials is obviously not known. Finally, the data on the peasants' income from farming of their plots are particularly succinct: they are limited to a percentage in the budget of a kolkhoz family. As for income derived from other private forms of activity, they are passed over in complete silence.

## II. Impoverishment of the Soviet Statistics

A definite impoverishment of the Soviet statistics has been observed since the mid-1970's. This trend developed especially fast in 1976, and to a lesser extent in 1977; and while some relative respite could be detected in 1978, the movement gained speed again in 1979. To be sure, not all the disappearances to be noted are of equal importance; while certain of them now prevent the Western researcher from carrying on the investigations he previously had in hand, at least on the basis of Soviet sources, others, on the contrary, are of such minor interest that they appear to have no other aim than to lighten a voluminous compendium.

### 1. Results of a Method of Empirical Analysis

Our investigation has concerned essentially the national annual statistical reports, "Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR" for 197.... We did a systematic comparison of the content of the statistical annuals' tables for 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979. This work has been complicated considerably by the frequent modifications of presentation of the data and the cross-fire of the tables: as between one annual and another, various tables are aggregated, others are broken up, statistics are put into different chapters. In order to follow the evolution of a given index over several years, the

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Western researcher must in certain cases demonstrate all the qualities of a good detective. Thus, the indexes for growth of labor productivity in construction, which usually have their place at the beginning of the annual report in the chapter on general data, are in the 1978 and 1979 reports found in the chapter on gross formation of fixed capital. The same is the case with the indexes of growth of labor productivity in agriculture, pushed back to the Agriculture chapter, and so forth.

The year 1975 was chosen as the reference point, since it is the year of the Helsinki CESC [Conference on European Security and Cooperation]. It has also emerged that a large number of data, including some of the most important ones, effectively disappeared between 1975 and 1976.

This method, as empirical as it may be, has made it possible to bring to light not only the quantity and the nature of the information that has been suppressed or, on the contrary, has not ever appeared, but also the dates when these modifications occurred. It emerges that the 1976 statistics are the ones most heavily affected by the "purge." It was possible to establish that 120 tables disappeared between the 1975 report and that of 1976; in addition, the largest quantity of highly important data censored was noted for the 1976 report. This annual is a somewhat special one because it celebrates the 60th anniversary of the revolution. It seems that the Soviet statistical services took advantage of the occasion to suppress a number of tables and replace them with others (68 "innovations"), most of which had more to do with propaganda than the economy; the table tracing "the triumphant march of socialism in the world" or the one that gives the number of mothers of large families who have been decorated with the order of maternal glory are the most characteristic examples of this. One might have thought that these "statistics" would have remained the appanage of the 1976 yearbook and that they had no other purpose than to screen the "clean-out" operation carried out in 1976. But a number of them came up again in the 1979 annual: the triumphant march of socialism, the publishing of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin since the installation of Soviet power, the number of deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviets of the republics, etc.

In 1977, 65 more tables were eliminated, but the trend seems to have slowed down in 1978, since there were only 23 disappearances. For the 1979 annual, our investigation had to be limited to the table titles and did not extend to their content. Nevertheless, this simple overview brought out the continuance of a tendency that now seems ineluctable. The year 1979, of course, was an especially critical one from the economic point of view,<sup>6</sup> and the first situation bulletins emanating from the Central Department of Statistics have already revealed the governing authorities' reluctance to recognize the seriousness of the situation. In the first place, the monthly industrial-production reports were not published for the whole first quarter of 1979. Secondly, the Central Department of Statistics has discarded a number of data--and not the least ones--from the annual results: smelting, iron ore, sulfuric acid, paper pulp, motorcycles, etc. Likewise, the production of products as important as metal-milling machines and stamping and forging equipment is given only in rubles, which destroys a large part of the interest of the results thus furnished. It will have been necessary to await publication of the 1979 annual report to know the production figures for these omitted products--figures which were previously available less than a month after the end of the year concerned.

According to our estimates, the number of statistical disappearances between the annual report for 1975 and that for 1979 comes to 15 percent. This figure has a purely

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indicative value and does not take into account the extent of the losses that have effectively been suffered. It would have been necessary to be able to weight each of the suppressed data in function of their interest and the use that could be made of them. Indeed, one finds in the same basket as the "big disappearances" a whole pleiad of entirely anodyne information, the suppression of which does not seem to correspond to any rational aim.

## 2. The "Big Disappearances"

The data relative to the principal economic indicator, net national production (literally, national income) were very extensively amputated in 1976 with the elimination of the structure of net national expenditure. Up to 1975, net national production from the point of view of expenditure ("national income utilized") was apportioned between, on the one hand, household consumption and the consumption of the administrations (the total of which forms the consumption fund), and on the other hand, the net productive and nonproductive investments and the increasing of stocks (accumulation fund). But since 1976, the annual has limited itself to giving the volumes of the consumption and accumulation funds without any further details. This disappearance has extremely extensive implications. On the one hand, the suppression of the data relative to consumption now prevents one from constructing, at least on the basis of the Soviet statistics, the fourth quadrant of a table of interindustrial exchanges that gives an image of the quantitative importance of the financial flows (in the broadest sense of the term--that is, encompassing all the operations that lead to a transfer of debits).

Furthermore, the structure of national expenditure furnished by the Soviet annual report up to 1975 made it possible to estimate the Soviet Union's expenditures for armament. In effect, in Soviet national accounting they are accounted for under the headings relative to net capital formation ("accumulation fund," in the Soviet terminology), and especially in the category entitled "increase of stocks." A series of calculations made it possible, on the basis of these data, to isolate the proportion of capital formation for military use. The other types of expenditures can be estimated--and this is still the case--either on the basis of other headings of the annual statistical report (scientific research for military purposes) or on the basis of observation of the defense apparatus (personnel and operating expenditures). Recourse to these different methods made possible an overall evaluation of the Soviet Union's military expenditures, and had the advantage of being expressed directly in current rubles without going through hazardous ruble-dollar conversions, and of being able to be related quite securely to net national production, because of the homogeneity of the data.

The Most Important Data That Have Disappeared from the USSR's Annual Statistical Reports since 1975 (and date of last publication)

## Major Aggregates

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| - Structure of net national expenditure   | 1975 |
| - Breakdown by sectors of net national production from point of view of product   | 1978 |
| - Comparison of the national income of the USSR and of foreign countries (evaluation of the national incomes of the foreign countries in terms of Soviet accounting and in dollars) | 1977 |

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## Population

- Population of the autonomous republics, the autonomous regions, and the districts 1976
- Infant mortality 1975

## Industry

- Production of oil by republics 1975
- Production of natural gas by republics 1975
- Production of coal by republics 1975
- Production of cast iron by republics 1975
- Production of steel by republics 1975
- Production of finished laminates by republics 1975
- Production of cement by republics 1975
- Production of cotton fabrics, woolens, linen fabrics and silks by republics 1975
- Production of tires, in terms of their use 1977
- Production of tractors, by type 1976
- Production of paper, by kind 1978
- Average annual numbers of production personnel employed in the various branches of industry 1975

