

LIFE, WORK AND POLITICS IN
SOVIET CITIES: Results of
the Soviet Interview Project

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Life, Work, and Politics in Soviet Cities:

Results of the Soviet Interview Project

James R. Millar and Peter Donhowe

According to the findings of a survey of recent Soviet emigrants, the social atomization bred by the terror of the Stalinist years has been withering away in the Soviet Union--particularly among the young, who did not experience the Stalinist period directly. Having grown up in a society where midnight arrests and executions are no longer routinely practiced by those charged with enforcing political loyalty, the younger members of Soviet society do not share the lingering inclination of their parents to be extremely wary of everything they say to neighbors and co-workers. Nor do they fear to the point of political paralysis the KGB and other agencies of Soviet control. Instead, the generation raised since the end of World War II reveals a greater willingness to trust others and to take calculated, albeit limited, risks to display their dissatisfaction with some aspects of the Soviet system.

Nonetheless, the evidence produced by the survey suggests that citizens of the Soviet Union are, by and large, satisfied with many aspects of their lives. For the most part, they like their jobs, their housing, and the quality of their medical care--with blue-collar workers, the less well-educated, and older citizens appearing to be the most satisfied and generally supportive of the Soviet economic and political system. But, in a development that signals a major shift in the dynamics of Soviet society, it is the "best and the brightest" among the Soviet citizenry--those with the best jobs and the most education, as well as those with the highest incomes--who are the least

satisfied and the most critical of both the material and political aspects of Soviet life.

These insights, based on in-depth interviews with nearly 2,800 former Soviet citizens, are among the initial findings of the Soviet Interview Project (SIP), a major new study of everyday urban life, work and politics in the USSR by a multidisciplinary team of university scholars (for background on SIP, see p. 23). Some initial analyses of the responses--in the form of 20 working papers--have been presented to a group of Soviet specialists from government and academe in conferences at Airlie, Virginia, in October 1985, and Washington, DC, in October 1986.¹ These papers and the discussion they engendered are the basis for this overview.

Although the emigrant population was not a cross-section of Soviet society as a whole, it was nonetheless diverse, and those interviewed were selected from a sample that was stratified to approximate the characteristics of the adult European population residing in large and medium-sized cities of the USSR at the end of the 1970's. In addition, as we shall explain below, a variety of statistical tests was applied to the data to test their reliability. Therefore, although the answers SIP received should not be extrapolated to all of Soviet society, they are useful in the light of what is known by other means about the USSR, and they do offer in many realms statistically reliable conclusions and offer new insights into a major segment of Soviet society.

Many of SIP's initial findings will not be surprising to those who have studied the Soviet society for years,² but the SIP studies do help us to confirm the results of different lines of research and to discriminate among competing hypotheses in the field. Moreover, some of the findings are, in fact, without precedent in Soviet studies.

Among the SIP findings are that:

** Those who abandoned the Soviet Union did so for a variety of reasons -- more often for family than for strictly political reasons.

** Most of those who left were generally able to recall satisfaction with certain aspects of their lives, though they were highly dissatisfied with queues and the chronic shortages of meat, fresh vegetables and quality merchandise.

** The Marxist ideological goal of a classless society notwithstanding, blue-collar workers are viewed as having relatively low status in the Soviet Union, while highly paid, well-educated professionals are held in high esteem.

** The Soviet labor market functions much like those in the U.S. and other mixed economies: It rewards human capital and provides positive returns to experience, but tends to reward men better than women.

** Women are more likely than Soviet men to report having been satisfied with their jobs and their lives, even though they believe (as do men) that men "have it better" in the USSR.

** Contrary to the assertions of Soviet social scientists, the inequality of wages and the unequal distribution of wealth remains pronounced. Though the number of households living in poverty has declined, it remains extensive, and a "feminization of poverty" appears to be taking place.

** Abortions were common among the surveyed women -- 69 percent reported at least one abortion, and nearly 70 percent of those born between 1926 and 1945 reported two or more abortions.

** Efforts to avoid military service have become increasingly common over the past 30 years. About 20 percent of the male

respondents reported having done so.

** High-level professionals are often readers of *samizdat* and frequent listeners to foreign radio broadcasts.

** A majority saw the KGB as competent, but not particularly honest. About 60 percent of all respondents thought "most or almost all" KGB leaders competent. A somewhat larger percentage said that "most or almost all" KGB leaders were dishonest.

** The young are much more likely to believe that the Soviet Union is more powerful than the U.S. and to favor a globally activist foreign policy, such as giving military aid to North Vietnam. Only 16 percent believe the U.S. would win if there were a war between the two countries, whereas 39 percent of those born before the First World War hold that view.

