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Executive Summary

On April 12-13, 1984 the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State, the William and Mary Greve Foundation, the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, and Queens College, sponsored a conference in Washington, D.C. on the quality of life in the Soviet Union. Held as the result of initiatives taken by Horst Herlemann of the University of Wurzburg and Herbert Ellison of the Kennan Institute, the conference was intended to consider from a sociological perspective the standard of living of Soviet citizens in a wide range of contexts, from education and health care to housing quality and working conditions.*

The major points addressed, conclusions reached, and policy implications made by the conference participants were as follows:

While the Soviet Union has long trumpeted the superiority of its economic system, the Soviet standard of living is still far below prevailing Western and East European levels. In 1976, for example, the Soviet standard of living was one-third the American level, and somewhat less than half the level of France and West Germany. The relatively low standard of living in the Soviet Union can be traced to the fact that the Soviet government spends a considerably smaller share of its GNP on consumption than most West and East European nations. The Soviet Union has traditionally neglected its consumer sector, and this has resulted in chronic shortages of consumer goods and services and food supplies. Moreover, Soviet wage scales require consumers to devote about two-thirds of their earnings to basic necessities such as food and clothing. Thus, not only is the Soviet standard of living relatively low as compared to the West, but Soviet consumption patterns are also quite backward and resemble those of developing nations more closely than industrialized nations. (SCHROEDER)

Because the Soviet Union maintains a "shortage economy" where consumption is restricted in favor of investment, Soviet consumers

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* In addition to the scholars who formally presented papers, the conference organizers are indebted to the following people who added their insightful comments: MARJORIE MANDELSTAM BALZER of Harvard University; ROBERT BELKNAP of Columbia University; IGOR BIRMAN of Russia magazine; KIETH BUSH of Radio Free Europe; MURRAY FESHBACH of Georgetown University; HANS-HERMANN HOHMANN of the Federal Institute for East European and International Studies, Cologne; PETER JUVILER of Barnard College; BERNICE MADISON of San Francisco State University; STEPHEN RAPAWY of the U.S. Department of Commerce; SEYMOUR ROSEN of the U.S. Department of Education; JACK UNDERHILL of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and FRANK WALLICK of the United Auto Workers.

often find it difficult to purchase the items they want regardless of their disposable income. Especially during the 1970s, the Soviet Union made important progress in the distribution of certain consumer items, but Soviet consumers still lag behind their Western counterparts in per capita purchases of most consumer goods and services. More importantly, per capita consumption levels have fallen since the 1970s, and governmental expenditures on state-provided social services have also decreased in recent years. Social services such as health care and education are provided ostensibly free by the state, but through taxes and other hidden charges, Soviet consumers pay for almost half of all "free" services. Furthermore, the Soviet Union is not moving very rapidly towards the creation of a post-industrial service economy as shown by the fact that less than half of the Soviet GNP is devoted to the service sector. For the foreseeable future, the Soviet Union will remain a production-oriented society which under-invests in consumer goods and services. (TECKENBERG)

Like any other nation, the Soviet Union contains many poor people, but the Soviet poverty sector is surprisingly large given the Soviet government's concern with its image as a socialist welfare state. Using Soviet estimates of minimum family income requirements, it appears that the average family in 1965 existed in a state of poverty. A large number of surveys conducted during the 1960s revealed that as many as a quarter or a third of the urban working class lived below the poverty line, and since rural wages are about 10% lower than urban wages and rural inhabitants account for about 35% of the Soviet population, the total number of "poor" people in the Soviet Union was perhaps 40% of the entire population. Although industrial workers are among the best paid in Soviet society, available statistics indicate that almost a third of them do not rise above the poverty threshold. One can assume the situation must be considerably worse for the 30 million people employed in health care and education, and the 40 million workers employed in unmechanized production jobs. (MATTHEWS)

According to Soviet ideology, the socialist economic system should put an end to the alienation of labor and poor working conditions. However, aside from the low wages paid to most Soviet workers, Soviet working conditions leave much to be desired according to even Soviet sources. Working conditions are generally best in production-oriented sectors of the economy because scarce resources tend to be concentrated in large-scale endeavors. In addition, Soviet workers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with organizational problems (such as "intra-shift down-time") which negatively affect their earning possibilities. (PIETSCH)

One of the Soviet Union's most impressive consumer achievements has been the creation of 2.2 million housing units per year since 1957. Despite this tremendous amount of construction, the demand for new housing far exceeds supply. Soviet citizens still suffer from the

poorest housing conditions in any industrialized nation, primarily because so many families do not have private apartments. The wait for a new apartment may last up to 10 years or more if one is not "sponsored" by an influential organization or cannot find another family willing to engage in a housing exchange. Moreover, housing has become increasingly stratified in the Soviet Union and identifiable "housing classes" have emerged. The upper classes live in or near the city centers where transportation and shopping is readily available, and the lower classes live on the outskirts of major cities where urban ammenities are few. Soviet citizens spend very little on housing compared to Westerners as rents are heavily subsidized by the government. Unfortunately, quality housing in the Soviet Union is available to only a small portion of the population. (MORTON)

Health care in the Soviet Union is also highly stratified, and the best medical care is typically reserved for a privileged few. The Soviet medical system is divided into a series of "networks" which serve different segments of the population according to one's position in Soviet society. Special clinics and hospitals exist throughout the Soviet Union for the benefit of the elites, while most Soviet citizens must make due with the much lower quality general health care system. While the Soviet Union has the largest number of hospital beds per capita in the world, the medical system is over-bureaucratized and routinized, and is plagued by chronic shortages of most health care materials, from high-technolgy equipment to bandages. These shortages stem from continued under-investment in the health care sector, as illustrated by the fact that the Soviet proportion of GNP allotted to to health care is only one-third the American level. Furthermore, Soviet spending on health care has declined significantly since the early 1970s, and some observers have linked this trend to a general degredation of the Soviet medical system as indicated by rising infant mortality and death rates. (FIELD)

Another important medical and social problem in the Soviet Union is the increasing degree of alcohol abuse and alcoholism. The magnitude and severity of this phenomenon is unique in terms of the international experience. Soviet consumers drink over 17 liters of pure alcohol equivalent per person each year, and the Soviet Union ranks first in the world regarding per capita consumption of strong alcoholic beverages such as vodka. More strikingly, Soviet consumption of hard liquors has increased by approximately 4.5% a year over the last 25 years. According to numerous Soviet studies, heavy drinking is an important factor contributing to overall mortality rates in the Soviet Union, and the number of deaths attributed to acute alcohol poisoning was estimated at over 50,000 in 1978. Soviet economists have also estimated that alcohol abuse decreased Soviet labor productivity by about 10% during the early 1970s. Between 16 and 18 million Soviet citizens were confined to overnight "sobering-up stations" in 1979 alone, but since the government depends on alcohol for a large share of its budgetary revenues, alcoholic beverages are

one of the few consumer items that are continually available in the Soviet Union. (TREML)

The introduction of "complete" (10 year) and universal secondary education in the Soviet Union during the 1970s is an admirable achievement. The quality of the secondary school system is another matter, however. General education in the Soviet Union is to be mastered by all students alike, irrespective of their individual abilities. It is therefore up to Soviet teachers to ensure that all students complete their studies successfully. As a result, most teachers have simply relaxed their grading practices so that few students fail. But in 1981 there were still 129,000 grade repeaters, accounting for 0.33% of the student population. Efforts to reform the school system are continually underway, but the practice of inflating grades will not be easily diminished as the universal completion of secondary education in the Soviet Union is primarily a political issue. (KUEBART)

As a result of demographic changes such as the increasing nuclearization of urban families in the Soviet Union, older Soviet women are being deprived of their traditional role as babushka, i.e., grandmother or child minder. Notably, most pension-age Soviet women do not look forward to assuming the babushka role after retirement, and they tend not to work after retirement either. As many are widowed, a large proportion probably find themselves in a position of economic hardship, being solely dependent on state pensions. These pensions are largely inadequate because Soviet pensions are tied to past wages and the wages of Soviet women are considerably lower than those of Soviet men. Thus, the Soviet babushka can probably be counted as an underprivileged group which is insufficiently cared for by the state. (STERNHEIMER)

No other nation besides the Soviet Union has such a widespread rural population, and no other nation employs so many people in the agricultural sector. But consistent with its under-investment in the consumer sector, the Soviet Union also neglects the cultural life of its rural inhabitants. Consumer items such as televisions exist in abundance in the countryside, but no real rural culture, per se, has emerged among the peasant classes. To the contrary, those who are able emigrate to the cities in search of a better quality of life. Although the Soviet village of the 1980s might have the material resources to organize a rural culture, this may no longer be possible as the expectations of the rural population continue to rise. (HERLEMANN)

I. Medical Care in the Soviet Union: Promises and Reality

It is difficult to speak of the quality of life in the Soviet Union without discussing the Soviet health care system. There is no doubt that the principle of free and universally accessible medical service as pioneered by the Soviet Union is heartily endorsed by the Soviet population. This principle derives from the idea that health care is such an indispensable aspect of the quality of life that (like education) it cannot be left to the vagaries of the marketplace. In principle, it guarantees every Soviet citizen the full gamut of clinical and preventive services at the expense of society. In reality, however, if one is to judge from the testimony of outside observers and Soviet sources themselves, the system is but a pale reflection of what it is meant to be. The following is an attempt to understand the manner in which Soviet socialized medicine operates, to measure how short it falls from what it should be, and to assess the degree to which the Soviet health care system contributes to the quality of life in the Soviet Union.

At the most general level, the present Soviet constitution states that each Soviet citizen is entitled to qualified medical care in the case of illness, at no cost to the individual. The implementation of this goal is via "Soviet socialized medicine," usually described as a socialist system of organization having as its major goal the prevention and treatment of illness, the provision of healthy working and living conditions, and the achievement of a high level of work capacity and long life expectancy. As such, the system has several well-defined formal characteristics that serve as bridges between the entitlement to free quality health care and the actual management of health services. Most important is the fact that the Soviet medical system is a state matter and responsibility, i.e., a function of government. The system is highly centralized and standardized, and it is therefore not surprising that there is no "medical profession" in the Soviet Union able to organize its members and adopt positions incompatible with government policy. Doctors in the Soviet Union are state functionaries with all that this implies.