## Agriculture

- Principal indicators of development of agriculture in the economic regions of the USSR 1975
- Principal indicators of development of agriculture by autonomous republics 1976
- State purchases of wheat, rye, and rice by republics 1975
- Number of kolkhozes and of sovkhoses and production of the principal agricultural products by autonomous region and national district 1976
- Average number of kolkhoz homes and average area of kolkhoz fields, by kolkhoz 1975

## Transport

- Transport of travelers by rail, by republics 1975
- Transport of goods and travelers by river, by republics 1975
- Cost of transport of goods by rail, by water, and by road 1975
- Average time of use of freight cars 1975

## Investments and Construction

- Investments by autonomous republics 1976
- Placing of fixed capital in service by the kolkhozes, by republics 1977
- Investments of the sovkhoses 1975
- Construction of housing in the kolkhozes, by republics 1975
- Construction of housing by the real-estate cooperatives, by republics 1975

## Labor

- Average annual number of blue-collar and white-collar workers, by autonomous republics, autonomous regions and national districts 1976
- Average annual numbers of blue-collar and white-collar workers by branches of the economy and by republics 1975

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## Retail Trade

- Turnover of state and cooperative retail trade (including restaurants),  
by autonomous republics, autonomous regions and national districts 1976
- Equipment of the retail-trade organisms 1975

The data on net national production from the point of view of product were in their turn chosen as a target in 1979. In effect, the figures indicating the contribution of the various sectors to creation of national production, as well as to creation of gross social production, disappeared from the 1979 annual. Thus, the only thing remaining of the general indicators of growth are some overall figures and series of indexes that go back to the night of time.

The Soviet statisticians have also struck some heavy blows in the area of regional statistics. All the data relative to the 18 economic regions of the USSR or to the administrative regions other than the federated republics were suppressed either in 1976 or in 1977: population by autonomous republic, autonomous region and national district (disappeared in 1977); rate of growth of industrial production by republic and by economic region (1976); principal indicators of development of agriculture in the economic regions of the USSR (1976); principal indicators of development of agriculture by autonomous republic (1976); number of kolkhozes and of sovkhoses and production of the principal agricultural products by autonomous region and national district (1977); investments by autonomous republic (1977); etc. In the 1977 annual, there were already no more data on the economic regions.

Furthermore, the statistics relative to the federated republics have themselves been heavily purged. It should be noted also that this operation was carried out entirely within the framework of the 1976 statistical annual; and the very few republic statistics that escaped it underwent a new offensive in 1979. Thus there ceased to appear as of that date the forest resources by republic, the ranking of the construction and assembly organizations according to volume of work done, by republic, as well as the ranking of the construction trusts, by republic.

The breakdown by republic of the production of a large number of industrial products disappeared from the USSR's statistical annual for 1976: oil, gas, coal, cast iron, steel, finished laminates, cement, masonry materials, cotton fabrics, woollens, linen fabrics, silks. The apportionment of the statistics by republic has been eliminated in other areas also. We can cite by way of example the breakdown of natural prairies by users, by republic; the number of specialists with higher or secondary specialized training employed in the kolkhozes, the sovkhoses, the auxiliary agricultural enterprises and others, by republic; transport of travelers by rail by republic; the average annual numbers of blue-collar and white-collar workers by branch of the economy and by republic; the number of kindergartens and nursery-kindergartens by republic, etc.

Nevertheless, it has been noted that these various data have not all disappeared completely from the statistical apparatus of the USSR; a number of them have gone from a "wide diffusion" category (the USSR's annual statistical report) to that of "limited diffusion" (statistical annuals for republics).<sup>7</sup> It has not been possible to make a systematic comparison between the data available in the "Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR" and those that are provided in the republic annuals, inasmuch as for a number of republics we did not have annuals available for earlier than 1975, while for others,

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the range of annual reports available between 1975 and 1978 is often limited to one or two works.

Therefore, our investigation could involve only 11 republic annuals (Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), and it was limited to the industrial products for which the production figure by republic was eliminated from the "Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR." It emerged that certain of the republic annuals studied continued beyond 1975 the publication of data that had disappeared from the national annual. Thus, coal production was still given by the annuals of the Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia (in 1978), of the Ukraine (1978), and of Kazakhstan (1978), production of steel and of finished laminates was in the annuals of the Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia and of the Ukraine, production of masonry materials was in the annuals for Azerbaijan (1976), of Uzbekistan (1978), of Latvia (1977) and of Lithuania (1978), but it disappeared from the Kazakhstan annual for 1978. Thus, for these products it is still possible to construct a partial table of the geographic distribution of production.

The case of oil and of gas is to be set aside because of the absence of interest for the data that have continued to be published. We note also that for oil, the test that has been made is significant, since the missing annuals concern republics that produce practically none (but with the exception of Turkmenia). Of all the republic annuals, only that of the Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia continues to furnish oil-production data beyond 1975 (509 million tons in 1977, or 89.1 percent of total production), but without giving any details about the contributions of the principal extraction sites (especially Ural-Volga, western Siberia). On the other hand, the annuals for the Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have ceased to publish their oil-production figures. The situation is the same for natural gas, for which only the production of the Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia is known (49.9 percent of total production). Moreover, this deficiency of information regarding gas is difficult to understand, since it is known that the Soviets have the habit of publishing regularly, in their specialized reviews, the state of the gas reserves and their geographic distribution as well as a good many other very detailed data.

Finally, the production statistics for a number of products of very unequal interest have totally disappeared: such is the case with cast iron, cement, and various categories of fabrics.

### 3. Attempts at Explanation

It would be illusory to hope to find a single and fully satisfactory explanation for all of the disappearances. It seems obvious that the censor of Soviet statistics has not followed a single guideline and that there are also different levels in the decision-making process. While it seems very likely that certain of these disappearances correspond to a deliberate policy, others, entirely insignificant ones, remain inexplicable; quite obviously, there is in the decision-making process in the USSR a level below which one cannot find any rationality in the choices made.

Nevertheless, it goes without saying that the impoverishment of Soviet statistics cannot be an isolated phenomenon and that it falls into a general context. Now one observes that after a phase of opening-up to the outside, the USSR went back, in the mid-1970's, to a certain turning-in on itself. This tendency is to be seen quite

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clearly in Soviet foreign-trade policy: starting in 1974, the USSR has limited its imports by selecting its purchases in strong foreign currencies to the advantage of its socialist partners. This new tack taken in the USSR's trade policy--explained by the Soviets as due to the reappearance of autarchic tendencies in the Western countries affected by the crisis--doubtlessly has internal reasons also. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1970's the Soviet government has presented more than ever the image of a monolithic regime that brings together at the very center of decision-making the various institutions constituted by the party, the armed forces and the police. For only the second time in all the history of the USSR, the armed forces were in 1973 received into the Politburo in the person of the minister of defense. In parallel with this, Leonid Brezhnev, secretary general of the party, was invested with the title of Marshall of the USSR and he affirmed himself as supreme commander of the armed forces. It will not be attempted here to throw light on the type of relations--very complex ones, for that matter--that link the party and the armed forces; but it is nonetheless important to stress the fact that the Soviet government has now entered a phase of stiffening. Is this from the influence of the military and police apparatuses, or a natural evolution? In any case, the repression of internal dissidence has hardened considerably in the last decade. Likewise, vis-a-vis the outside world the USSR has slipped from the openness dictated by detente to isolationism accompanied by an expansionist policy in increasingly diversified theatres of operations. If one is to believe the Soviet propaganda, this new attitude adopted by the USSR has been caused by the lack of benevolence now shown to it by the Western countries, the United States in particular. Feeling threatened and besieged, the USSR would thus be taken to have begun a response movement that has resulted in particular in the gradual shutting-off of the flows of information. Finally, the taste for secrecy that is usual in the military probably has something to do with the halt in the publication of substantive information that could have contributed to a deepening of the Western observers' knowledge of the USSR.