** Low productivity in the workplace is common, but workers blame the lack of incentives and the failure to reward efficiency rather than the factors commonly cited by Western scholars -- alcoholism, Soviet central planning or bad management.

The Sample

For both what is surprising and what is not, the reliability of our data is of critical importance. It does not require expertise in survey research methodology to realize that the SIP sample differs from a random sample drawn from the general population of the USSR, if only because the respondents opted to face the trauma of emigration and resettlement. More important, the interviewees were more educated, more urban, and much more Jewish than a typical cross-section of Soviet society.

Three-hour face-to-face interviews were conducted in Russian with 2,793 respondents from a stratified sample of some 3,500 emigrants from the Soviet Union. The sample was stratified by ethnic origin, educational attainment, size of city and region of former residence, and its members were between the ages of 21 and 70 at the time of their arrival, between January 1, 1979, and April 30, 1982. About 8 percent had left the USSR in the years 1975-78 (mostly 1978); 48 percent left in 1979; 26 percent left in 1980, and 19 percent left in 1981-82. All were asked to report on their "last normal period" of life in the USSR, defined as the five years immediately preceding the decision to emigrate (or the incident that triggered that decision). For the great majority, that period ended in 1978 or 1979.

Of those interviewed, 36 percent had completed higher education; 50 percent, secondary education. Respondents were almost all from large and medium-sized Soviet cities: 72 percent had lived in cities with a population of 1 million or more; 8 percent in cities of 500,000 to 1 million; and 17 percent in cities of 100,000 to 500,000. Some 82 percent reported themselves to be Jewish either by religion or nationality. An additional 13 percent stated that although they were not Jewish, their parents, spouse, or spouse's parents were. Only 5 percent reported no Jewish connection.

The respondents were not merely a group of like-minded political dissidents. The survey reveals a wide range of motivations for emigration. Respondents often gave more than one reason, but the most commonly cited were accompanying family or friends (48 percent), "religious" or ethnic (mentioned by 46 percent of the respondents), political (43 percent), and economic (27 percent). Men were more likely to cite political reasons than were women (52 percent to 36

percent); women were more likely to cite family (55 percent to 39 percent). The well-educated were much more likely to cite political reasons than were those with less education (69 percent of those with advanced education, 37 percent of those with completed secondary education, and only 20 percent of those with less than complete secondary education). Moreover, the young were much more likely (54 percent) than the old (about 20 percent) to cite a political reason for leaving.

When the reasons are analyzed from the perspective of the respondent's role in making the decision to emigrate, politics (53 percent) and religion (46 percent) were the major reasons given by those who made the decision. For those who only shared in the decision, family (50 percent) and religion (48 percent) were the two reasons most cited, with politics third (40 percent). Those who had no significant role in deciding to emigrate give family (72 percent) as the major reason, with religion (28 percent) and politics (24 percent) trailing far behind.

Thus, the respondents to the survey are not a like-minded group of political dissidents, each of whom was clamoring to leave the Soviet Union for the West, but instead a diverse group in terms of their attitudes, interests and aspirations. As a result, they emerge as a promising source of information about Soviet society.

Nonetheless, the question of bias has been a matter of keen concern to the scholars involved in the SIP. It has been addressed in a variety of ways, with results that have tended to increase confidence in the survey's findings. When there is a known sample bias, survey results can still serve to identify limits. For example, when the SIP found that nearly 30 percent of the respondents had read underground

publications while in the Soviet Union, it can be concluded that a generalized figure for the entire Soviet population is not larger, and is almost certainly smaller.

It is common in survey research to test for bias and to make appropriate adjustments when interpreting the data. Although the ethnic composition of the SIP sample is unquestionably skewed, for example, researcher Donna Bahry found that the resulting bias is selective, coming into play on issues relating to ethnicity, but not on general political questions. In testing this phenomenon, Bahry divided the respondents into five categories. The first, and largest (2,137 respondents), were "intense identifiers . . . those who saw themselves as Jewish only, and who felt they belonged to no other nationality." The other categories were "moderate identifiers" (262), those "who saw themselves both as Jewish and as belonging to one or more other nationalities of the USSR;" "non-identifiers" (66), "individuals whose parent(s) was (were) Jewish but who claimed another nationality" exclusively; "spouses" (183), that is, "non-Jewish respondents married to a Jewish spouse in the USSR;" and "others" (145), consisting mostly of persons of Russian nationality.

Bahry discovered that answers to questions related to ethnicity or nationality, such as whether the respondent would desire to have a relative seek a Jewish spouse or whether ethnic discrimination played a role in education or in job advancement, revealed significant ethnic bias. However, answers to more general questions, such as whether agriculture or medical care should be private, revealed no significant variation by ethnic identification. All categories heavily favored *private* agriculture and *public* medical care.