The Soviet medical system is completely financed by the state treasury. Thus, in contrast to the United States, it is possible to determine fairly accurately what percentage of the gross national product is allocated to medical care. Furthermore, because the medical budget is state controlled, it is possible for the Soviet government to keep the salaries of medical personnel at a very low level even when compared to other occupations in the Soviet Union, let alone physicians' incomes in the West. The Soviet medical system may be defined as labor intensive in the sense that labor is cheap and abundant, while medical equipment is expensive and in short supply.

Soviet medicine is basically a prepaid (prospective) payment scheme, which is considerably cheaper to operate than Western

reimbursement or insurance (retrospective) systems that tend to inflate costs. It is true that, with some exceptions, Soviet citizens do not pay for services rendered at the time they are performed. Soviet propaganda stresses that it is the government that provides care to its people almost as an act of generosity in comparison to the parsimony of capitalistic systems. In fact, these services are paid for by Soviet citizens through taxes, unseen deductions and various levies. There is, moreover, increasing evidence that the idea of "free" medical care in the Soviet Union is a myth because most Soviet citizens feel it is necessary to give private additional payments to physicians, nurses, and hospital attendants to get better attention than they would normally receive.

It is difficult to estimate the extent of these "under the table" transactions, but we do know that during the last few years, Soviet spending in the health care sector has fallen significantly. In 1950, 5.2% of total national budgetary allocations were earmarked for health care. The figure rose to 6.6% in 1960, then dropped to 6% in 1970, 5.3% in 1975, 5.2% in 1978, and 5% in 1980. Though the absolute spending figures more than doubled from 1955-1977, the proportion of the Soviet GNP allocated to health care decresed by more than 20%. It is estimated that the Soviet fraction of GNP allotted to health care is presently one-third the American level. Reports that the Soviet infant mortality rate has risen by more than 25% in the last decade have prompted some observers to tie the above statistics to a degradation of the medical system, though the connection would be difficult to prove.

The idea that Soviet medical services are provided on a priority basis might surprise those who are still under the impression that Soviet society is egalitarian. In reality, there is no single medical system equally available to all (as with the British National Health Service), but several networks of different quality that deal with different populations and/or administrations.

Soviet medicine cannot be understood or analyzed simply in universalistic (i.e., Western) terms. It must also be understood as being steeped in the characteristics and patterns of everyday Soviet life: the scarcities, the bureaucracy, the officiousness of state employees, the absurdities of formal rules, and the inequities which permeate it from top to bottom.

It is ironic that a new society whose great ideological appeal is equality should have spawned a multi-class medical system. In the health field, Soviet propaganda initially promised the elimination of first- and second-class medical systems as they existed under the Tsars. But ever since the early days of the Revolution, this has not been the case, as those who governed received special medical attention and rations. The situation became even more polarized during the 1930s as a result of Stalin's deliberate policies to eliminate egalitarianism as left-wing or infantile deviation. Soviet

society has given rise to an elaborate system of rankings and distinctions, which are followed quite closely in the provision of medical services. The health care system in the Soviet Union is divided, broadly speaking, into two unequal categories: territorial networks and closed networks. Territorial networks serve the general population and are accessible by virtue of residence. Closed networks, on the other hand, are reserved for special groups.

At the lowest level, there are facilities reserved for workers of industries with over a certain number of personnel. Next, there are special facilities for certain agencies of ministries, such as the armed forces, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Another network is reserved for intellectual elites, such as members of the Academy of Sciences or leading artists. Finally, at the apex of the Soviet medical (and socio-political) pyramid is the network of medical institutions and rest homes, etc., reserved for the Kremlin elite and their families. This network of high-quality medical care parallels the other perquisites of rank, such as private dachas, chauffeured limousines, restricted special stores, and so on. This is sometimes reffered to as the Fourth Administration of the Ministry of Health Protection.

Just as there are special detention centers in all Soviet cities, there are also specialized clinics and hospitals where the elites can receive medical care far removed from the scrutiny of the common man. These facilities may be free standing or merely restricted sections of general hospitals. The major difference between these facilities and private rooms in American or British hospitals is that members of the Soviet establishment do not pay for their privileged treatment. The Soviet elite receives medical care as a perquisite of rank, paid by the state--paid for in fact by the taxes of ordinary citizens who must content themselves with ordinary hospitals and clinics.

Needless to say, medical facilities reserved for the elites are better equipped that those in the ordinary networks. According to the observations of William Knaus, M.D., equipment, drugs and procedures not available in the Soviet Union are imported from abroad, either from Eastern Europe or the West if necessary. In some instances, top specialists are invited to come to the Soviet Union to consult on important cases or operate.

The bureaucratization of medicine is a world-wide phenomenon, but there seems to be a special quality to the problem in the Soviet health care system which has exacerbated a general problem. The result has been the deprofessionalization of medical services, the unwillingness of individuals to make personal decisions, and a tendency to practice medicine "by the numbers," which makes the handling of special situations and emergencies often difficult. Apparently, almost everything in the medical system is routinized and proceeds according to rigid established norms. Physicians are expected to work a specific number of hours per day and see a specific

number of patients per hour, the number varying according to the specialty.

The Soviet press repeatedly reports complaints received by readers about the rigidities of the medical system. Hospitals, for example, will not admit new patients after a specified time of day. Every disease is tariffed according to the number of hospitalization days it is permitted. A delivery is usually nine days; an appendectomy is ten days. Even if the patient is well enough to be discharged earlier, this is not allowed. Patients will be subjected to routinized procedures whether they need them or not. Bureaucratically determined rules overload physicians in outpatient clinics, thus reducing the time available for those who really need a doctor. While meaningless rules are enforced as to what one can bring into a hospital, sterility is poorly observed in operating rooms. As a result, the incidence of post-operative infections is very high, affecting about one-third of all patients operated on. The rigidities of the Soviet health care system is epitomized by the extensive use of quotas. Hospitals are assigned "death quotas," and investigations will follow if they exceed these quotas. The result is that hospitals often refuse to admit terminally ill patients, placing the burden entirely on their families. There are also quotas for all types of operations and hospital occupancy rates. The result in this case is the widespread tendency to falsify records and statistics. Hospitalization quotas are almost always met in the Soviet Union--at least on paper--because if they were not fulfilled, budgets and supplies might be curtailed in the next fixcal year. Thus the hospital manager plays the same game as the industrial manager. It is not unusual, nor seen as improper, to request twice as many supplies as needed since the director knows that he will be lucky to get half of what he requests.

The Soviet Union is proud of its system of preventive examination. Here again, quotas for examined patients may be met by completing forms without actually examining patients. The results of these ghost examinations are aggregated and published as another example of the preventive orientation of Soviet medicine. However, if Soviet medical data are too unpleasant or embarrassing, their publication is simply discontinued, as was the case for infant mortality rates in 1974. In addition, statistics have not been published since the early or mid-1970s on life expectancy, the causes of death by age group, age and sex specific death rates, the number of doctors by specialty, or the size of various age groups in the population.

The Soviets repeatedly emphasize that their medical system has removed the "capatalistic cash nexus" between doctor and patient. Unfortunately, the general impression that emerges from both outside observers and Soviet sources, is that Soviet physicians frequently display a lack of sensitivity toward patients. Contrary to official theories, the Soviet health care system often encourages indifference

and formalism. Generally speaking, Soviet nurses are poorly educated and trained. There is indeed little incentive, save a personal one, to be considerate with patients, except perhaps when they are willing to provide money or gifts. It is no wonder that the hospital is generally feared in the Soviet Union. That fear stems both from expectations of rough and impersonal handling and the knowledge of acute shortages of medical supplies which may make a hospital stay dangerous to one's health. It is probably true that while paying lip service to the patient, the Soviets do not consider patient satisfaction as important in evaluating medical services. It is therefore not surpising given the low incomes of health care personnel, that patients should use money and gifts to gain special treatment from their attendants and physicians, thereby negating to some extent the advantages of "free" medical care.

The Soviet Union has more hospital beds per capita than the United States and most other nations. The general impression, however, is that there is very little in these hospitals in terms of equipment and medical technology. Whereas American hospitals have been accused of doing too much for their patients, the reverse seems to be true in Soviet hospitals. Knaus reports that one-third of all Soviet hospitals do not have adequate laboratories for blood transfusions, and when laboratories do exist they are frequently closed. Many hospitals are located in old, dilapidated buildings, and apparently, the Soviet Union does not even manufacture wheelchairs.

Given the fact that the health care system is not a high priority area in the Soviet economy, it suffers the same shortages and erratic distribution patterns as the rest of the economy. A review of Soviet materials reveals an extremely inefficient system, riddled by bureaucracy, poor quality and severe problems of production and distribution. Shortages of medical supplies are chronic, and the system works poorly to inform physicians of new medical products and techniques. Although drug retail prices are very low, the patient is often unable to obtain prescription and non-prescription items, or only with great difficulty. Sometimes it is even difficult to procure very basic items, such as bandages and aspirin. As a result, there is a black or grey market in drugs unavailable either for purchase in pharmacies or use in hospitals. Year after year, complaints about medical supply shortages are voiced in letters to the editor and in "investigative" articles that confirm such complaints. Needless to say, such shortages are unlikely to be found in the health care networks for the elites

With its plethora of physicians and hospital beds, the Soviet medicine system seems impressive at first glance. But indeed, in some instances, it resembles the medical systems one sees in lesser developed nations. The level of infant mortality is certainly not what one might expect of a highly industrialized nation with an economy second in size only to the United States. With the exception of the elites, the population in general receives a kind of mass

medical care which pays scant attention to detail, quality or the personal feelings of patients. Improvements in the quality of the Soviet health care system will require important changes in structure, attitudes of health personnel, and significantly higher budget allocations. But if the medical industry does produce certain goods, more money will not necessarily help. The problems of the Soviet medical system are representative of the problems of Soviet society in general, and the solution to the former are not possible without solutions to latter. Furthermore, because of the way the Soviet economy has developed towards increased defense expenditures since the mid-1960s, a reordering of priorities and a significant increase in the quality of medical care is most unlikely at this historical juncture. Indeed, the reverse seems to be in the cards if rising death rates in the Soviet Union are any indication.