In addition, the middle of the 1970's also marked for the USSR the end of a certain economic expansion and an aggravation of the difficulties that previously had been latent. It is probable that in the face of this new situation, the Soviet officials reacted in the same way as in the 1950's by purely and simply stopping the publication of unfavorable data. Indeed, in the USSR more than elsewhere, statistics are a propaganda tool to be used on domestic and international public opinion. The elimination of a number of figures in the results of the 1979 annual plan--figures that were extremely poor in most sectors and were published by the press in 1980--is significant in this regard. The statistical services even used an especially crude artifice: in order not to stress the multiple appearance of minus signs, they broke with tradition by not giving, in the lists of principal industrial production, the rates of variation from the preceding year.

The same appears to be the case with the elimination of the regional statistics--an elimination that could well mask the dissonances of a territorial-development policy whose aim is nevertheless, according to the Soviet officials, to promote harmonious development of all the regions of the country.

By another hypothesis, less unfavorable to the Soviet Union, the statistical services have carried out a decentralization of information by handing over a part of the national annual report to the regional or sectorial annuals. Such an operation nonetheless implies, of course, that such information loses a good part of its audience, since the regional and sectorial annuals have far more limited diffusion than the

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"Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR." From this angle one could also explain the weakening of the chapters on agriculture and on the population by the preparation of an agricultural annual report, the imminent publication of which has been announced, and by the preparation of the definitive results of the 1979 census, which should be published at the beginning of 1981. It is true that in the annual for 1979, the chapter on "Territory and Population" is distinctly fuller than in the previous years; certain information is of a new character by comparison with the demographic data usually communicated, while, on the contrary, other information that had ceased to appear since 1976 has been reestablished. It should be stressed, though, that the results of the preceding census of 1970, published in the annual for 1971, were both more complete and more detailed. And in a general way, it has been noted that although the techniques of gathering and processing of the data have made considerable progress, there is presently less information available about this census than at the same period 9 years ago.

Other elements are also of such a nature as to weaken the hypothesis of a decentralization of statistics. On the one hand, the data that have disappeared from the national annual have also been eliminated in the republic annuals, or at least in most of them. On the other hand, the several sectorial annuals that were available to us (in particular, an annual on the population and one on transport and communications) either ceased to appear in 1975 or were eliminated, as of that year, from the list of works whose publication is announced abroad.

The various hypotheses that have been offered are only attempts at explaining an objective fact: the impoverishment of economic information of Soviet origin. Nevertheless, we have considered it important to stress the degree to which the rise of this phenomenon and the development of it in recent years seems to echo the evolution of Soviet policy, both internal and external.

## Evolution of Soviet Foreign-Trade Statistics (by Anita Tiraspolksy)

The foreign-trade statistics of the Soviet Union constitute an entity distinct from the other Soviet statistics. Prepared in a different framework from that of the Central Department of Statistics, they cannot be compared with the data relating to the domestic economy: the monetary units differ fundamentally. The "foreign-exchange" unit of account for foreign-trade statistics cannot be compared to the domestic ruble.<sup>8</sup> Another difference that scarcely permits comparison is the product nomenclature, which in the case of trade operations leans toward the end-use aspect of the product considered.

Despite these essential differences, one notes that since 1975 there has been an entirely parallel evolution between the domestic statistics and those of foreign trade. Overall, one sees the same phenomenon of a regression of official information.

What is the scope of the disappearances from the foreign-trade statistics? What are the areas or products affected? What arguments can one present to explain the deterioration one notes between 1975 and 1979? Most of the theses advanced in an attempt to understand this phenomenon in the internal statistics of the national economy are doubtlessly valid in the case of the foreign-trade statistics. But beyond these explanations, others seem to be more specific to a class of information that could make it possible to detect the Soviet Union's international policy.



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If one compares the official annual report of foreign trade for 1978 and that for the year 1975, one notes an evolution that is disturbing to say the least, and which at first sight seems to run against the commitments made by the Soviet Union, jointly with the states participating in the Helsinki Conference on European Security and Co-operation.

The Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act

The Final Act (second basket) of 1 August 1975 stipulated, in the chapter on foreign exchanges, that the participating states committed themselves to encouraging "the publication and diffusion of economic and trade information at regular intervals and within the best times possible--in particular:

--...The statistics on foreign trade, worked out on the basis of classifications comparable to one another, including breakdown by product with indication of volumes and values, as well as the countries of origin or destination.

--the laws and regulations concerning foreign trade....

--Other information of such a nature as to aid businessmen in their commercial contacts--for example, the periodic summaries, the lists, and when it proves possible, the organigrams of the firms and organizations involved in foreign trade.

The states expressed the desire to "take advantage of the possibilities offered by the competent international organizations, and in particular the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in order to implement the provisions of the final documents of the Conference." And since 1977, the EEC's Trade Development Committee, one of whose functions is to collect, publish and diffuse information whose objective is to create better conditions for developing trade,<sup>9</sup> has been discussing these problems in the course of its annual sessions.

More particularly, the Committee has sought to set up a multilateral system enabling each country to give notice of the laws and regulations concerning foreign trade, and the changes that might come about in this area. It would seem, though, that the Eastern countries' interest in establishing such a system is not so lively as the Committee had hoped.<sup>10</sup>

Certain governments have transmitted lists of sources of foreign-trade information which they could make available to the Secretariat of the EEC. This is the case with Bulgaria and Poland. Others, such as Switzerland, Norway, the United States and the FRG, have submitted proposals for improving the conditions of information. But there do not seem to have been any important sequels to this work.

Moreover, the few proposals for improving and harmonizing foreign-trade statistics are coming essentially from Western countries--Norway, the United States, etc. The FRG, which in its official statistics does not even distinguish exports and imports by country, is asking for broader information on the restrictions, prohibitions, taxes and subsidies on or for exportation and importation, on the long-term and medium-term investment programs of the governments and the private firms, and on the prospective data that make it possible to trace the economic and monetary policies of the countries. The USSR seems to have scarcely made any appearance within that framework.

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In the area of foreign-trade statistics, the work is even less advanced. It is proposed here to examine the case of the USSR and to raise questions about the evolution observed in the USSR's official foreign-trade statistics. May one speak of progress? What interpretation is to be placed on the disappearance of certain headings?

## I. The Soviet Statistics on Foreign Trade

## The Sources

The foreign exchanges of the Soviet Union can be studied on the basis of sources issuing from international and national organizations.