SIP researchers Barbara Anderson and Brian Silver addressed other, more general, questions of bias--relating to respondent recall, the validity of responses about other persons, potential contamination of interviews by the presence of other members of the family, and "interviewer effects," or responses calculated to please the questioner. As they report, great care was taken to allow for these problems in designing the survey.

The selection process sometimes resulted in interviews of more than one member of a single household. This had the interesting advantage of permitting the use of statistical techniques to evaluate reliability of respective responses. The results were encouraging. Using 192 individuals who shared the same household with one or more of the given group during the last normal period in the USSR, Anderson and Silver found a high degree of agreement on such objective questions about life in the USSR as the size of residence in square meters, household wealth, monthly household expenditures, husband's monthly income from his main job, and wife's monthly income from her main job--even though spouses were interviewed separately. Responses of spouses to subjective questions--e.g., satisfaction with housing, jobs, medical care, and consumer goods--were also strikingly similar, regardless of whether the pairs were interviewed separately and simultaneously, or separately at different times, or whether others were present during the interview.

In another attempt to identify potential pitfalls in the SIP data, a research staff led by Michael Swafford conducted a series of sophisticated statistical tests for unintended influences on responses stemming from the survey's design or from the way it was carried out.

Specifically, Swafford sought to see if the responses were influenced by:

- * the length of time respondents had lived in the United States;
- * whether respondents participated willingly or reluctantly (some had initially said they had nothing to contribute or expressed concerns about possible reprisals against relatives still in the Soviet Union);
- * possible "interviewer effects" in responses from the 85 interviews conducted by 11 individuals born in the Soviet Union;
- * the sex of the interviewer, to find if women questioned by a man gave different answers than women questioned by a woman, etc.;
- * the ethnicity of the respondent.

The analysis examined a large sample of survey answers and found little evidence of effects in any of the five categories listed above, with the exception of a few questions that were, as anticipated, related to ethnicity (as Bahry also found).

In addition to testing the data for internal consistency, SIP scholars have, whenever possible, compared their findings with published Soviet official data. Consider, for example, the economic data developed by team member Paul Gregory. The official Soviet figure for per capita urban housing space for the 1978 urban population is 12.9 square meters. The SIP sample for approximately the same date gave a figure of 13.5 square meters. Hours worked per week is given officially as 40.6, and for the SIP sample it is 40.0. Family size is respectively 3.2 and 3.4 members. Finally, the percent employed revealed in the SIP sample is 69.5, while it was 71.0 percent in 1979 according to Soviet figures. Where this kind of correspondence is found for aggregates or means, one can have considerable confidence in

the finer breakdowns that SIP data permit, breakdowns that are not available in any form in Soviet official publications. Much of the SIP information is unique precisely because the project sought answers to questions that Soviet researchers do not ask, or at least do not publish.

Control and Dissent

The SIP researchers devoted considerable attention to the nature of political coercion and control and to popular attitudes toward the system in today's Soviet society. They came to remarkably similar conclusions, albeit using different methodological approaches.

Rasma Karklins divided the SIP respondents into four groups, based on their attitudes toward the regime and their participation in unsanctioned activities. By far the largest group (50 percent) was neither strongly critical of the system nor active. A smaller group (8 percent) were supporters of the system but reported taking part in some unsanctioned activities. The second largest group (26 percent) was critical of the system but not active. Only 15 percent of those surveyed could be classified as both critical of the system and active in unsanctioned activities.

Paul R. Gregory found that the Soviet regime tends to concentrate its attention on activists, rewarding those who lead sanctioned activities, and punishing severely leaders of unsanctioned activities. Blue-collar workers who lead unsanctioned activities appear to be the most severely punished economically, losing about 35 percent of their pay (as compared to other workers with the same skills and training). Higher-level persons leading unsanctioned activities are more likely to be punished in ways other than a drastic wage reduction--e.g., loss of

privileges and advancement opportunities. (The authorities were found to pay little attention to those who merely participate in unsanctioned activities such as attending illicit study groups or reading unauthorized publications). Conversely, those leading approved activities receive special privileges (such as use of a state car), better jobs, and higher pay as rewards for their loyalty.

By punishing activists, Soviet authorities appear to hope to provide citizens with examples of the price to be paid for dissent. But there are pitfalls to this approach. Several SIP studies found that coercive measures by Soviet authorities tend to bring forth more dissent. Bahry and Silver found that those who had been officially disciplined for their activities were more likely to engage in subsequent acts of dissent. Karklins found that family members of those who had run afoul of Soviet authorities were also likely subsequently to be drawn into acts of dissent. All concluded, with Gregory, that blue-collar protests such as strikes were likely to be more severely punished than intellectual dissent, the former being perceived as more directly threatening to the regime.