II. On Cultural Aspects of Rural Life in the Soviet Union

The concept of culture discussed below is oriented towards the definition found in the Soviet encyclopedia. According to Soviet ideology, culture is mainly concerned with the spiritual life of a certain people, but it also characterizes material and spiritual levels of development of certain historical epochs. Due to a lack of empirical evidence regarding rural life in the Soviet Union, we can only form a rough mosaic of the Soviet countryside made of bits and pieces of information hidden in obscure Soviet journals and statistics.

The number of people who live in the Soviet countryside is steadily declining. Since 1970, the exodous has been outpacing the rate of increase. The number of people living in settlements of less than 2,000 inhabitants decreased by 6.9 million from 1970 to 1979. The figures become more impressive over a longer period of time. In 1940, there were about 70,000 rural soviets and 241,000 large-scale farms embracing 572,000 localities. In 1979, the respective figures were 41,000 rural soviets, 47,000 large-scale farms and 319,000 localities. The structure of the villages and the make-up of their inhabitants have changed considerably over time. More and more small villages have been abandoned and rural life has become concentrated in central villages. Between 1959 and 1970, the number of rural settlements declined from 772,000 to 469,999, indicating that some 30,000 small villages had vanished.

We do not know how many villages there are in the Soviet Union, but we do know that the proportions of women and older people have increased in the countryside as a result of rural-urban migration. Numerous studies on migration have been done in the Soviet Union. One such study found that 12.6% of the sample of migrants left the village because the "culture" did not satisfy them. After only one year of city life, only 8.7% of these could recall the same motivation. Evidently the city culture did not live up to their expectations either.

In 1983, the rural population of the Soviet Union was estimated to be 96.6 million, or 35.6% of the entire population. Several Soviet studies have been conducted on how these millions make use of their spare time. In the 1960s and 1970s, the average villager spent 5.4 hours per week on TV and radio; 3.1 on reading; 1.3 on movies and visits to the local "club;" 0.2 on artistic hobbies; and 0.18 on sports.

The TV network in the Soviet Union reaches 88% of the population, leaving some 32 million rural inhabitants without access to TV. Seven years ago, the figure was 63 million. Since the Soviet government considers TV sets an important indicator of living standards and progress, we have detailed statistics on the annual sales of TVs in

the Soviet Union. Rural inhabitants buy sightly more than a third of all black and white TV sets and one-eighth of the color sets purchased annually in the Soviet Union. This means that there should be a set in each rural household. Radio transmissions reached 97% of the population in 1982, and it is estimated that there are some 70 million radio receivers in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union has long claimed a booming publishing industry and an avid reading audience. During the last seven years, the number of books supplied to rural libraries has increased slightly. In previous decades, there was a notable preference for investment in rural libraries, but the emphasis has recently shifted. Nonetheless, the Soivet Union had 96,700 libraries in 1982, or more than one library for every rural settlement. Although the number of rural libraries has not recently increased, the number of books have. One study indicates that almost half the books in rural libraries are never requested, but very little is actually known about the reading behavior of rural people in the Soviet Union. Soviet officials tend to regard rural libraries mainly as instruments to foster political agitation and to increase the vocational qualifications of the rural leadership. This may partially account for the fact that the average rural library has only 600 readers per annum, a figure which has remained constant since 1979.

The rural "club" serves two functions in the Soviet Union. It is a place to hold political meetings and to show movies. Thus Soviet clubs or "houses of culture" have nothing in common with what Westerners mean by the term "club." Soviet clubs are usually sparsely equipped and dreary facilities. There were 118,600 rural clubs in the Soviet Union in 1982, and the quality of each was directly related to the economic situation of the enterprise or organization responsible for it. In some instances, rich collective farms can afford to build a real "house of culture," but they are not encouraged to do so.

Most people who visit these clubs are under 30 years of age. Thirty percent of the individuals in this age bracket are reported to attend the rural clubs 2-3 times a week, while 30% of the villagers over 50 never find their way to a "house of culture."

Most of us have seen one of the large Soviet folk ensembles which dance and sing all over the world as living proof of how much the Soviet state cares for the cultural heritage of the Russian peasant. Some of the routines are of rural origin, and some of the performers may have been born in a village, but these professional groups in fact consist of well-paid actors whose ties to the countryside may best be symbolized by a dacha.

Soviet statistics show an ever increasing number of artistic hobby groups organized into drama, music, dance and choir groups. Since 1976, figures on artistic hobby groups have not been specified for rural or urban areas. In 1975, however, 388,000 rural groups were

reported out of a total of 585,000 in the Soviet Union. Rural participants amounted to 4.9 million out of a total of 8.9 million. In 1982, the total number of groups in the Soviet Union stood at 733,000 with 12.4 million participants. This means that one out of every 12 or 15 peasants participates in some kind of artistic hobby group. But what these people actually do, what kind of music they play, what kind of drama they perform, who participates and why is unknown to us.

Considering the Soviet emphasis on sports in general, it is surprising that rural inhabitants spend so little time on physical recreation. The reasons are probably rooted as much in "cultural" factors as they are in the limited possibilities for constructing sophisticated sports facilities.

No other nation besides the Soviet Union has such a widespread rural population, and no other nation employs so many people in the agricultural sector. The general impression remains that the Soviet Union could do better in the cultural sector considering that party and government have always been in favor of "culture." However, a genuine rural culture has not emerged in the Soviet Union. Rather, those who can, emigrate to the cities. Being exiled from a major city like Moscow is considered a punishment, as it has been for centuries. One reason for the absence of any effective local cultural initiative may be the Soviet obsession with central planning. On the other hand, it takes time and a certain standard of living for culture to emerge.

The Soviet village of the 1980s might have the material resources and necessary leisure time to organize cultural acitivities, but now it seems to be too late. Sports are now on TV and the rest of one's leisure time must be spent working to buy a new TV. There remains the belief in the Soviet Union that cultural activities should be an integral part of the life of the masses, but the idea has not yet gained much support in the Soviet countryside.

III. Aspects of Soviet Secondary Education: School Performance and Teacher Accountability

The quality of education is a vital dimension of the quality of life. Thus the following is an assessment of the performance of the Soviet school system, a problem which has gained prominence in the Soviet Union as a result of policies designed to provide universal secondary education.

One of the major accomplishments of Soviet educational policy during the 1970s was the general introduction of "complete" secondary education, the extension of compulsory schooling from 8 to 10 years. Today, roughly 60% of those finishing the eighth grade are accomodated by the senior grades of the general secondary school. A unique feature of the Soviet school system is that there is no specific cycle of schooling oriented towards preparing students for higher education as is the case in other East European nations, most notably the DDR. Thus the Soviet ten-year school is assigned the dual function of preparing young people for higher education as well as for work, although no more than every fifth graduate will attend a university.

The introduction of universal secondary education involved changes in the structure of the Soviet shcool system and the organization of teaching as well. General education in the Soviet Union is to be mastered by all students alike, irrespective of their special interests or career goals. But elective courses were reluctantly introduced as the system was reformed in the 1960s and 1970s. Additional changes have been aimed at removing obsolete subject matter and making the fundamentals of key disciplines more accessible to students.

In expanding the numbers of students attending secondary schools, care was taken to avoid any drop in educational standards. It was theoretically the responsibility of teachers to ensure that all students completed each academic year successfully, irrespective of their individual abilities. Thus in the 1970s, the evaluation of educational achievements became one of the most prominent issues in public debates on education. The official Guidelines for the 1984 school reform confirm that this is still the case today.

The traditional indicator for assessing school performance in the Soviet Union has been the percentage of students successfully completing each grade. Student grades are determined on a standard 1-5 grading scale, and this simple scale is also used as an indicator of teacher performance. By evaluating student performance, Soviet teachers are at the same time assessing their own achievements. Along with modernization of the curricula, educational reforms included vague instruction for raising the quality of teaching and applying new teaching methods. But in order to insure that students should complete their studies successfully, most teachers have chosen the

easier solution of adapting their grading practices to the results expected of them. The more reluctant ones are put under pressure by their head teachers, who in turn have to satisfy their superiors in the school administration. The obsession with highly positive learning results has come to be known as protsentomania, a catchword that represents feelings of widespread public discontent with the contemporary Soviet school system.

The available statistics show that grade repeating has declined over the years, but the absolute numbers are still high and the statistics do not indicate that a large number of students pass their classes because grading practices have been relaxed to ensure student success. The number of repeaters as a proportion of the total number students enrolled in the school system was less than 2% in the 1970 school year and dropped to a mere 0.33% in 1981. But considering the size of the Soviet school system, this means that there were 129,000 repeaters in 1981. The drop-out rate for the lower grades of the school system was less than 1% in 1980. This amounts to about 316,000 students who failed to return to school in 1980 alone. For the upper two grades, the deputy minister of education indicates the drop-out rate is about 2.6%, or some 138,000 students who leave school each year. He stated the figure is even higher in some republics, reaching 5.7% in Moldavia and 4.2% in Estonia and Armenia. Given the widespread practice of manipulating grading results, the "holding power" of the school system seems a more pertinent indicator of school performance than the total number of grade repeaters.

Because the expansion of the higher education sector has not kept pace with the rising numbers of students enrolled in secondary schools, college admission procedures have become increasingly competitive. Since 1972, secondary school achievement has been taken directly into account in evaluating college entrance examinations. But secondary school grading results have lost much of their diagnostic and prognostic value as a result of widespread grade inflating. Even students who receive medals for academic achievements do not always pass their entrance exams.

The most severe critics of protsentomania are the teachers themselves. During a public debate on the grading system sparked by critical remarks by Brezhnev in 1981, many teachers reported instances of unveiled pressure to raise grades in complete contradiction to regulations laid down by the Ministry of Education. Some of them even blamed the existence of universal secondary education for creating the "universal compulsory "3" for unsucessfull students," but most of the blame was laid at the door of the educational authorities and the school inspectorate.

Efforts to replace the 1-5 grading scale as the single indicator of student and teacher performance have been underway for at least a decade. Spurred by mounting public criticism of protsentomania, the Ministry of Education has urged the adoption of guidelines called

"Criteria" for the assessment of school performance. These Criteria include certain standards for ideological education and the quality of teaching. But the Criteria have not been successful because they were vague and poorly implemented. We can only speculate as to whether there is tacit connivance of the Ministry of Education in retaining the handy percentage indicator as the sole measure of school and teacher success. After all, successful completion of secondary education by all students is fundamentally a political issue. Teachers have been warned that an "avalanche of twos" (a failing grade) would have a boomerang effect on themselves.