The international sources, which themselves present data of Soviet origin, are relatively few in number.<sup>11</sup> They are mainly the "United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics," which once a year publishes the exchanges of the planned-economy countries; the annual GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] publication "International Trade in . . .," comprising a special chapter on the trade of the countries of the East. These two publications make it possible, at an aggregate level, to make international comparisons by product group for the USSR. But they do not furnish data by product and by country. The same is the case with the annual report of the CEMA, "Statisticheskij Ezhegodnik Stran Chlenov SEV," published every year since 1971, which gives only summary indications for foreign trade: total value, breakdown by zones, overall apportionment by products. For the USSR, the omission one notes in the Soviet official annual report are found also in these international sources.

The USSR regularly publishes annual and quarterly national statistics on foreign trade in the monthly review VNESHNYAYA TORGOVLYA. It appears in five languages: Russian, French, German, English and Spanish. This organ of the USSR's Ministry of Foreign Trade inserts four times a year a section devoted to the quarterly foreign-trade statistics, broken down by country group and by country. These statistics are available well before the foreign-trade annual report comes out. The annual report for the USSR ("Narodnoe Khozjajstvo SSSR" for 19...), published by the Central Department of Statistics, is especially skimpy on foreign trade. It presents a selection of data in six tables, drawn from the foreign-trade annual, at least since 1964.

In addition to these six tables, there are three original tables on the fruits of Soviet cooperation. This involves construction projects in which the USSR has participated abroad, and projects planned, by economic branch and by country.

The most complete document by far is the series of annual reports published by the Principal Department of Economic Planning (Glavnoe Ekonomicheskoe Upravlenie) of the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the USSR and put out by Statistika under the title of "Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR v 19... g." (Foreign Trade of the USSR in 19...). Indeed, the introduction states that this annual "constitutes the most complete source of statistical information published in the USSR on foreign trade."

Each annual contains the statistics for the year stated in the title and those of the preceding year. Statistical revisions from one annual to the next are rares, and they usually concern typographic corrections.<sup>12</sup> With the exception of a few products, the headings have been practically the same since 1958,<sup>13</sup> the year of the first foreign-trade annual. But headings have been disappearing increasingly since 1975. In certain years, the Ministry of Foreign Trade has published retrospective reports (5 to 50 years), similar to the annuals, which generally cover 2 years.<sup>14</sup>

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These annuals present the exchanges, in current prices, with breakdowns by country groups, by countries (104 in 1978), by product groups (8 groups), a geographic breakdown for certain products (in value or in physical quantities), and the exchanges by country and product in terms of value and for a narrower selection of products in physical quantities. In addition, one will find overall indexes in terms of physical volume, a breakdown of freight by type of transport, in the form of very succinct data.

## The Techniques of Preparation of the Foreign-Trade Statistics<sup>15</sup>

The foreign-trade statistics are established on the basis of the accounting data of all the export-import organisms and the other institutions involved in foreign trade. The transport and merchandise documents are the basis of them. They are furnished by the industrial, commercial and other enterprises that provide merchandise for exportation and by the foreign suppliers and carriers at the importation level.

At the exportation level are recorded the merchandise of national production and the reexportations of products of foreign origin (general trade). At the importation level are recorded the merchandise of foreign origin intended for national consumption and for reexportation. Furthermore, the USSR records in its statistics at both the exportation and importation levels the merchandise of foreign origin that is the object of a transaction abroad made by Soviet foreign-trade organizations and that is intended for other foreign countries. In such case, the merchandise does not transit the USSR at any time.

The Soviet statistics do not include: merchandise delivered without payment, under the heading of aid to foreign countries; merchandise going to the technical assistance fund of the United Nations; foreign merchandise transiting the USSR; products intended for expositions and fairs abroad or in the USSR; and the transactions that do not have a commercial character--for example, parcel post addressed to private parties, and passengers' baggage.

The value of merchandise is established according to the value of the contracts, in FOB-FOB prices. The exchange rate used for conversion of foreign currencies into rubles is an official rate established by the State Bank of the USSR for the corresponding period. At the exportation level, the partner country is the country of consumption of the product, and at the importation level, it is the country of production of the product. If the country of consumption or the country of production cannot be identified, the USSR records the country of first destination or of last origin. The date of recording of a product is generally the date of its crossing the border. These practices are not always comparable to those of the Western countries or even those of the other socialist countries, and they explain in part the differences to be observed from the statistics of the USSR's partner countries.<sup>16</sup> The problem of determining the value of merchandise is in fact far more complicated than is indicated in the methodological note that appears in the foreign-trade annual.

## The Foreign-Trade Nomenclature

All the statistics of the Soviet foreign-trade annual are established in conformity with the unified nomenclature of foreign-trade merchandise, "Edinaya Tovarnaya Nomenklatura Vneshney Torgovli," a numerical-code system for classification of products.

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This nomenclature, published for the first time in 1954, was republished on several occasions in 1962 and 1971, with revisions introduced in 1962, in 1967, and in 1976-1977. The recapitulative reports for foreign trade 1918-1966 and 1959-1963 take them into account. The principle for elaboration of this nomenclature differs considerably from that of the nomenclatures by product used in the Western countries as the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), promulgated in 1950 and revised in 1960 and again in 1976. Except for certain nuances from country to country, the unified nomenclature adopted by the countries of the East classifies the products mainly in function of their final use. The first objective is to separate the products for productive consumption from those intended for personal consumption; next, the nomenclature is detailed in function of the users. Thus, the countries of the CEMA have two distinct positions for a pump intended for a steel mill and a pump delivered to a cement plant, even if the pumps are identical. Live animals for slaughter are in a different position from live animals intended for raising, for zoos, or for scientific laboratories. It is obvious that establishing comparisons with the other classifications of the SITC or Brussels type becomes problematic. There are concordance tables, though; but they can be only approximate.<sup>17</sup>

The unified CEMA nomenclature of 1971,<sup>18</sup> adopted in December 1969, involves a system of 7-digit indicators in which the first digit indicates a major division, the second a group, the third a subgroup, the fourth and fifth figures a product, and the sixth and seventh a subposition. By way of example, the code 7 comprises the "raw materials" for production of food products; 70 is cereals (including groats); 700 is cereals (without groats); 70001 is wheat; 7000103 is hard wheat.

In the 1971 classification there was a total of 9 divisions, 57 groups, 317 subgroups, 3,945 products and 8,293 subpositions; after the 1977 revision there appear to be, according to the calculation done, 9 divisions, 57 groups, 320 subgroups, 4,074 products (132 new positions and 3 removed), and 9,178 subpositions (900 new positions and 15 removed). It is the broadest classification of all the international nomenclatures (cf Table 1).

Table 1--Number of Positions in the Principal Foreign-Trade Classifications

Number of Digits for for the Indication	Unified Nomenclature of the CEMA			SITC	Brussels NDB [*]
	1962	1971	1977		
1. Principal divisions	9	9	9	10	21
2. Groups	58	57	57	56	99
3. Subgroups	302	317	320	177	--
5. Products	3,890	3,945	4,074	1,312	1,097
7. Subproducts	6,238	8,293	9,178	--	--

-- = not applicable

\* [expansion unknown]

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Besides the nine major divisions of the nomenclature, there is a series of operations of a productive character that are recorded as trade but do not figure in the annual reports, except [as published] the printing of books, pamphlets and advertising material and ship repair. In international-trade practice, these operations for the most part are generally recorded in the balance of current operations as services (except for the groups 05, 07, 09100). This operation, entitled "operations of a productive character not falling into divisions 1-9," is given as an appendix to the nomenclature with a zero as indicator. In 1971, it comprised 9 groups (2 digits) and 73 "products" (5 digits).