Karklins found that repression is rarely instant or intense. In part this may reflect deliberate Soviet policy, but in part it also reflects new tactics of Soviet dissenters, who have learned to use international news coverage and provisions of Soviet law as temporary shields against official repression. It also may reflect, as Karklins and others have observed, the relatively nonthreatening nature of the activities engaged in by most of the activists in the survey.

Therefore, although coercion remains an important element in the Soviet system, it is not the only method of social control and may not be the most potent one. Bahry and Silver found that many

respondents--particularly the young and well-educated--found official reaction to unsanctioned behavior predictable, and thus felt unsanctioned behavior presented a calculated risk they were willing to take. The researchers concluded that although intimidation continues to work, it may be working less well and not always in the ways Soviet leaders intend.

One of the major SIP findings regards shifts in the structure of support for the Soviet regime since the situation revealed by the Harvard Project of the 1950's. Whereas the earlier project found the young and well-educated to be the most supportive of some basic elements of the Soviet system and found the older, less-educated emigrants more critical, the SIP survey yielded the exact opposite results.

Moreover, those who were reaping the most material benefits from Soviet socialist society in the later 1970's were, in general, the least satisfied members of that society. Elizabeth Clayton and James Millar found that those who lived in the most desirable cities, who had the highest educational attainments, who held the most skilled jobs, who earned the highest incomes, who occupied the best housing, and who dominated consumption in all markets reported themselves the least satisfied. This is in sharp contrast with the findings of the Harvard Project, in which the same categories were the least dissatisfied.

In general, the level of support for traditional state control and management of major sectors of the economy declines with each increase in the level of educational attainment. The same pattern occurs in responses to questions juxtaposing the power of the state and the individual. Thus, the drive to modernize the Soviet economy may be carrying with it some unsettling side effects. An educated middle

class is of increasing importance to economic growth and the advancement of science and technology in the USSR, yet to create such a class is to court increasing disaffection.

These attitudinal trends do, it should be noted, occur at the margins. Analysis by Clayton and Millar of responses about the quality of life found 60 percent "very satisfied or "somewhat satisfied" with their standard of living during their last normal period in the USSR (see Table 1). This perhaps surprising result is corroborated by the fact that less than 30 percent of respondents gave economic reasons for emigrating. Most expressed their greatest satisfaction with their jobs and next with their housing. They were least satisfied with consumer goods and services.

Adequate housing was strongly linked to overall satisfaction--and was a particular concern of the young, who often must share apartments or live in dormitories. Married respondents were more satisfied than singles. Residents of smaller cities were more satisfied than those in larger cities. And women, particularly older women, were more satisfied than men, despite lower income and occupational status. Although they considered themselves in poorer health than men and hence more likely to need medical care, women were also more satisfied than men with the accessibility of medical care.

Brian Silver found that the keys to popular support for Soviet regime norms are, insofar as they exist, education and material rewards. Increased material rewards do increase regime support, but they fail, in general, to keep pace with educational advancement. Thus, wide access to education has contributed both to the generational anomie of the young and the disaffection of the best and the brightest of Soviet society.

Using questions similar to those in the Harvard Project of the 1950s, Brian Silver sought to gauge the respondents attitudes to certain established institutional practices in the Soviet regime, such as state ownership of industry, state control of agriculture production and distribution, and state provision of free medical care. In addition, respondents were asked about whether workers should have the right to strike; about the Soviet practice of requiring residence permits to live in large cities and about legal policies that favor the rights of society over the rights of the accused.

He found that the respondents tended to support state control of heavy industry and free medical care. More than 40 percent favored state-controlled industry, while 26 percent favored converting industry to private control. More than 50 percent evidenced strong support for state-provided medical care; less than 7 percent favored completely private medicine. In agriculture, however, 69 percent favored private over state control.

On issues concerning the rights of individuals and the powers of the state, 43 percent strongly favored a right to strike and 76 percent opposed residency permits. As to whether the rights of society should take precedence over the rights of the accused even if an innocent person is sometimes sent to prison, the response was more mixed. Twenty-five percent strongly favored protecting the individual from the state, while 17 percent strongly favored the power of the state over the individual.

Even those most strongly hostile to the Soviet system, however, were not negative on all its aspects. Thus, 48 percent of those who believed that "the US can learn nothing from the USSR" still favored state-provided medical care, and nearly 30 percent favored state

ownership of heavy industry. This willingness of respondents to endorse strongly some key features of the Soviet regime while sharply criticizing others further enhances confidence in the validity of the survey's findings.