Results of college entrance examinations are one of the most instructive methods of evaluating secondary school performance. Examinations are given for Russian and additional subjects relevant to the applicant's career goals. According to the few statistics available on entrance exam results, it seems that somewhere between 20 and 30% of all students fail tests in their chosen field of specialization. Educational administrators seem particularly concerned about the results of mathematics examinations. It should be kept in mind that these results may be affected by the frequent practice of hiring a private tutor to prepare for the exams. One should also note that examination results for different regions show a considerable degree of variation. In some of the Central Asian republics, up to 70% of all candidates failed their examination.

Several studies by Soviet educators have been undertaken to determine how students are reacting to school curricula as revised for the 1980s. Results have shown that few students are capable of applying the knowledge they have learned in a creative fashion under non-standard circumstances. This suggests that teaching methods are not in accordance with the goals of the revised curricula, and that the encouragement of student independent study has not shown significant results.

The 1972 education decree heralding the final phase in the implementation of universal secondary education proposed a new method for evaluating teacher performance called "attestation," i.e., a review process to evaluate individual skills and qualifications. Similar reviews are common for other professional groups in the Soviet Union, but the extension of "attestation" to teachers was clearly designed as a shake-up operation to make teachers more responsive both to changes brought about by educational policies and to new developments in their areas of specialization. One of the most important goals of attestation is the dissemination of progressive teaching methods. Special emphasis is also placed on the control of teachers' ideological attitudes and political activities.

With few exeptions, teachers must undergo attestation once every five years. Attestation is carried out by special permanent commissions which are empowered to confer special honorary titles and take disciplinary actions against teachers whose performance is deemed

to be unsatisfactory. Two million teachers underwent this process in 1980 (out of a total of 2.3 million teachers in the Soviet Union), and 380,000 were found worthy of commendation. On the other hand, 17% did not entirely fulfill the demands of their jobs and were strongly recommended to undertake remedial in-service training. Results varied by region, however, and the proportion of teachers who required remedial training increased to over 20% in certain Central Asian republics. Only about 1,000 were declared completely inefficient and forced to give up teaching, but another 1,500 less than satisfactory teachers quit their jobs during the review process. To the extent that educational authorities have gone to great lenghths in trying to convince teachers of the fairness of the reviewing process, we can assume that it is extremely unpopular among teachers.

In a shift that may be interpreted as a change of emphasis from bureaucratic to social policy, the Guidelines for the 1984 school reform seek to enhance teachers' innovative capacities and promote their qualifications--not by exerting additional control and pressure, but by developing teacher training programs which are to become based entirely on higher education. The reforms are further aimed at improving the working conditions and salaries of teachers.
But given the Soviet bureaucracy's characteristic aversion to change and well-known budgetary priorities skewed in favor of industry and defense, it seems unlikely that these reforms will be realized in the near future.

IV. Aspects of Poverty in the Soviet Union

Every country in the world, including the richest, contains poor people. When we turn to a large country like the Soviet Union, with a mixed population of over 270 million and a questionable pattern of economic growth, we would probably be surprised not to find a large poverty sector. A closer look at the Soviet Union in the 1970s confirms such expectations.

The investigation of poverty in the Soviet Union is a daunting task, lying more often than not beyond the bounds of foreign and even Soviet scholarship. Even now, the term "poor" cannot be used in Soviet economic and sociological literature. During the Khrushchev era, however, Soviet authorities allowed minimal standards of well-being to be stipulated (at least in theoretical terms); censorship bans on the publication of some scholarly findings were relaxed; and the publication of certain idealized minimal budgets were allowed.

The problem of terminology was solved by using the euphemism "underprovision" (maloobespechennost) instead of "poverty," and this is the term that is still used today. In the late 1950s, a number of institutes were instructed to assess the minimum consumption requirements for a typical urban family and studies done in the 1920s were re-examined. By 1959, several "minimum budgets" were prepared. The best known of these, published by Sarkisyan and Kuznetsova in 1967, are still used as the definitive measures of poverty in the Soviet Union. The budgets as published covered the contemporary monthly needs of an urban nuclear family consisting of four people. The budget was estimated, with due allowances for state subsidies and services, at about 51 roubles per person per month.

Food purchases took up a relatively high proportion of spending, approximately 56%, and clothes required some 20%. Housing and communal services, on the other hand, claimed only 5.4% of the budget because of state subsidies and shortages in supply. No estimates were included for medical and educational needs as it was reasoned that these are provided by the state. Neither was there any provision for saving. In addition, the budget contained an unrealistically low estimate of less than 3% for alcohol and tobacco consumption. As proposed, the budget specified minimum consumption requirements necessary to exceed the poverty level in Soviet society, but ignored the necessity for extra payments to obtain goods in short supply or special services.

Despite these problems, the ideal minimum budget has continued to serve as a silent marker in many sociological surveys. Moreover, Soviet social security benefits are still paid at levels close to the poverty threshold indicated in the 1959 minimum budget. The minimum 51-rouble standard used in the study immediately raised some awkward

questions about poverty in the Soviet Union when it was published in 1967. A family of two working adults and two children theoretically required total earnings of some 206 roubles to reach the designated threshold. Yet the average wage in 1965 was only about 97 roubles, or approximately 194 roubles for two working adults. It would therefore appear that the average family existed in a state of poverty. A large number of surveys conducted during the 1960s showed that as many as a quarter or a third of the urban working class must have been living below the poverty threshold, and since the proportion of disadvantaged workers among the peasantry was certainly larger, the "poor" made up perhaps 40% of the entire population.

A longer-term budget by the same authors, designed to be valid in the 1970s, estimated the minimum per capita income requirement at 66.6 roubles. This second budget was similar to the first in terms of the proportions of income spent on food and housing, etc. There was a small entry for "expenditures on other goods" and savings, and large increases were allowed for holidays, transportation, communications, tobacco and vodka. This budget estimated the total necessary income for two working adults in a family of four at 267 roubles--an average that was only reached in 1974.

The average wage for Soviet workers, as stated in official statistical compilations, has continued to rise, reaching 172.5 roubles per capita in 1981. Two working adults would therefore take home about 310 roubles per month after taxes. Inflation, however, would raise the 267 rouble threshold by 4% to about 278 roubles if we accept the inflation rates admitted to in Soviet price indices. If American estimates were used, however, the figures would be much higher, and the safety margin explicit in the budget would therefore come to about 32 roubles per month, or 8 roubles per head. Given the wide distribution of wages in the Soviet Union, this would mean that large numbers of workers with statistically average families would have remained near or below the poverty threshold. Moreover, the incidence of poverty among the peasantry would seem to be even higher as rural wages are about 10% lower than the incomes of industrial workers.

Due to the absence of detailed figures for Soviet income distributions, the incidence of poverty in the Soviet Union must be determined by considering which socio-occupational groups were most likely to fall below the 50-60 rouble poverty threshold. The poorest workers of the Soviet Union, as elsewhere, are likely to be found in the traditionally neglected sectors of the economy, and in jobs that require only manual unskilled work. The Soviet economy embraces some 57 industries, and the scant data available indicates wide differences in pay scales between various sectors of the economy. Personnel in the extractive, energy producing and heavy industries are at the top of the wage scale. Low average wages continue to be paid in light industry (e.g., textiles, footwear and garment production) and food processing enterprises. Perhaps seven or eight million people are

employed in these sectors. Personnel involved in trade, catering, and state farming are also poorly paid. Wages in the major social service industries, education and health care, fall far below the national average, and "cultural workers" are at the bottom the pay scale. Of course, each sector of the economy contains some relatively well-paid personnel, but in assessing the extent of Soviet poverty, it is relevant to note that the number of workers employed in the service sector is well over 30 million people, or something approaching a third of the the entire non-peasant labor force.

Industrial workers are among the best paid in Soviet society, but the figures indicate that almost a third of them do not rise above the poverty threshold. (A portion of them, however, are probably underqualified young people.) In short, available Soviet wage data provide ample evidence of poverty if we use the 1959 poverty threshold as a yardstick. In 1980 there were still some 40 million Soviet workers employed in unmechanized production jobs. Assistant workers in this category, who perform unskilled supportive functions, numbered over 2 million in 1975. Their average income was 90 roubles per month according to figures published in 1977. Junior service personnel not directly involved in production (e.g., janitors, messengers, door-keepers, etc.) accounted for half a million workers in 1981. According to Soviet sources, incomes for junior service personnel ranged between 75 and 85 roubles a month. Some of these wages were undoubtedly supplemented by "incentive payments," but details on this phenomenon are not discussed in Soviet sources.

In 1970, the Soviet Union employed approximately 5 million office support personnel. Soviet sources suggest a significant increase in this number during the 1970s, but secretaries and other clerics are poorly paid in the Soviet Union. Office personnel in Soviet services and industry earn between 75 and 95 roubles per month. Collective farm workers account for approximately 13.2 million members of the work force, but there are no known estimates for a minimum farmworker budget. Farm income is subject to wide variation, and the existence of private plots, which may account for a fourth of peasant incomes, make it extremely difficult to assess the extent of rural poverty. But there can be no doubt that rural poverty is still widespread. Collective farm wages are highly stratified, and income differences between managers and farmers are widening as a result of faster growth rates in the earnings of administrative personnel.

It is well known that "specialists" and "semi-specialists" in the Soviet Union receive very low salaries regardless of the sector of the economy in which they are employed. For example, in 1981 engineers of all types made 95-150 roubles per month; teachers earned from 80-140 roubles; and doctors of all types made only 100-170 roubles. Young specialists start off on a "poverty wage," but long years of service do not necessarily raise their standards of living.

The overall sum paid to the Soviet Union's 50.2 million

pensioners in 1981 (35.4 million roubles) provided an average pension of only 58.8 roubles per person. The formal minimum was 45 roubles for workers and 28 roubles for peasants. The fact that the average is so close to the poverty level indicates that many pensioners live in a state of poverty. This encourages older people who are able to continue working after reaching retirement age.

Since the end of 1974, families with a per capita income of less than 50 roubles have been entitled to monthly payments of 12 roubles for each child between the ages of one and eight. These benefits are paid for one year at a time, and must be re-applied for each year. Funds paid out in 1980 were sufficient to cover nearly 15% of all children in the Soviet Union, but have decreased since 1974. It does not seem likely that many Soviet families were lifted out of the poverty bracket by receipts of child care benifits. Such payments are evidently designed to alleviate financial difficulty rather than remove it.