- 01. Patents, licenses, know-how
- 02. Design and research work
- 03. Assembly and construction work
- 04. Technical management and control
- 05. Repairs
  - including: 05300 ship repair
- 06. Leasings and concessions
- 07. Improving and finishing
- 08. Specialist missions for training of cadres
- 09. Other services of a productive character
  - including: 09100 Printing of books, pamphlets, advertising material; became 09974 in 1976.

## The Residua

The richness of this nomenclature does not, however, imply that all the positions are utilized--far from it. The foreign-trade annuals provide a wide but incomplete "choice" of headings. A significant volume of trade can be identified [as published]. The term "residuum" designates the value of the trade that does not appear in the annuals but that can be calculated as the difference between the total amount of the exchanges, which includes the residua, and the sum of all the identified elements that make it up. The annual does not have any heading for "miscellaneous" or "other." A residuum of products not identified or of countries may be involved. Thus, in the "machinery, equipment and means of transport" category, the part not broken down by type of machine represents from 9 to 17 percent of total exports and from 2 to 4 percent of imports, depending on the year. For certain countries and certain years, this proportion can be higher than 50 percent.

Residua are found at all levels: groups, subgroups, etc. One can in fact distinguish two big "residua" as B.L. Kostinsky does.<sup>19</sup>

The residuum of the machinery and equipment category--The annual gives no data for total exports and imports of metalworking equipment (10), energy equipment (11), equipment for the chemical, wood and paper, and construction industries (15), communications equipment (158), or for transport (19). At the importation level, there is a systematic lack of data for equipment and material for complete plants (16), for agricultural equipment and tractors (18), for aeronautical materiel and airplanes (193). At the exportation level, data are never given for mining and petroleum equipment (12), and since 1966, for industrial diamonds (175). The existence of a flow can be evidenced by the USSR's partner countries and notably by the other European socialist countries.

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- The total residuum--This is the biggest, and it remains very difficult to identify. It results from the difference between total trade and the sum of the elements figuring in the annual, either by product group or by country group.

The sum of the products reveals a residuum that represents 5 to 6 percent of the USSR's imports and 23 to 27 percent of exports. The studies done on this subject<sup>20</sup> attribute this residuum to the exportations of precious metals, diamonds, radioactive isotopes and amorphous chemical products, to certain food products (meat, fish), and in particular, to the sale of certain military materiel that go into the overall figures (certain raw materials and intermediate products, construction materials, etc). The total for these military supplies appears to represent about 1.2 to 1.5 percent of exports. In fact, the bulk of military materiel does not appear in the unified nomenclature or does not constitute merchandise in the proper sense. Moreover, a part of the residuum is doubtlessly to be attributed to the "zero" position.

At the importation level, the number of missing products includes ores and ore concentrates (uranium), certain products of a military character, and doubtlessly some "operations" of a productive character also.

In the total for the countries, the residuum is apparent in an approximate way in the USSR's exports to the Third World: 40 to 50 percent of exports cannot be broken down by country in the trade with this zone. Moreover, the list of products given for each country is not exhaustive: at both the exportation and importation levels, as much as 50 percent or more of the USSR's total exports may be missing. In 1975, for example, only about 87 percent of the trade with the GDR and Czechoslovakia could be identified, 68 percent of exports to Belgium, 96 percent of those to France, 64 percent to Iraq, 50 percent to Indonesia, and 43 percent to Burma.

Quite obviously, the Soviet foreign-trade statistics have great imprecisions and numerous shadowy areas. And it was possible to hope that the commitments made by the USSR at Helsinki would make it possible to resolve a number of uncertainties, at least in part, and to fill in some gaps.

## II. The Evolution of the USSR's Official Foreign-Trade Statistics

### The Methodological Approach

Description, even if summary, of the Soviet foreign-trade statistics is not useless. The fact is that before one can talk about evolution of foreign trade, and especially in order to interpret it, one has to be able to determine the "quality" of the initial product. This permits more correct evaluation of the "gains" or "losses."

We shall limit ourselves here to establishing a comparison of the official annual reports--the most complete tool--of the USSR's foreign trade. The statistics for the year 1975 (annual report published in 1976) were chosen as the reference year. The most recent annual report available at the time of the present study, in March 1980, is that for 1978 (published in 1979). Systematic comparison, table by table, permits a number of observations. Since that time, it has been possible to supplement the observations, after the appearance in 1980 of the annual report for 1979.

Observations were made at several levels in an attempt to grasp the scope of the changes that have occurred since 1975:

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- simple comparison of the table headings
- the variations at the level of the nomenclature
- the variations at the level of the residua

## Comparison of the Table Headings

## The Disappearances

The first observation that must be made concerns the very volume of the annual report. As Table 2 shows, the number of pages has decreased considerably since 1975, going from 314 pages for the year 1975 to 286 pages for 1979 (published in 1980)--down 8.9 percent. On the other hand, the print run is going up and the price has gone down, both for the paperback edition, which is the first to come out, and for the hardbound edition. The annual report is coming out faster, and is now issued at the end of March instead of in April. However, it is relatively difficult to obtain it abroad before August or September by the conventional book-acquisition methods (purchase or exchange).

The decrease in the number of pages is explained by the disappearance of a table, and especially, of numerous headings. We refer to Table XVI, which in 1975 gave in parallel the production, exportation and importation of the principal merchandise, in physical quantities for 2 years. The production figures had come out of the USSR's small statistical annual "The USSR in Figures in 19...." This relatively succinct table made it possible to estimate apparent consumption (real consumption plus stocks and losses) for 33 essential products such as machine-tools for metalworking, excavators, tractors, electric locomotives, passenger cars, trucks, touring vehicles, buses, crude oil, iron ore, cast iron, steel pipe, cement, glass, paper, cardboard, meat, shoes, refrigerators, cameras, television sets, etc.

Table 2--The USSR's Annual Foreign-Trade Reports

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Pages	298	316	314	314	311	286	287	286
Print run (copies)	8,500	12,000	12,000	14,620	16,300	16,000	16,000	16,000
Price (in rubles)								
-paperback	1.39	1.53	1.53	2.08	2.10	2.00	2.00	2.00
-hardbound	1.79	2.17	2.52	2.43	2.40	2.30	2.30	2.20
Completed	4/7/71	3/28/74	4/3/75	3/31/76				
Date of legal filing	5/28/71	4/22/74	4/21/75	4/20/76	4/27/77	3/21/78	3/23/79	3/18/80

Note: Since 1975, the official responsible for publication has been G.G. Manaev.

One could no doubt reconstitute an analogous table for the following years, but for a far more limited number of products; it is, in effect, at the product level that the greatest number of disappearances is to be observed.