Among the relatively disaffected "best and brightest" of Soviet society, it is the young who are the most disaffected. Thus, Bahry found relatively higher rates of criticism among the young at all educational levels, and the higher the level of education of a young person, the greater the tendency to be critical and to be inclined toward unconventional activities. Moreover, the survey indicates that youths who have been highly active in such conventional activity as the Komsomol--designed to mold "active builders of communism"--are frequently also among the most politically deviant.

What seems clear is that the young, much more so than those who are older, judge the regime on the basis of current performance. They are looking for material and measurable progress now. If it does not materialize, or comes slowly and haltingly, this could create problems for the Soviet leadership. The older generation, which experienced one or more of the many traumatic events in Soviet history, is apparently more philosophical about the failings of the Soviet system today. After all, taken as a whole, the years since Stalin have been generally peaceful and relatively prosperous, notwithstanding the recent stagnation of the Soviet economy.

The young may be victims of the rewriting of Soviet history: having never experienced Stalinism and having been taught only a sanitized history of the period, they give little weight to the realities of those days in their evaluations. One might infer from this situation that if there are neo-Stalinists today in the Soviet Union, they must

be among the young. Curiously, and significantly, while the young appear to agree with their elders that the Khrushchev years represented a kind of political and economic "golden age," they voted the Brezhnev era as the worst in all respects (even in comparison with the Stalin era).

More evidence of a withering away of support for certain aspects of the Soviet system comes from the analysis of William Zimmerman. Only one respondent in ten reported having regularly attended meetings of such groups as the people's militia, people's control commissions or comrades' courts--institutions often seen as devices for mobilizing support for the system. He also found reading of *samizdat* and listening to foreign radio broadcasts to be common among the mid-level elite. Readership of underground publications was highest among higher level professionals (45 percent) and the political middle elite (41 percent) and lowest among enterprise managers (27 percent). For blue-collar workers it was lowest of all (14 percent). Moreover, only 77 percent of blue-collar workers listened to foreign broadcasts compared to 96 percent of all mid-level leaders. Zimmerman also found signs of an increase over time in the tendency to use *blat* or *protektsiya* (bribery or influence) to get a job, as well as an increased willingness to try to avoid military service.

Zimmerman's study demonstrates two major findings. First, the current young, successful generation is perhaps the most highly "mobilized" of any Soviet generation ever in the formal sense of the word. They belong to the correct social and political organizations, and they participate at high rates. Yet this same group, is also the most heavily involved in "unconventional" behavior--refusing to vote, listening to BBC and other foreign broadcasts, reading and distributing

samizdat, and reading foreign fiction and nonfiction. Second, the survey reveals a gradual "privatization" of personal life since Stalin. The use of connections and influence to avoid military service or to obtain a choice first job, for example, are reported to have become more widespread over time.

Living under "Socialism"

It is difficult within the confines of a brief note to do justice to all of the careful and thought-provoking studies emerging from the SIP. We might just mention briefly some of the other salient findings with regard to Soviet "socialist" society.

The first has to do with attitudes toward jobs and incentives. Although the respondents were generally satisfied with their jobs, Paul Gregory found that they frequently reported that productivity at the workplace was low and that trade unions and party organizations were largely ineffectual. The overwhelming explanation they gave for low productivity was inadequate or ineffective incentives. Many respondents admitted stealing time frequently from work to take care of personal matters. Without time to shop, higher income is without impact. Although workers rarely blamed the system, management, or alcoholism for low productivity, those in management were more likely to mention such factors -- the same ones commonly cited in Western analyses of the Soviet economy.

Michael Swafford looked at how occupation, party membership, education, ethnicity, income, gender, and location of residence affect perceptions of social status in the Soviet Union. He found that though blue-collar workers are championed by Soviet ideology they are not highly regarded. Instead, status is conferred on the basis of

attainments such as occupational level, party membership, and education. The highest status is ascribed to lawyers, doctors, writers, professors, engineers, and army officers (see Table 2). Ethnicity is also a significant factor in perceptions of prestige among the respondents, while gender seems much less significant. Swafford concludes that Max Weber's explanation of class, or social stratification, as a function of wealth, power, and prestige, seems to offer a better explanation of actual status rankings in the USSR than does Karl Marx's analysis, which saw social classes as being derived solely from relationships to the means of production.

Aaron Vinokur and Gur Ofer concluded that income and wealth are divided in the Soviet Union in patterns not much different from those found in many Western states. They reached this finding on the basis of information from both the SIP survey and from a survey of family budgets conducted by Vinokur and Ofer among 1,250 Soviet emigrant families in Israel in the mid-1970's.

Vinokur estimates that in 1979 the 10 percent of Soviet households with the highest average income per household received 33.4 percent of all income. The share for the lowest 10 percent of households was 3 percent of the income. The highest 20 percent received 46.4 percent; the lowest 20 percent, 7.4 percent. Interestingly, income from the private sector helped offset the inequality in some cases, and aggravated it in others (see Table 3). For 1979, more than 12 percent of the respondents reported income from both public and private sources, with the average hourly income from private activity about 7.5 times as great as earnings from public-sector employment.