An emigre study conducted by the author shows that Soviet workers supplement their earnings by a variety of means. Some work overtime, but this is not particularly widespread outside the agricultural sector; some take on part-time second jobs (but only 2% of the respondents did so); and others engage in work at home. Home production of clothing and other items is encouraged by the authorities, but only about 140,000 people were engaged in home production on a permanent basis in 1980. More importantly, there is little doubt that a considerable proportion of the country's wage-earners supplement their income by resort to so-called "second economy" or black market activities. Almost 40% of those emigres surveyed admitted to various forms of corruption at work and various undeclared money-making activities (mainly odd jobs, etc.). The benefits derived from such activities, however, were meager in most cases. Most of the respondents complained of financial difficulty, and many regularly borrowed money from family, friends, and co-workers.

Since the 1960s, the Soviet diet has shown marked improvement, but the average Soviet citizen still eats far less meat and far more carbohydrates than his or her American counterpart. The price of average grocery purchases still account for more than 50% of the ideal minimum budget. Some 75% of the emigres surveyed complained of food shortages because of a lack of money or available goods, or both. The average caloric needs of the poor are roughly met, but there is little in the way of surplus, and it is clear that poor people eat few vegtables or fruits (except the most common), and half of the families surveyed said they bought no meat at all.

Selective but significant use is made of collective farm markets. Prices in these markets were about two and a half times higher than in state shops. Purchases from collective farm markets are made--somewhat reluctantly, it seems--as a result of shortages and poor

quality elsewhere. It is not possible to measure the extent of this market, but it is nevertheless significant, both in economic and social terms. Forty-one percent of all respondents said they were dissatisfied with their dietary situation; 9% were very disatisfied; and 38% found it "satisfactory," perhaps due to lower expectations or relative success in the procurement of foodstuffs.

It is difficult to estimate how much the average Soviet citizen spends on clothing. By the late 1970s the supply of clothing, which was grossly inadequate in the mid-1960s, was shown to have increased by about two and a half times. But 95% of those surveyed said that buying clothing was a major problem. Twenty-seven percent made do without a heavy winter coat and 30% had nc fur hat, both of which are a must in the cold Soviet winter

Soviet sources admit that in 1980 some 20% of all urban families still lacked accomodations in separate housing units, while the occupancy rate in Leningrad in 1978 was authoritatively stated to be 1.9 persons per room. 26% of the families interviewed lived in communal appartments, and another 2% actually lived in hostels. Several Soviet observers have suggested that there is little correlation between per capita amounts of living space and socio-occupational groups. This means that the poor do not necessarily live in more crowded conditions than than richer people. It is clear, however, that the housing accomodations of the wealthy are of far higher quality than those of the poor. Poor people tend to have less chance of living in the housing units erected by powerful organizations or enterprises; they are much more likely to live in the low quality apartments which typically belong to local soviets. The poor cannot afford to live in cooperative housing projects because these are extremely expensive as compared to typical state apartment complexes. But while average rents are officially very low (accounting for about 5% of the ideal minimum budget), the poor in fact spend much more on housing than Soviet sources would have us believe. The average rent in the state housing sector is about 9 roubles per month, but when electricity, gas, telephone, heating, cleaning and repair costs are included, the figure rises to 20 roubles, or about 20% of family income. This figure is of course very low by Western standards, but it is twice the proportion allowed for in the ideal minimum budget.

The degree to which the poorest people in the Soviet Union feel themselves to be a group apart is highly relevant to any assessment of poverty in the Soviet Union. Less than 2% of the emigrants surveyed admitted to being very poor, and only a handful said they were "poor." Nearly two-thirds did not categorize themselves at all, but about 90% believed that poverty was widespread, and no less than 97% thought the average wage in Soviet society was considerably lower than the official published figure of 160-163 roubles per month in 1978-1979. (The per capita monthly salary of the sample was 59 roubles.) Most thought the possibilities for upward social mobility were limited for the poor.

Soviet ideology asserts that under capitalism the maintenance of a pool of poor unemployed workers is essential to the working of the economy. Fear of poverty stimulates the proletariat to work harder, according to Marx. It is claimed that all Soviet citizens are "justly" paid for their efforts, but nevertheless, the Soviet Union has long tolerated mass poverty. It would seem that the poverty budgets formulated over two decades ago by Soviet scholars are still endemic for a large proportion of the Soviet people. It may well be that the continuing existence of poverty in the Soviet Union serves as something of an incentive to make the working class work a little harder.

V. Housing Quality and Housing Classes in the Soviet Union

From the 1920s to the 1950s, the Soviet government invested heavily in rapid industrialization, but failed to provide adequate resources to house the millions who left the countryside to work in urban factories. Shortly after Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership sought to eliminate the chronic housing shortages that plagued Soviet society. Since 1957, the Soviet Union has built 2.2 million housing units per year, a noteworthy achievement even if their size and quality remain far below Western standards.

The results of this effort are visible in almost every city and town in the Soviet Union. In most cities, new housing districts outnumber older ones, and by 1982 the per capita living space in urban areas increased to 9 square meters (9.7 by 9.7 feet) from 5 square meters in 1950. But because housing conditions improved for a significant part of the population, the demands of those who were still waiting for their own apartments intensified as the housing situation became more stratified. Even Soviet media sources admit the tremendous amount of apartment construction in the past 10 to 15 years has not kept pace with rising expectations. Knowledge that a housing "rich" exists has bred the resentment of the housing "poor." These are the millions who are still waiting for accommodations in new apartment buildings. A survey conducted in Moscow (where per capita living space is 11.3 meters) revealed that the percentage of those dissatisfied with their housing conditions doubled between 1966 and 1969, chiefly among those who had close relatives or friends with new apartments.

Soviet citizens still suffer from the poorest housing conditions of any industrialized nation, principally because so many families still live communally without their own apartments. In 1980, an estimated 20% of all urban households still shared apartments, with an additional 5% (mostly single people) living in factory dormitories. The fact that conditions were worse in 1960, when 60% of all families lived communally, is of little comfort to the millions still living in inadequate conditions. The waiting period for a new apartment is indefinite--it may take from a decade to a lifetime unless one has connections. The Soviet government tries to persuade its citizens that their housing conditions are steadily improving. It is regularly publicized that new housing units account for more than 100 million square meters per year and ten million people improve their housing conditions annually by moving into new apartments, or through the housing exchange system. Though quite impressive, these statistics merely serve to cover up critical shortages of housing space.

In practically all Western nations, the goals of matching housing units with the number of households has been achieved. In the Soviet Union, the defict of housing units in relation to the number of households is very large. The deficit in 1970, according to

unpublished Soviet figures, was 7.4 million units in urban areas, but the actual figure may be as high as 9.6 million units, or 100 units for every 128 households. The deficit has not been overcome by a vigorous construction program, in part because housing is no longer the government's primary consumer priority as it was during the 1950s and 1960s.

In a deficit housing situation, the ratio of marriages formed to housing units produced greatly affects nationwide housing conditions. Between 1973 and 1982, over six million more marriages were formed than housing units built. This huge imbalance was also reflected in 29 major cities and the capitals of most republics. In 1982, only Kiev and Minsk registered more dwellings built than marriages formed. Moscow's defict was more than 43,000 units, and Leningrad's was 26,000 units.

However, the urban deficit is actually much larger than the figures show. With a zero vacancy rate in Soviet urban areas, the desire for each family to live in a separate apartment is strictly monitored by the authorities. To reduce housing demand pressures, single people who wish to move away from their families are frequently denied places on housing waiting lists. Many who live outside major cites are also denied the chance to live in urban centers. These sub-urbanites constitute a class of "urban poor," for urban amenities are extremely scare outside major population centers. Permission to move to a major city is rarely granted without official sponsorship or an apartment exchange. Needless to say, the chances of sponsorship by a major industry or organization is improved for those with skills in high demand. If unsponsored, an individual must battle the bureaucracy alone, and few attempt this discouraging procedure.

To move to a major city, a propiska (residence permit) is required. But to be eligible for a propiska, it is necessary to have housing accomodations, for which one needs a propiska. Therefore, to gain a propiska one must find accomodation as a sub-tenant because residence permits are issued for specific street addressess and areattached to one's internal passport. Even if this is accomplished, permission to reside in a major city will be denied unless strong sponsorship or a bribe prevails. Temporary propiskas may be provided for those on work assignmentsin a given city, but permanent propiskas are likely to be approved only if two families of approximately the same number agree to exchange apartments of approximately the same size. Such exchanges are less likely between small and large cities than two cities of approximately the same size.

The rationing of urban housing in the Soviet Union is primarily by allocation, whereas in the United States it is primarily by price. In new towns, of which there are more than 1,000 in the Soviet Union, housing is primarily financed and controlled by large enterprises or industries which "run" the city. In older towns, capitals of republics and large cities, about half of all housing stock is owned

by the municipality. In both cases, party trade unions or housing committees forward their recommendations on waiting list applications to the executive committee of the local soviet, which invariably gives its approval to recommendations from the lower committees.

Waiting lists for housing are quite rigid, and to be legally taken out of turn is a priviledge granted only to those who have received high awards, KGB officers, members of the armed forces (including civilians), World War II veterans and their families, tuberculosis patients and those sharing a room with strangers. Few figues are available on the size of various waiting lists, but in Moscow, 180,000 families or about 590,000 people were on the lists in 1974. This accounted for 7.8% of the city's population. Sixty percent of these averaged less than 5 square meters of living space, and the others lived in dilapidated accommodations or lacked basic conveniences such as central heating or hot water. Of the total, 70% were on preferred lists. Those on the preferred lists may have had their housing demands satisfied within a few years, but the other 30% had a wait of a decade or longer to look forward to.

With more than 70% of all urban housing owned by the state, it is primarily bureaucrats who decide who shall live where and when. However, there is still a sizeable market for private houses, rentals and apartment exchanges. As in the West, prices are dependent on one's ability to pay the going market rate. This is invariably much higher than the officially permitted price, and is therefore illegal. Only in the case of housing cooperatives are prices set by the government.