Tables XI and XIII of the 1978 and 1979 annual reports--Relative proportion of different merchandise in the USSR's exports (XI), and in its imports (XIII)--have no more than 42 positions, as against 50 and 48, respectively, in 1975.

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Table XII of the 1978 annual (USSR's Exports, by Product) has 405 positions, including 24 with 2 digits, 104 with 3 digits, 259 with 5 digits and 18 with 7 digits, as against 497 positions in 1975, including 25 with 2 digits, 119 with 3 digits, 329 with 5 digits and 24 with 7 digits--that is, an 18.5-percent decrease in the number of positions. In the 1979 annual report, one notes 4 disappearances among the 5-digit indicators, and 22 new positions, including 18 with 5 digits and 4 with 3 digits.

Which, then, are the products or aggregates that have disappeared root and branch from the annual report between 1975 and 1978, and which have undergone a modification?

At the exportation level, one counts 105 positions that no longer exist, 13 new aggregates, and 38 positions given in value whereas in the 1975 annual they were given in value and in physical quantities.

The following have disappeared by more intensive aggregation of many categories of machinery, equipment and means of transport (10-19): machine-tools, the various diesel engines, the various electric motors, transformers and batteries, all cranes, various civil-engineering equipment, the equipment for the radio and electronics industry, the various types of electronic bookkeeping machines, the various locomotives, trucks, the various fuels and petroleum products (coal, oil, gasoline, fuel oil, greases, etc), the various nonferrous metals, the various laminates and steels, the various kinds of pipe, all nonferrous metals and all nonferrous laminates, and finally, all kinds of rubber and rubber articles.

The following are no longer given in terms of value: the single categories that group the diesels, transformers, cable, rolling-mill equipment, smelting, elevators and other road-building machinery, computers, bearings, tractors, locomotives, trucks and parts, buses, solid fuels, oil and petroleum products, gas, cast iron, the various iron alloys, ferrous laminates, sheet metal, pipe, cable, certain chemical products, the various cereals.

Thus, coal (200) has been replaced by a more general category entitled solid fuels (20) that comprises coke and lignite in addition to coal; furthermore, this category is given only in terms of value. The Soviet sales of gas (23001) have suffered the same fate under the appellation of gaseous fuels (230), which also includes liquid gas and propane.

At the importation level, one counts 104 positions that no longer exist, 23 new positions, and 55 positions given only in terms of value and no longer in physical quantities. The positions have been aggregated for the various kinds of machine-tools, presses and forging machines, for the lines of metalworking equipment, the diesels, electric motors, cranes, the various kinds of chemical equipment, certain civil-engineering equipment, the electronic industry's equipment, the cable industry's equipment, the various kinds of computer, tractors and railway equipment, trucks, the various liquid and solid fuels, the various nonferrous minerals and ores, the various ferrous laminates, pipe, all nonferrous metals, rubber articles.

Value only is now given for the single categories that group the headings that have disappeared, and in addition, cable, industrial equipment (for rolling, smelting, lifting), bearings, buses, cast iron and ferrous laminates, sheet metal, pipe, white iron, numerous chemical products, livestock and cereals.



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In all the other tables of the annual report for 1978, especially by country and product and by product and country, one notes the same evolution. However, several key products remain in physical quantities in the breakdown by country. For example, for the United States, Canada, Australia, Brazil, the Soviet imports of cereals (wheat, corn, etc) are still given in 1978 and 1979 in physical quantities and in value, whereas for France, Hungary and Argentina, the cereals are given only in value.

As in the listing by product, one notes a sizable reduction of the total number of positions for each country--in most cases, a larger reduction for exportation than for importation. It is in trade with the socialist countries that the greatest number of disappearances is seen: from 12 percent less in 1978 by comparison with 1975 in exports to Mongolia to 28 percent less in 1978 in relation to 1975 (exportation to Poland), from 3 percent less in importation from Mongolia to 19 percent less (Poland, GDR). On the average, there are 21 percent fewer headings with the socialist countries at the exportation level and 16 percent fewer at the importation level.

Proportionately, the number of products exchanged with the Western countries is lower; but here too, the details (positions of 5 and 7 digits) are tending to decrease--on the average, 10 percent fewer at the exportation level and 7 percent at the importation level. With the developing countries, one notes, insofar as the number of products exchanged is significant, the same evolution. The total number of positions stated in trade with the countries of the Third World has decreased by 19 percent at the exportation level and 8 percent at the importation level.

For 1979, the foreign-trade annual comprises a relatively large number of new positions: 18 for exports, 22 for imports. They essentially involve merchandise of secondary importance: metal in pellets; boric acid; anhydrides; articles of magnesite, of refractory clay; products of the sea; vegetables and potatoes; dried fruits and berries; mushrooms; margarine; cooking fats; smoking tobacco; metallic notions; metal tableware, glass tableware; pianos for export. At the import level there appear equipment for production of metal constructions, agricultural machinery, butter and cheese, tobacco, phosphoric acid, fertilizers, furniture; welding equipment; cultural equipment; pipe (in value); fatty acids; anhydrides, silicates, glues; ethylene; etc.

## The Nomenclature

If one takes the figures resulting from a counting of the annual's headings, in the tables of exchanges by product (XII and XIV) (cf Table 3), one notes that the disappearances involve mainly 5-digit and 7-digit positions--that is, products. By country, one observes the same phenomenon. Starting with 1977, some highly aggregated 1-digit positions appear in the trade with certain partners. Imports of tin from Bolivia, Malaysia, Indonesia, for example, are now buried in a more general category "fuels, mineral raw materials, metals" corresponding to principal division 2 of the nomenclature. Likewise, rubber from Malaysia, Burma and Sri Lanka is incorporated in "chemical products, fertilizers, rubber"--that is, principal division 3; and finally, Iraqi oil appears in principal division 2.

## The Date of the Disappearances

The appearance or disappearance of a country in the USSR's foreign-trade annual is linked more to political considerations (regimes that have the USSR's approval) than to the existence or nonexistence of trade flows. Thus, Chile has not appeared in the

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annual report since 1974. On the other hand, West Berlin has always been considered as a "commercial" entity distinct from the FRG. Between 1975 and 1979, one notes several modifications. In 1976 appear Laos, the United Arab Emirates, the Philippines, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and Panama; in 1977, Mozambique. Jamaica vanishes in 1977, Somalia and the Central African Empire in 1978, and Malta, the United Arab Emirates, Rwanda, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Venezuela and Guyana in 1979. The appearance of Laos in the number of the socialist countries as of 1977 should also be stressed.

Table 3--Number of Positions

	Years	Total number of positions	including those with ... digits			
			2	3	5	7
Exportation	1975	497	25	119	329	24
	1978	405	24	104	259	18
	1979	423	24	112	268	19
Importation	1975	495	22	131	311	31
	1978	415	18	119	251	27
	1979	433	18	123	265	27

One can distinguish two stages in the process of omissions of products. In the first phase, in 1976, products (5 and 7 digits) previously given in physical quantities and in value simply disappear: such is the typical case of petroleum products, which all disappear in 1976, with only the general designation, "petroleum products," remaining, with the indicator 22, in volume and value. The same thing is noted for the various coals (200), cranes (130), ferrous laminates (264), pipe, nonferrous metals and alloys, the various rubbers. In 1977, all these products are combined in new, broader headings (2 digits) and/or are now given only in value, or disappear completely (nonferrous metals, cranes, rubber). Many products, notably the cereals and agricultural products, and certain chemical products are given only in value starting with 1977, and the same is the case for certain machinery and means of transport.