Total wealth appears to be even more unequally distributed. The top 10 percent of households own more than 40 percent of the total sum

of wealth and approximately 45 percent of the total financial assets (see Table 4).

Thus, Soviet society appears far from egalitarian. The distribution of income and wealth in the USSR is perhaps more egalitarian than one might expect given the country's level of development--thanks to the widespread availability of education. But it does not stand out as exceptionally egalitarian when compared with the situation in other more developed "mixed" economies.

The proportion of families at or below the poverty level appears to have declined--presumably thanks to an extension of a minimum wage to a number of new sectors of the economy. Poverty is, however, still widespread, affecting between 5 and 21.9 percent of the households, depending upon the definition. Also, as in the United States, poverty is "feminized"--i.e., single women and mothers with children are much more likely to be found among the poor.

On average, as Gregory has discovered, women earn between 18 and 29 percent less than men, in part because of occupational segregation, but mainly because women are paid less than are men even when both have similar education, experience, and responsibilities. The gap between remuneration of men and of women in blue-collar jobs is greater than in high-level positions.

Barbara A. Anderson's examination of the life course of Soviet women born between 1905 and 1960 also yielded important findings. She discovered that the well-recognized high rate of female participation in the Soviet labor force actually understates the proportion of women who are engaged in the workforce over their lifetimes. Essentially all Soviet women work, their entry into and departure from the work force is primarily governed by the bearing and rearing of children. The

number of years a woman spends in the labor force is inversely related to the number of children she bears and to her husband's income. These two variables are obviously crucial, therefore, to estimates of female labor force participation in the future of the USSR.

Reliance upon abortion as a means to control family size is exceptionally common, Anderson documents, noting that this phenomenon even has roots in prerevolutionary Russian society. Among the women surveyed, 69 percent reported having had at least one abortion. Nearly 70 percent of women born between 1926 and 1945 reported two or more abortions, even though abortions were illegal between 1935 and 1956.

A study by Rasma Karklins found evidence that Soviet policies aimed at diffusing ethnic tensions may not be working. She concluded that resentments generated by those policies--and a heightened awareness of nationality as an asset or a liability to social mobility--may be creating new ethnic stresses in the USSR. More conclusive results may require studies of a more ethnically diverse sample of Soviet emigrants.³

In yet another study, Linda Lubrano found, as did Swafford, that scientists are well-respected. But many respondents took issue with the priorities of Soviet science, tending to believe that too much was spent on the Soviet space program. By contrast, almost two-thirds said that too little was being spent on health and agriculture. They gave widespread support to scientific inquiry and generally agreed that Soviet scientists were competent, but were skeptical about the ability of Soviet science to solve economic problems, especially in agriculture.

Conclusions

The most significant finding to emerge from the early SIP research is the erosion of popular support for the Soviet system among important sectors of the society. At the same time, these indications suggest a strategy that the Soviet leadership might use to revive its popular base. Because support is weakest among the best educated and the young, educational opportunity might be manipulated to restrict education levels to employment possibilities (in essence, what the recent reforms of secondary and higher education seem aimed at effecting). Also, greater effort would need to be applied to give tangible rewards to those who have worked hard to earn higher incomes -- specifically by increasing the quality and quantity of goods and services that are available to citizens in the Soviet Union. What good is a high salary, after all, if there is little to spend it on? Finally, the young would need to be cultivated especially intensively, partly by linking the policies of the current regime to the progressive aspects of the Khrushchev period.

Otherwise, despite all the changes--and all of the accomplishments of the Soviet Union over the past 30 years--the best and brightest are likely to remain discontented. For as the 70th anniversary of the Soviet revolution approaches, it is not the state, but rather unquestioning support for it among the young and other key members of the society, that appears to be withering away.

Footnotes

¹In 1987, the Cambridge University Press will publish a book containing the 10 papers presented at the Airlie House conference. The volume, tentatively titled *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR. A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens*, will also contain essays describing the sample, referent population, and other technical issues connected with the survey.

²Joseph Berliner--a participant in the Harvard Project, a prime consultant on SIP, and one of our most rigorous critics--pointed out at the Airlie House meeting that if SIP does produce wildly surprising results, scholars in the field as a whole ought to be fired for incompetence.

³Karklins is involved as a consultant in such a study of German-Russian Soviet citizens who have taken up residence in West Germany. This study is expected to be available for comparative analysis with SIP data in the near future.