Before 1977, the down-payment for a two-room cooperative unit was 5,000 roubles, or 45% of the 11,111 rouble cost, the rest to be paid off at low interest rates over a 15-year period. Since then, the down-payment has increased to 6,500 roubles, a sum which takes an industrial worker averaging 175 roubles a month 37 months to earn. Even at these prices, cooperative units are very hard to obtain in most cities as demand far exceeds supply. Most cooperatives are built in new districts far from the center, where shopping is virtually impossible because retail outlets will not be completed for several years. For that rare cooperative built near a metro station, a bribe of 1,000 roubles may be necessary to satisfy the chairperson of the cooperative and the housing inspector who processes the application.

Because official housing exchange bureaus are of little help to the average person who cannot get on a preferred waiting list, a lively "stock market" operates for the trade of apartments and rooms. Not all housing exchanges are approved by the authorities, principally because they suspect that money is being exchanged for unfair gain. Frequently this is true. But to disallow such exchanges would be counterproductive because putting obstacles in the way of private exchange only results in a larger black market for housing.

One example of the complicated and time-consuming negotiations needed to organize a housing exchange involved Adrei Sakharov before his internal exile to Gorky in 1980. In all, the exchange chain involved 17 persons and 5 apartments and took a year to arrange. According to Dr. Sakharov, everyone involved welcomed the prospective move. The planned exchange was first approved by the housing commission of the district soviet in Moscow, but was later vetoed by the district soviet executive committee, most probably for political reasons.

Sometimes families with adult children living elsewhere may choose to sublease extra rooms. Such rooms located in city centers are in the greatest demand and can go for as much as 50 roubles per month or more. Subleased appartments are more expensive. Prospective sub-tenants must file an application with the local housing office, and once a propiska is obtained, permission to sublease is usually granted. Soviet authorities accede to this practice, realizing that the black market in subletting is a necessary safety valve which takes care of a portion of the overflow demand for housing. To suppress such activities would place housing officials under even greater pressure to distribute rooms and apartments which they do not have.

A market for leasing second homes is also flourishing. Each summer, more than 25% of all Muscovites and Leningraders rent a dacha of some sort, and another 35% have access to one. The going price for a comfortable dacha with modern conveniences is up to 1,000 roubles for a summer. A legal price limit for renting space in a dacha exists, but only on paper. Leningrad architects have estimated that city-dwellers spend 25-30 million roubles a year on summer dachas. This is not surprising as dachas account for approximately 80% of all suburban holiday facilities. The cheapest dacha costs about 5,000 roubles, and the price for a comfortable coutry home with modern conveniences ranges from 15-50,000 roubles, but both are extremely scarce.

To reduce the time one spends on a waiting list, it is necessary to find a way to jump the queue. One quick route out of the provinces and into a large city is to find a marriageable resident who has a propiska. Fictitous divorces also take place so that couples can receive more spacious accommodations than they would have obtained if they remained legally married. More important, however, to circumvent the system, one must resort to blat (influence), a bribe, or both. In the Soviet Union, a "society of connection," who you know will often determine how well you are housed, what food you eat, what theater tickets you can get, and so on. It is not simply a matter of bribery, but rather of "influence." As even Pravda complained (2/11/73), "too often the decisive factor is not the waiting list, but a sudden telephone call...."

As housing demand far exceeds supply, housing officials are frequently on the take. It is dangerous, however, to find an official

who will accept a bribe because conviction brings a sentence of eight years. Systematic abuses in the housing allocation process are sometimes exposed when a general anti-corruption campaign is launched by a high official. Flagrant abuses were found in Georgia and Armenia in the mid-1970s, but anti-corruption campaigns are infrequent and seldom affect the highest officials, who are often the worst offenders. Local party and governent officials and others sometimes use their connections to build well-equipped, oversized private homes on illegally assigned plots, using stolen building materials and illegally-loaned construction machinery charged to the state. A cursory check in Georgia in 1974 indicated that more than 50,000 homes had been built illegally.

Urban housing in the Soviet Union is a state monopoly, and government policy strictly limits investment choices concerning the types of housing units that may be built. Cities with over 100,000 people build apartments; permission to build comfortable family homes is usually not granted near urban areas; and credit and building materials are unavailable except through the state. Consequently, suburbs as known in the West do not exist.

The acute housing shortage is very much of the government's own making. Heavy investment in industry and defense continues to attract workers to urban areas, but at the same time the government deliberately underinvests in housing construction and consumer services which are needed to satisfy the working class. Citizen initiatives to improve their housing situation are consistently stifled. Moreover, stratification between housing "classes" is rapidly increasing in newly-constructed developments sponsored by powerful organizations. Housing cooperativess largely occupied by the intelligentsia are another example of existence of housing classes in the Soviet Union. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the "least favored," the millions who live on the outskirts of large cities. They are also the most segregated. Mainly semiskilled and unskilled workers, which commute an hour or more to work--not by choice, but because they cannot find adequate accommodations near the city center. Large cities are closed off to the "least favored" to prevent major population centers from being overrun by migrants. At the bottom of the urban housing hierarchy, the "less favored" tend to live communally or in dormitories. Much better off are the "more favored," who live in self-contained appartments in newly-erected housing districts, which are not located near city center. Finally, the "most favored" are those who live in apartments in or near the city center. These are usually political, military, state security, economic, scientific, educational and cultural elites. They are also the most heavily subsidized as they pay the same low rents per square meter as those who live communally. Admittedly, further differentiation exists within each housing class, but upward movement from one housing class to the next, though not impossible, is difficult and may take a good portion of one's lifetime.

VI. Self-Fulfilment Through Work: Working Conditions in Soviet Factories

According to Soviet ideology, the abolishment of private ownership of the means of production will put an end to the alienation of labor. At the same time, however, the Soviet Union does not deney the fact that unpleasant working conditions exist in certain places. During the last 20 years, poor working conditions were seen as a transitory phenomenon that would disappear as a result of the imminent scientific-technological revolution. In reality, Soviet working conditions leave much to be desired according to recent findings inSoviet empiricle sociolgoy. Furthermore, Soviet workers have become increasingly materialistic over the years, and this has led to increased disatisfaction with prevailing working conditions.

During the 1970s, a series of opinion polls were conducted regarding workers' attitudes towards work. These studies repeated questions asked in similar polls during the 1960s. The resulting material makes clear that Soviet workers are even further from developing a socialist attitude towards work than they were during the 1960s. The results of the earlier opinion polls showed that especially younger workers ranked the content of their work higher than financial rewards. In the 1970s, however, the younger generation developed a more instrumental attitude towards work, with the consequence that salary and working conditions were seen to be more important than the character of the work itself. "Work," according to Jadov, a well-known Soviet sociologist, "is now seen as a means to satisfy needs outside the production process." According to Marx, this is one of the most important characteristics of alienated labor. The younger generation has taken a much greater interest in private life than previous Soviet generations, and its participation in political and social activities has declined accordingly. Discipline problems have increased in the factories, and young workers are beginin to react negatively to chronic deficiencies in the organization of Soviet labor, especially the so-called unrhythmical use of labor time.

To explain the reasons behind the new value system of young Soviet workers, Soviet sociologists cite higher standards of living and education, and the changed social composition of the work force. Higher consumption and education levels have raised young workers' demands concerning their working conditions. The proportion of young, unpretentious workers with peasant backgrounds has diminished in the Soviet work force. As a result, labor turnover, especially among unskilled workers, has increased dramatically.

The value system of young, well-educated Soviet workers resmebles the attitudes displayed by young Polish workers during the Gierek period. Withdrawal into private life was typical among younger Poles before their demands became politicized, but young Polish workers were

less tolerant than their present-day Soviet counterparts regarding deficiencies in labor organization. The similarities between Soviet and Polish value systems, however, do not mean that they will lead to similar political results.

Young Soviet workers are begining to protest against the special problems of Soviet labor organization, but these problems cannot be solved by new regulations or better labor controls, for as Kornai shows in The Economics of Shortage, they are endemic to centrally planned economies. According to Kornai, the socialist firm has no rigid budget constraints. This peculiarity generates what he calls "investment hunger." Being insatiable in principle, the excessive demand behavior of the socialist firm creates repeated shortages and bottle-necks. If they occur in the production sphere, they give rise to "intra-shift down-time." As the majority of Soviet workers are involved in piece-work labor, down-time adversely affects their earnings. Down-time accounts for 50% of all labor-time losses, a figure that accounts for far more than all the labor-time losses caused by absenteeism and turnover problems which are widely criticized in the Soviet press.

Down-time, however, is not the only result of Soviet labor practices which constantly renew the bottle-neck phenomenon. Another consequence is the concentration of scarce resources in areas where they seem to achieve the greatest short-term effect, i.e., in the industrial sector. This is the reason why working conditions in the so-called subsidary division of the economy (intra-factory transport, loading and storing, etc.) are much worse than in sectors directly concerned with production. It is also the reason why preference is given to the construction of new factories instead of the modernization of older ones, a problem which only perpetuates unsatisfactory working conditions in older facilities.

On the other hand, there is a positive side to Soviet labor organization for the Soviet work force. Soviet workers are rather well protected by labor laws against dismissals and they enjoy a favorable market position which gives them shop floor power not intended by the central authorities. Since the 1970s, Soviet labor resources have been exhausted. There is a shortage of labor in the Soviet Union (though not within factories) and Soviet workers take advantage of this situation in the labor market. Their bargaining power leads to the existence of a permanent wage drift. Managers depend to a certain extent on the motivation of their employees and try to give space to their demands if possible. The central authorities try to counteract this tendency, for instance by the introduction of so-called scientific norms, i.e., fixed pay scales. As a result, wage drift has diminished; but to some extent, the authorities have been forced to implement "scientific norms" in consistent fashion due to the bargaining power of Soviet workers.

The absence of democracy in the Soviet Union has apparently not

led to the suppression of interest group conflicts between workers, managers, and planners. Shop floor power enables Soviet workers to fight for better salaries. This does not mean that these strategies can be considered equivalent to trade union activities as known in the West, but we should realize that Soviet workers have far more room to express their interests than we usually assume.

Soviet workers are confronted with deficiencies in their working conditions unknown to their Western counterparts. Unfortunately, it is impossible to statistically compare the working conditions of the two systems due to a lack of relevant data. One of the original aims of Soviet society was to guarantee workers' self-fulfilment through work. This goal continues to play an integral role in Soviet ideology. Its realization, however, as even Soviet sociologists now confirm, has not come appreciably nearer over the years.