Only the products of secondary interest have found favor with the "statisticians," and as we shall see, it is in that category that the choices made by the censor lies.

## The Residua

As we have seen in the first part, there are sizable residua in the Soviet statistics. Here too, one notes a deterioration of the situation since 1975.

The proportion of not-broken-down items in the structure of the USSR's exports by product group (Table X in 1975, Table IX in 1978 and 1979) went from 15.6 percent in 1975 to 19.2 percent in 1978 and 17.3 percent in 1979, and in the structure of imports, from 5.3 percent to 6.0 percent in 1978 and 5.6 percent in 1979, a relatively negligible increase.

The items not broken down in the distribution of trade by country (Table IV) increased considerably for the developing countries until 1978. The Soviet exports to the developing countries were broken down by country in the proportion of 58.7 per-

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cent in 1975 and only 50 percent in 1978, and back up to 54.8 percent in 1979. For imports, the deterioration is less: 99.2 percent in 1975, 98.4 percent in 1978 and 99.2 percent in 1979. With the other zones, 99.9 percent of trade is expressed.

Observation by countries and products shows once again an impoverishment of information, especially at the exportation level. Between 1975 and 1978, the breakdown by products improved for Mongolia, North Korea, Denmark, Great Britain, Canada, Spain, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tunisia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cyprus, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the Yemen Arab Republic. All the others show a decrease in positions broken down, and especially the socialist countries, Belgium, France, The Netherlands, the FRG, the United States, Japan, Switzerland, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Uganda, Zambia, Uruguay, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Syria and Thailand.

For imports by country and product, the deterioration of information is less pronounced and often of little significance, except perhaps for the Soviet imports from Poland, Vietnam, Great Britain.

### III. The Strengthening of Statistical Secrecy

The breadth of the changes that have occurred in the USSR's official foreign-trade statistics is indisputable. Why, in 1976 and 1977, did the censors make so many omissions, irrefutably entailing an impoverishment of information in this area in which the situation was not particularly brilliant? In 1975, out of 12,612 positions with 2, 3, 5 and 7 digits included in the foreign-trade nomenclature of the CEMA member countries, the Soviet foreign-trade annual's lists by product gave 507 different positions, or about 4 percent of the total, including 25 2-digit positions out of 57, 131 3-digit positions out of 317, and 320 5-digit positions out of 3,945.

Of course, not all the products in the nomenclature are necessarily imported or exported by the USSR; but all the same, it can be considered that with 507 positions, things were far out of line. For 1978, out of 13,629 nomenclature positions, the list by product gives 429, or about 3 percent, including 24 different 2-digit positions, 119 out of 320 3-digit positions, and 259 out of 4,074 5-digit positions.

Several reasons can be suggested in explanation of this impoverishment. We shall cite here four of them which, it seems, have led the Soviet censorship to transform the statistics into a very rough-woven fabric:

- 1--the growing difficulties of the Soviet domestic economy;
- 2--the evolution of the international raw-materials market;
- 3--the extension of the "strategic products" concept;
- 4--the USSR's foreign policy.

The statistical information that could disclose certain economic difficulties of the USSR in too quantifiable a way have been omitted starting from the years 1976-1977. In this regard, the particularly sensitive sectors are energy fuels and cereals.

It is no longer possible, on the basis of the Soviet statistics, to know what the quantities of oil, gas and coal imported and exported by the USSR are, and therefore impossible to know apparent energy consumption or to evaluate the country's stocks. A drop in the volume of oil exports would show in too obvious a way--in the context

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of the rise in the prices of energy sources--the USSR's inability to cope simultaneously with a higher domestic demand and an increase in demand for oil and gas by the Eastern countries. The same holds for the cereals--wheat, corn, etc--for which the difficulties are notorious and the deficit constant. And similarly, the volume of exchanges of animals for slaughter is no longer given in physical quantities. The evolution of the exchanges of ferrous laminates and of certain chemical products may also reflect a difficult situation within these branches.

Means of transport such as buses and trucks are doubtlessly to be numbered among the products that may reflect a critical branch evolution, in view of the sizable investments made in the Soviet automotive industry in recent years. For these products, the loss of information may also reveal more strategic considerations.

In all these cases, of course, one can make use of the trade statistics of the partner countries in order to reconstruct the volumes exchanged. The procedure is a longer one, though, and differences in recording from country to country often make it possible only to establish approximations which are difficult to compare with the Soviet statistics.

The evolution of the international nonfood raw-materials market, characterized since 1973 by a constant rise in prices, has put into the realm of sensitive products a number of basic products previously considered strategic products and treated as such--that is, they are covered by secrecy like all military supplies, precious metals, diamonds and radioactive products. Thus can be explained the disappearance of all the nonferrous metals (copper, zinc, tin, etc) and the nonferrous laminates. The nonmetallic minerals (mica, sulfur, apatite, etc) are likewise omitted. But the camouflaging of these products is not always done well. For example, the USSR imports from Bolivia only crude and concentrated tin; it matters little whether it goes under the heading "tin" or under "fuels, mineral raw materials, metals." It can also be detected easily for Malaysia. Likewise, one knows that the indicator 3, "Chemical products, fertilizers, rubber," which is given for Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Burma covers natural rubber exclusively. As for the first series of omissions, one can find the figures by means of the statistics of the partner countries--but with the same trouble that has been mentioned. In a few years, certainly, it will be more difficult to know exactly what is covered by the new positions. This is the only explanation that can be given to justify some relatively naive disguises.

The suppression of the heading "nonmetallic minerals" (250) in 1976, by absorption into the 2-digit position (25) "nonmetallic minerals, clays and earths" makes it possible to bring out position 25911--that is, diamonds--which had to be included in this position, as well as barite, mica, sand and graphite, which are negligible among Soviet exports. Thus, in 1975 the value of exports of nonmetallic minerals totalled 360.9 million rubles. In the 1976 annual report, category 25, for the year 1975, represented 635.6 million rubles. The difference is composed essentially of Soviet rough diamonds. The ceiling value of the diamonds can also be calculated in the list of exports by product and country (which does not include Great Britain, the importer of the major part of Soviet uncut diamonds) by subtracting all the countries mentioned from category 25. In 1977, the residual value is 310.2 million rubles, and in 1978, 277.9 million rubles.

The extension of the "strategic product" concept seems to be closely linked to the products of increasing technicity, on the one hand, and on the other, to the greater

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vulnerability of the energy resources indispensable to the economic expansion of all countries. Secrecy now covers the heavy equipment for metalworking (presses, hammers, shears), the cranes, computers, cables of all kinds, pipe, and all heavy equipment for the extractive industries.