Background on the Soviet Interview Project

The SIP is the first large-scale US scholarly effort to seek insight into Soviet life through surveys of former Soviet citizens since the Harvard University Refugee Project of the 1950's. That pioneering effort sought to assay "the strengths and vulnerabilities of the Soviet social system" by interviewing Soviet expatriates in displaced-persons camps in Allied-occupied Europe following World War II. The sample surveyed then was seemingly unpromising--comprising Soviet citizens who had been prisoners of war or forced laborers in Germany or had retreated with the Germans and who, at the conclusion of the war, chose not to return to their homeland. Yet the study, funded by the US Air Force and conducted by anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, sociologist Alex Inkeles, and social psychologist Raymond Bauer, plus a gifted group of graduate assistants, is generally acclaimed as a success. It stood the test of time, including the unanticipated release of large quantities of new data on Soviet society by Nikita Khrushchev after he consolidated his power in the mid-1950's. Indeed, the work of the Harvard investigators established paradigms for the study of Soviet society that, for the most part, inform research in the West to this day.¹

When, in the 1970's, tens of thousands of Soviet citizens were allowed to leave the Soviet Union, Western specialists on Soviet matters quickly recognized the potential for new studies. A number of small-scale projects were initiated in the US, including one on the Soviet "second economy" by Gregory Grossman and Vladimir Trembl that has subsequently grown in scope and size, and a significant study of Soviet family budgets conducted by Aron Vinokur and Gur Ofer among Soviet emigrants in Israel in the 1970's. In the U.S., the prospects for a

major research program seemed dim because the Ford Foundation had reduced funding for Soviet area studies and the government was following the "Kissinger rule." Named after the Secretary of State, the rule enforced his personal policy against using federal funds for academic or government studies of emigrants from the USSR, presumably out of concern about potential adverse effects upon the emigration itself and upon US-Israeli relations.

After considerable lobbying by senior Soviet specialists inside and outside the US government, the "Kissinger rule" was revised in early 1979, and in August of the same year, James Millar, coauthor of this article, agreed to coordinate efforts of a small group of scholars in assessing the feasibility of a major research project to tap the "living archive" of former Soviet citizens in the US. This initial effort was funded by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research.

Key issues facing the group were how to assemble a complete census of recent Soviet emigrants and to determine whether the latter would freely and candidly participate as respondents. Resolution of the second issue depended upon the SIP's ability to assure confidentiality and anonymity. With the help of the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, the team devised the most rigorous confidentiality procedures ever applied in private survey research--something akin to but more stringent than procedures applied in surveys protecting the identity of persons interviewed about criminal activities, where lack of anonymity could expose respondents to criminal charges. This approach reassured agencies involved in assisting emigrants from the USSR and also resulted in a very successful response rate among those selected for interviews (79

percent).

However, there still remained the fear that the project could imperil further emigration. Our analysis was that Soviet decisions to allow emigration were linked to larger foreign policy considerations. And subsequent events confirmed that view. Developments in 1979-80--US failure to ratify the SALT II agreement or to ease restrictions on Soviet trade, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the US Olympic boycott--resulted in a sharp reduction in Soviet exit visas and emigration, to less than one thousand a year, where it still remains.

It was not until September 1981 that the project was launched at full steam, under the auspices of the NCSEER on contract from the Department of State with principal funding contributed by the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. Headquartered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, SIP involved an interdisciplinary research team of ten scholars² that devoted an entire year to developing an interview instrument for the survey, in consultation with a wide range of interested scholars. After extensive pre-testing of the questionnaire in both English and Russian, the survey was fielded between June 1982 and January 1983 by 90 trained bilingual interviewers, mostly young Americans.

The SIP has recently launched three additional projects. One involves recoding available materials from the Harvard Project for comparative analysis with the new surveys. A second involves a new general survey interviewing a new sample of Soviet emigrants who have arrived in the United States more recently. The purpose of the second general survey is to investigate change over time in contemporary Soviet society and to permit the clarification and amplification of certain findings of the first survey. A third survey being fielded is

devoted to an investigation of the Soviet military and focuses upon the "human face" of the Soviet military system and upon a comparison of civilian and military sectors of the Soviet social system. Finally, there are a number of "special projects" being conducted with the SIP sample, involving more extensive interviews with persons with specialized profiles such as former managers of economic enterprises, lawyers and camp returnees.

Additional publications on the first SIP general survey and reports on these new initiatives will appear in the future, and the data and associated materials will be placed in the public domain for the benefit of scholars in the field. All materials will be carefully preserved at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A data tape of the SIP general survey, including all necessary supporting documentation, is to be deposited with the Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in December 1986, where it is to be made available for analysis by other scholars. Inquiries concerning SIP studies generally, including requests for working papers, should be directed to: Soviet Interview Project, University of Illinois, 325 Coble Hall, 801 South Wright Street, Champaign, IL 61820.