VII. Soviet Living Standards in Comparative Perspective

Spokespersons for the Soviet Communist Party and government have long maintained that their centrally planned economic system would be able to produce such impressive growth rates that the Soviet Union would catch up with the West in terms of living standards within a relatively short period of time. In 1960, Krushchev declared that by 1965 the Soviet Union would surpass the most highly developed capitalist nations in per capita consumption of "many important consumer goods," and the following year, the Communist Party adopted a grand program to achieve communism "in the main" by 1980, when the Soviet people would attain the "highest living standard in the world." Since the Krushchev era, Soviet leaders have been more cautious with regard to the "race" with capitalism, and have instead spoken of "rational" levels of consumption for the Soviet people.

Instead of achieving communism, the Soviet economy in the 1980s is experiencing a painful time of troubles. Advances in living standards have slowed markedly; consumer markets are in severe disequilibrium; and there is widespread dissatisfaction with the quality and mix of consumer goods and services and the pace at which matters are improving. Given this state of affairs, and the leadership's concern for the Soviet Union's image as a socialist welfare state, the following will consider how present standards of living in the USSR compare with those of other industrialized nations. The comparative living standards of a wide range of range of Eastern and Western nations will be analyzed based on data contained in Phase II of the United Nations International Comparison Project (1975) and a similar study on U.S. and Soviet consumption levels (1976). While the methodology of these studies leaves much to be desired, the results are probably not far off the mark. Indeed, they are not biased against the Soviet Union, and may in fact overstate the levels of consumption in the USSR relative to the West.

As the data indicates, the Soviet Union has a long way to go to catch up with Western standards of living. In 1976, the living standard of the Soviet people was roughly one-third that of the United States, somewhat less than half that of France, West Germany and Austria, just over half that of the United Kingdom and Japan, and about two-thirds of the Italian level. These relationships remain essentially the same in the 1980s.

Large deficiencies are found in all major categories of Soviet consumption, except for education. With respect to food, beverages and tobacco, Soviet per capita consumption levels range from between 50 to 70% of the total for Western nations. Moreover, the quality of the Soviet diet is poor by Western standards. In 1976, for example, Soviet consumers obtained 46% of their daily caloric intake from bread and potatoes, and only 8% from meat and fish. The comparable figures for the United States are 22 and 20%, respectively. These

statistics do not include expenditures in restaurants and cafes, which would make the Soviet position look somewhat less favorable because relatively fewer people in the Soviet Union frequent such establishments than in the United States.

Soviet per capita expenditures on clothing and footware are also well below Western levels, but the variability between nations is greater than the range for overall standards of living. Per capita consumption of clothing and footware ranges between 46 and 81% of the Western levels. However, both the Soviet press and foreign observers point out that the style, variety, and general appearance of Soviet attire is far inferior to the fashions available in the West. Unfortunately, such considerations cannot be fully captured by quantitative comparisons.

The area where the differences between Soviet and Western living standards is perhaps greatest is in the housing sector. Here, the Soviet Union spends less than one-fifth the total US figure, and well under half of what is spent in Spain and Japan. Housing is probably the greatest consumer frustration in the Soviet Union. Most urban residents pay very low subsidized rents, but live in small, overcrowded, poorly-maintained apartments. For the Soviet Union to appreciably reduce its housing problem, huge sustained increases in investment would be necessary--an occurance which does not seem likely given Soviet investment priorities.

Allocations for transportation and communication services are also very low in the Soviet Union as compared to Western levels. Soviet consumers spend large amounts on public transportation relative to the West and very small amounts on private automobiles. Presently, only about one Soviet family out of twenty owns a car, whereas car ownership is almost universal among American families and is overwhelmingly predominant in Western Europe and Japan. Only one in seven urban families in the Soviet Union has a telephone, and home telephones are exceedingly rare in rural areas. The availability of recreational goods and services is scarce in comparison to the West. According to Soviet data, over nine-tenths of all families now have television sets, with color sets coming into use fairly rapidly.

Soviet consumers also spend relatively much less than their Western couterparts on a variety of miscellaneous goods and services. The largest share of this category consists of expenditures in restaurants and lodging places which are far less common in the Soviet Union than in the West. While restaurant sales make up about one-sixth of total retail sales of food and beverages in the Soviet Union, the share is much larger in Western nations. The Soviet government's long-term neglect of the service sector has produced expenditure lags comparable to those for housing and recreation. The relatively large Western totals for "other expenditures" reflect the fact that a wide variety of financial, legal, and similar services are

provided in the West, whereas they are extremely rare or non-existent in the Soviet Union.

Health care in the Soviet Union is provided at no direct charge to the individual, but the figures indicate that per capita expenditures on health care are only about one-third of those in the United States, France and West Germany, and about two-fifths the level of the United Kingdom, Austria and Japan. This is partially explained by the fact that the Soviet health care system is labor-intensive and uses fewer expensive materials than in the West. Moreover, Soviet health care personnel are among the lowest paid in the Soviet economy.

In sharp contrast to the poor showing in all areas up to this point, the Soviet Union leads all countries but the United States in per capita expenditures on education. This relects a long-standing commitment to create an educated and skilled labor force with which to fuel a rapidly expanding and modernizing economy. But while general secondary education is now compulsory and nearly universal, access to full-time higher educational facilities is strictly limited to the government's estimated need for trained manpower. Less than one-fifth of all Soviet high school graduates are enrolled in full-time colleges, compared to over two-fifths in the United States. About 10% of the Soviet labor force is made up of college graduates, whereas the figure is approximately 25% in the United States.

Soviet consumption patterns differ markedly from those in the West. Soviet citizens devote a far larger share of their expenditures to food, clothing, alcoholic beverages and tobacco. With close to two-thirds of all consumption outlays devoted to these items, the Soviet Union displays a consumption pattern more similar to developing nations than industrialized ones. This follows from Engel's Law which holds that proportional outlays for food and clothing, etc., decline as spendable income rises. As Soviet wages are relatively low compared to those in Western nations, the proportion of income spent on food, etc., is necessarily higher than in the West. In short, not only are relative standards of living far below those of the West, but the pattern of consumption is also quite backward and has changed at a glacial pace compared to the West. As the United States and other Western nations have moved towards the creation of service-oriented economies, Soviet expenditures on production comprised almost 80% of all spending in 1976. In the United States, the respective share was 45%.

From 1953 to 1970, per capita private consumption in the Soviet Union rose nearly twice as fast as in the United States, but since 1970 that growth has slowed markedly. Starting from a much lower base, Soviet efforts to reduce the gap betweem Eastern and Western standards of living have been mixed. Soviet living standards have indeed increased, but on the whole, the result has not been particularly impressive in comparison to the capitalist nations of

Western Europe. Western estimates are virtually unanimous in their forecasts of slow economic growth in the Soviet Union and therefore even slower growth rates in per capita consumption levels.

A comparison between the Soviet Union and other EastEuropean nations with centrally planned economies (except Yugoslavia) will provide an interesting dimension to our study. (Czechoslovakia and the DDR were not included in the UN data, but these nations probably have the highest living standards in Eastern Europe.) Soviet consumption patterns are much more like those of Eastern Europe than the West. In all four East European nations, consumption expenditures on food and clothing make up close to two-thirds of total outlays. But all four nations devote considerably larger shares to housing and related expenditures than the Soviet Union. Shares spent on education are similar in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but the share allocated to health care is smallest in the Soviet Union. The average Hungarian or Pole has considerably more food and clothing provided for him than does the average Soviet citizen, while the reverse is true for Romanians and Yugoslavs. All four nations provide more housing and associated goods and services than the Soviet Union.

Improvements in living standards slowed sharply in the Soviet Union and all East European nations except Yugoslavia after 1975. Nevertheless, in many key areas, East European consumers are appreciably better off than their Soviet counterparts. With regard to meat consumption, which has become something of a political symbol, probably all East European nations are in a better position than the Soviet Union. No gains in this area have been made in the Soviet Union since 1975, whereas supplies of both meat and fish have increased in at least five East European nations. Since 1975, milk supplies have actually declined in the Soviet , but rose in Eastern Europe. Per capita supplies of eggs, sugar, and vegetables rose in the Soviet Union during this period, and Soviet consumers tended to be relatively better off than East Europeans in kilograms consumed per capita. But in 1981 Soviet consumers still ate more grain products and potatoes than any East European nation except Poland, indicating a very slow shift towards reducing the share of starchy food in the Soviet diet.

With respect to durables, household stocks of refrigerators, washing machines, and television sets in the Soviet Union were well below the consumption levels of all Eastern European nations except Bulgaria. Supplies of consumer durables have increased about as rapidly in the Soviet Union as in Eastern Europe, but the availability of passenger cars in the Soviet Union has not significantly increased and remains at the lowest level for any industrialized nation.

Soviet retail outlets tend to be few in number, small in size, and poorly equipped by Western and even East European standards. In 1977, for example, Moscow had only one-quarter to one-third the number of retail stores to be found in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, and

only half as many retaurants. The result of too few retail outlets, distorted prices, poor services, and an often unreliable wholesale distribution system is that Soviet consumers must spend an inordinate amount of time standing in lines and going from store to store. These factors qualify our measurements of consumption levels in the Soviet Union and mean that our estimates of relative quantities of goods and services are biased in favor of the Soviet Union.

The relative consumption levels in the Soviet Union might be underestimated because of a sizable "underground" or "second" economy. But what matters for an international comparison is the total production of goods and services; illegal acitivities are by definition excluded from that total.

The Soviet Union devotes a considerably smaller share of its GNP to consumption than almost all of the nations to which it was compared in the United Nations International Comparisons Project. Soviet expenditures on consumption averaged only 62 to 73% of Western consumption levels. This pattern has changed very little since 1965 and reflects the Soviet government's well-known allocative preference in favor of investment and defense over consumption. Soviet investment priorities have resulted in huge backlogs of neglect in the consumer sector, most notably in housing, retail trade and services. Depending on one's values, one may wish to take such considerations into account in assessing the "quality of life" in the Soviet Union.