Finally, one last motivation is certainly among the most important that can explain the sizable loss of information--a motivation of a political order. The suppression of the physical-quantities statistics now makes it impossible to calculate the unit value of many products by country. One can no longer make comparisons between the unit prices of the exchanges with the socialist countries, with the developing countries and the Western countries and those of the world market.

Until 1976, one could know what countries benefited from real Soviet aid by means of preferential exchange prices. For example, aid to Cuba takes the form of imports of Cuban sugar at prices well above the world price and by Soviet exports of oil at prices lower than the price of the oil sold to the other socialist countries. Such deductions will henceforth be very difficult to make. This doubtlessly involves a deliberate decision to deprive foreign observers of a means for analysis of Soviet foreign policy. It is also from a foreign-policy motive that certain sensitive products have disappeared for certain countries only: natural gas imported from Iran, oil from Iraq. In the latter case, the oil was buried under the 1-digit heading "fuels, mineral raw materials, metals," which for Iraq includes crude oil only.

It is certain that the Soviet intentions go very broadly against the decisions taken at Helsinki in the matter of economic information. The evolution noted since 1976 shows clearly the Soviets' determination not to contribute to the efforts being made by the Helsinki Final Act signatory countries to reconcile and better harmonize each country's trade statistics. Moreover, the USSR seems to have given similar directives to its socialist partners, which since 1975 have also more or less reduced the volume of information that used to be available in the annual statistical reports. Only Hungary has not followed the movement. Thus, since 1975 the general statistical annual of the GDR, which was already poor for foreign trade, has aggregated the exports and imports by country. One can no longer calculate the balances. In certain cases, the omission procedure is thoroughly crude. In 1978, for example, Bulgaria suppressed all the statistics on its ex-post imports of oil--that is, imports after computer composition of its foreign-trade annual report. The position of Libya, which sells only oil to it, has been erased, and for the other oil-supplier countries, the lines have been cancelled out. Nevertheless, the poorly camouflaged volume of Soviet oil imports can be deciphered.

One question must be asked in the last analysis. How is one to reconcile the attitude of the USSR, which tends to raise obstacles against anything that could contribute to better understanding of that country, with the development of an economy that remains highly dependent on its ties with the Western world?

## FOOTNOTES

1. It is therefore clear that the institution, by the decree of July 1979, of the enterprise "passport" is aimed at breaking the secrecy with which the production units surround themselves. Henceforth, in effect, it will be possible to check the declarations of the enterprises by means of a central record filed with the

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Gosplan and indicating, for each unit, its nominal capacity, the degree of use of its equipment, the increase of the coefficient of rotation of its equipment, etc. The question remains whether the authorities will effectively have the means by which to apply this measure. On this subject one may refer to the July-August 1980 issue of CPE [COURRIER DES PAYS DE L'EST], No 242: "The Alterations of the Economic Mechanism in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe."

2. France's economic results are published by the INSEE [National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies] between 18 months and 2 years later.
3. Bergson, A., "The Real National Income of Soviet Russia Since 1928," Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1961; Becker, A.S., "Soviet National Income 1958-1964: National Accounts of the USSR in the Seven Year Plan Period," Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969; Trembl, V.G., and Hardt, J.: "Soviet Economic Statistics," Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1972; Green, D.W., and Higgins, C.I., "SOVMOD I: A Macroeconomic Model of the Soviet Union," New York, Academic Press, 1977; etc.
4. "A New Approach to the Economies of Soviet Type: the 'Second Economy'": G. Duchene in LE COURRIER DES PAYS DE L'EST, October 1980, No 244.
5. Alec Nove, "The Soviet Economic System," George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1977.
6. "Results of the Soviet Economy in 1979: Toward Zero Growth," in LE COURRIER DES PAYS DE L'EST, February 1980, No 237.
7. The print run of the annual report for the Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia was 27,000 for 1978, for the Ukraine annual it was 6,500 for 1978, for the Azerbaijan annual it was 4,000 for 1976, for the Latvia annual it was 2,500 for 1977, etc. We note that for 1977 and 1978, the statistical annual for the USSR was printed in 40,000 and 55,000 copies, respectively.
8. Cf "Panorama of the USSR," LE COURRIER DES PAYS DE L'EST, February-March 1979, Nos 226-227, 2nd edition, 1980, pp 72-73.
9. "Economic, Commercial and Administrative Information Relevant to the Development of Trade," TRADE (R 354, 23 August 1977, ECE [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe], Committee on the Development of Trade.
10. TRADE / R 389, Add 1, 9 October 1979, EEC, Committee for the Development of Trade.
11. Cf M. Lavigne, "Les Relations Economic Est-Ouest" [East-West Economic Relations], PUF [University Presses of France], Paris, 1979, pp 20-21.
12. Certain corrections are not inserted in the annual reports for the following years, but may be published in the review VNESHNYAYA TORGOVLYA. Thus the indexes of the volume of the USSR's foreign trade for 1975 were corrected for the "CEMA countries" group in VNESHNYAYA TORGOVLYA, No 9, 1977, p 65.
13. From 1930 to 1958, the USSR published no annual reports on foreign trade. In 1958, it issued two retrospective works for the years 1956 and 1957.

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14. We refer to "Vneshnyaya Torgovlya v SSSR v 1955-59 g.," which was published in 1961 after the change of the nominal gold content of the ruble and which furnishes the data recalculated in function of the new rate for this period; "Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR v 1959-69 g." was published after the adoption of the unified nomenclature of the CEMA in 1962 and contains the trade statistics in conformity with this nomenclature for the years 1938 and 1958-1963.
15. According to "Methodological Explanations" in "Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR v 1978," pp 284-285.
16. A. Tiraspolsky, "The Statistical Divergences of East-West Trade," in "Strategies des Pays Socialistes dans l'Echange International" [Strategy of the Socialist Countries in International Exchange], Economica, Paris, 1980, pp 317-331.
17. Romanov, J.A., in BYULLETEN' INOSTRANNOY KOMMERCHESKOY INFORMATSII, No 3, 1971, furnishes an alphabetical list of the products of the unified nomenclature of 1971 with, opposite them, the numerical codes of the classifications of 1962, of the SITC, and of the Brussels nomenclature.

Also: "Draft Conversion Key between the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification and the Standard Foreign Trade Classification of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance," Eur Conf Stats/WG 38/2, Geneva, United Nations, 20 July 1972, and Eur Conf Stats/WG 38/2, Amend 1, of 10 August 1972.

18. "Edinaya Tovarnaya Nomenklatura Vneshney Torgovli" [Unified Commodities of the Foreign-Trade Nomenclature], 3rd edition, Moscow, 1971, 607 pages; and "Byulleten' Tovarov Vneshney Torgovli (Dopolnenie k Edinoi Tovarnoy Nomenklature Vneshney Torgovli Stran Chlenov Sovyeta Ekonomicheskoy Vzaimopomoshchi" [Bulletin of Foreign-Trade Commodities (Supplement to the Unified Commodities Nomenclature for Foreign Trade of the Countries of the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance)], Moscow, 1977, 34 pages.
19. "Description and Analysis of Soviet Foreign Trade Statistics," op cit, pp 39-74
20. Marer, P., "Soviet and East European Foreign Trade, 1946-1969," Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1973.

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