Footnotes to Background

¹The principal products include Bauer, Inkeles, and Kluckhohn, *How the Soviet System Works*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957; Inkeles and Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959; Joseph Berliner, *Factory and Manager in the USSR*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957; Mark Field, *Doctor and Patient in Soviet Russia*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957; Alex Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-45*, London, Macmillan, and New York, St. Martin's Press, 1957.

²The Research Team includes professors Barbara A. Anderson, University of Michigan; Donna Bahry, New York University; John Garrard, University of Arizona; Paul R. Gregory, University of Houston; Rasma Karklins, University of Illinois at Chicago; Norman Nie, University of Chicago; Brian D. Silver, Michigan State University; Michael Swafford, Vanderbilt University; Aaron Vinokur, University of Haifa; and William Zimmerman, University of Michigan. Elizabeth Clayton, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Linda Lubrano, American University, were research associates. James R. Millar, University of Illinois, is project director.

TABLE 1: Self-Assessed Satisfaction among Soviet Emigrants

		"How satisfied were you with:				
		Standard of Living	Housing	Goods	Job	Medical Care
Very Satisfied	N =	310	645	139	711	518
	Z =	11.1	23.1	5.0	25.5	18.5
Somewhat Satisfied	N =	1343	1213	488	1054	1142
	Z =	48.1	43.4	17.5	37.7	40.9
Somewhat Dissatisfied	N =	694	379	634	303	570
	Z =	24.8	13.6	22.7	10.8	20.4
Very Dissatisfied	N =	403	533	1477	170	450
	Z =	14.4	19.1	52.9	6.1	16.1
Missing Values	N =	43	23	55	555	111
	Z =	1.5	0.9	2.1	20.2	4.0
TOTAL	N =	2793	2793	2793	2793	2793

SOURCE: "Quality of Life: Subjective Measures of Relative Satisfaction,"
 Millar, J. R. and E. Clayton. Soviet Interview Project.

Table 2

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE SCORES FROM SOVIET EMIGRANTS

	SCORE*
BOOKKEEPER	22.3
SALES CLERK	29.4
FIELD HAND	32.6
TRACTOR DRIVER	36.6
MAIL CARRIER	38.2
DRIVER	45.3
TEACHER	56.4
ARMY OFFICER	60.4
CHEMICAL ENGINEER	65.6
ECONOMIST	66.0
PROFESSOR	66.8
LITERARY WORKER	70.7
DOCTOR	76.3
LAWYER	76.4

*The higher the score, the higher the perceived prestige.

SOURCE: "Perceptions of Social Status in the U.S.S.R.,"
Swafford, M. Soviet Interview Project.

TABLE 3: Per Hour Gross Wages at the Main Place of Work in the Public Sector and in the Private Sector by Occupational Groups.

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS	Per Hour Gross Wages at the Work in Public Sector (RUBLES)	Per Hour Wages From Private Work (RUBLES)	Ratio Between Private and Public Per Hour Wages
Mean	1.08	8.14	7.5
1. Faculty members and researchers	1.38	8.18	5.9
2. Engineers	1.07	5.62	5.3
3. Medical doctors and dentists	1.21	32.96	27.2
4. Employees in administration and planning	0.97	3.5	3.6
5. Teachers at high school	1.15	4.94	4.3
6. Employees in culture	1.60	6.95	4.3
7. Several kind of employees with special secondary level of education	0.84	8.60	10.2
8. Non-professional white collar workers	0.77	3.26	4.2
9. Blue collar workers in production sectors			
Skilled	1.23	7.93	6.45
Semiskilled	0.98	6.19	6.32
Unskilled	0.96	18.17	18.9
Other ¹	1.04	6.85	6.59
10. Drivers	1.24	6.24	5.03
11. Blue collar workers in service sectors	0.85	5.54	6.52

¹ Workers who didn't report about their "grade" skill.

NOTE: All results presented in this table are based on the original nonweighted sample at 2,045 respondents.

SOURCE: "Inequality of Earnings, Household Income and Wealth in the Soviet Union in the 70's," Vinokur, A. and G. Ofer. Soviet Interview Project.

TABLE 4: Lorenz Statistics for Total Wealth and Financial Assets of Total Population in 1979

	Percentage Share of:	
	Gross Wealth	Financial Assets
Population Proportion		
Lowest 25%	0.3	
Lowest 50%	8.9	5.9
Highest 1%	7.0	11.5
Highest 5%	28.7	28.6
Highest 10%	42.9	43.1
Highest 25%	69.5	72.8
Gini coefficient	.61	.64

SOURCE: "Inequality of Earnings, Household Income and Wealth in the Soviet Union in the 70's," Vinokur, A. and G. Ofer. Soviet Interview Project.