VIII. The Vanishing Babushka: A 'Roleless Role' For Older Soviet Women?

As a result of the demographic changes associated with economic modernization in the Soviet Union, many women of pension age (55 and older) are now facing many of the same dilemmas as older women in the West. Essentially, the problem is that older women in both the Soviet Union and the West are being deprived of their traditional roles in their respective societies. This is a phenomenon that follows the laws of demographic change without respect to ideological or geographic boundries. The traditional role of the babushka (grandmother, child minder, or housekeeper) holds little appeal for many contemporary Soviet female pensioners. What will eventually fill the vacuum of the "roleless role" confronting Soviet women still remains unclear.

The 30 million Soviet women aged 55 and older in 1982 were better educated, have raised fewer children, have longer experience in the work force, and enjoy a greater life expectancy than any previous generation of Soviet women. As in the United States, older women in the Soviet Union outnumber older Soviet men. Frequently, these women exist on largely inadequate state pensions and many of them live alone (20% in cities and 25% in rural areas). The nuclearization of the family is a phenomenon common to all industrialized nations, and this force is now threatening to deprive older Soviet women of their traditional role in Soviet society. It may also strip the role of babushka of much of its social and economic meaning even for those older Soviet women who still wish to become babushki.

In general, older Soviet women shoulder a disproportionate share of the burdens of aging in the Soviet Union due to the "feminization" of the Soviet pension-age population. This can be traced to male population losses during World War II and a rise in the number of divorces in the over-40 age group. Soviet gerontologists have authoritatively stated that in 1980 women in the over-60 age group outnumbered their male counterparts by more than 2 to 1. Other recent Soviet sources suggest an even larger demographic gap on the order of 7-8 females for every 2-3 males over 60. American calculations suggest a decrease in this ratio over time. The size of the female majority was 19.5 million in 1969, but is scheduled to drop to 13.8 million in 1985 and 4.7 million by the end of the century according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Still, a balanced sex ratio probably will not appear before the year 2010.

In the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Moldavia, older widowed females accounted for at least 25% of all rural women. The national average for older women who are widows stood at about 24% in 1979. Older widowed women account for over nine-tenths of all individuals over 60 who are single or widowed in rural areas. Moreover, there were approximately 40 million pension-age persons in

the Soviet Union in 1980, amounting to about 15% of the total population, and in 1978 pension-age persons accounted for almost 25% of the population of the RSFSR. Given the "feminization" of the Soviet population, these figures suggest that many husbandless older Soviet women may find themselves in a position of economic hardship as they must rely on their own resources or state pensions to support themselves. This may be especially true in rural areas where older women make up a larger proportion of the population than in urban areas. In urban areas, the problem is also widespread but perhaps less chronic. For the Soviet Union as a whole in 1975, 23% of all women over 60 in cities lived alone and the figure was even greater in certain republics such as Estonia. In cities such as Moscow, old-age pensioners accounted for 20% of the total population. Within this group, the largest single component is made up of older Soviet women.

Yet despite the erosion of the babushka role and the economic hardships the above figures suggest, work roles for older Soviet women have yet to take up the slack. Soviet retirement policy was reversed in the mid-1960s when a variety of incentives were instituted to entice old-age pensioners to remain part of the labor force. But whatever the success of these measures--and indeed they are mixed--most older Soviet women have not eagerly embraced the option of work after retirement. Indeed, retirement continues to be the preferred role of both men and women of pension age in the Soviet Union. Old-age pensioners comprised 8-9% of the total work force of Moscow and Leningrad in 1971, but for the Soviet Union as a whole, the number of female working pensioners declined from 3 to 2.2 million between 1959 and 1970 (a decrease of 27%). The number of male working pensioners decreased even more dramatically, from 2.6 to 1.2 million, probably owing to the relatively higher pension benifits they enjoyed. In addition, the preference for retirement increases with age. While 80% of all those in the 55-59 age bracket continue to work, the number falls to 32% for the 60-64 age group and 17.5% for the 65-69 age group. Pension-age workers in the Soviet Union leveled off at about one-third of the work force in 1982.

Even though Soviet women become eligible for retirement five years earlier than males, they are less likely to work even one year beyond the date when they begin to receive their pensions. Even when they continue to work, they will tend to withdraw from the work force sooner than pension-age males. One Soviet study found that male working pensioners remained employed for an average of 6-7 years after reaching retirement age, whereas female working pensioners worked only 2-3 years. Moreover, pension-age Soviet women return to the work force more reluctantly than older Soviet men. Most pension-age women who return to work cite material necessity as their major reason for doing so. (Older Soviet men cite personal satisfaction or other "social" motives more often.) This is primarily because pensions in the Soviet Union are tied to past earnings. Despite increases in wages over the last several years, pensions have not been adjusted accordingly. This affects both men and women alike, but older women

suffer more because of the lower salaries they received during their careers. Even Soviet sources admit that women make 15% less than their male counterparts for performing similar tasks. Thus income inequality between the sexes continues even after retirement.

But while pension-age Soviet women tend to choose work roles only reluctantly, it seems they do not especially look forward to assuming the babushka role either. Soviet surveys indicate this role is less attractive and less widespread than is commonly believed in the United States and even the Soviet Union. Only 20% of those surveyed in 1973-74 said they looked forward to becoming babushki, and 40% replied in the negative. Another study conducted in 1977-78 revealed that most older Soviet women associated retirement with "increased leisure" or "time to look after oneself." Only about 1 in 4 linked retirement to "care of grandchildren" and fewer than 1 in 6 to helping with household chores. Further studies indicate that large numbers of older Soviet women indeed wish to live alone.

It is difficult to determine how many children in the Soviet Union have the benifit of a babushka. But we can estimate that there were between 22 and 37 million preschool children in the Soviet Union in 1979, and that "babushka coverage" at the national level was somewhere between 24 and 26%. However, this figure is probably high due to the relatively large number of extended families that still exist in the Muslim regions of Soviet Central Asia. In urban settings, a survey conducted in 1973-74 indicated that grandparents were involved in child-rearing in less than half of all families, and this figure declined as the children grew older. In addition the number of babushki increases to a high of 64% for urban families where different generations live nearby, and decreases to a low of 25% where travel time separating generations is more than an hour.

Plans are underway in the Soviet Union to study the positive aspects of the traditonal babushka role and devise several modified alternative roles which will be of benefit to both babushki and Soviet families in need of child-care assistance. Apparently, some Soviet gerontologists are convinced that the babushka role is somehow redeemable. This is unlikely, however, for the central problem confronting older women in the Soviet Union is that they play no significant role in Soviet social or political life.

IX. Consumer Goods and Social Services: Is the Soviet Union on the Road to Post-Industrialism?

The investment policy of the Soviet government profoundly affects individual consumption preferences in the Soviet Union. Several sociological studies show a growing differentiation in the preferences of various social strata. These differences reflect not only the problems of obtaining certain goods in the Soviet Union, but also income disparities and culturally determined personal preferences.

A large portion of the Soviet population is living under conditions of relative poverty as compared with the West, but there is still a money surplus in the Soviet Union because a "shortage economy" is maintained where consumption is restricted in favor of investment. Consumer goods remain in short supply, and therefore consumers often find it difficult to purchase the items they want, regardless of their disposable income. Capital accumulation in the consumer sector dropped from 15.1% in the eighth five-year plan (1970-1974) to 12.1% in the tenth five-year plan (1976-1980), and to 12% in 1981. The statistics also show a slow-down in per capita consumption, reflecting recent declines in overall economic growth. At the same time, it is important to note that the Soviet Union has made important progress in the distribution of consumer durables (e.g., television sets). Developments in Soviet agriculture were on the whole less impressive, but Soviet meat production, always the weak point of Soviet agriculture, increased from 48 kilos per capita in 1970 to 57 kilos in 1982, a figure still far below the OECD average of about 83 kilos in 1982. It seems that per capita levels of meat consumption have not risen since 1975 in relation to consumption patterns for consumer durables.

Except for telephones and private cars, the per capita Soviet consumption of consumer durables was close to the West German level in 1978. But one should note that the regional distribution of consumer durables in the Soviet Union is very unequal. For example, there were 5.2 million private cars registered in the Soviet Union in 1979. This means that the national average was 7 cars per 100 inhabitants, but the average increases to 61 cars per 100 in Estonia, and is also quite high in Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia and Armenia. These figures may reflect cultural preferences as well as the simple availability of goods. However, none of these statistics say anything about the quality of consumer goods in the Soviet Union, which are generally thought to be quite inferior by Western standards.

The results of a large household budget survey conducted in the Ukraine indicate that 10% of family income was spent on services in 1970, and in 1975 the figure was 10.5%. West German consumers spent a similar proportion of family income on services (except for public utilities, housing and health care), but if one looks at the statistics for retail transactions and purchases of commodities, the

comparison begins to diverge. The structure of retail trade in the Ukraine was dominated by food and beverage purchases, amounting to nearly 50% of all transactions in 1975. Another 27% was spent on clothing and various accessories, and tobacco products accounted for about two percent. Leisure spending amounted to only 5.3% of the total, but many of these goods and services are provided ostensibly free by the state and thus do not enter into statistics for retail trade. In reality, however, through taxes and other hidden charges, Soviet consumers pay for almost half of all "free" services. Furthermore, while services may be cheaper in the Soviet Union than in the West, the existing supply neither satisfies demand, nor are tax revenues allocated to the modernization of the consumer sector.

One way of coping with the money surplus in the Soviet Union would be to offer more and better services. But this is highly unlikely due to Soviet investment priorities in heavy industry and defense. Employment in the consumer services sector rose about 58% between 1961 and 1970, but only 30% percent from 1971 to 1980. In addition, neglect of the service sector infrastructure has led to significant waste because consumer demand far outstrips the packaging and distribution system. One source indicates that tons of milk are lost every year due to simple packaging problems. There is also a severe lack of spare parts in most repair shops in the services sector. Certain repair facilities have gone so far as to call for juridical measures to exert pressure on the producers of durable household goods who did not provide necessary spare parts.

In January 1982 a decree of the Central Committee called for the improvement of conditions in retail trade and commercial services. The decree was aimed at abolishing corruption and black market transactions by withholding certain goods in high demand. The decreestipulated that the number of workers involved in retail trade and food services should not increase beyond the 1982 total of 7.3 million (or 6.5% of the work force), but retail sales were designated to increase 22-25% by 1985. These goals can only be achieved by improving organization and building larger and better equipped retail outlets.

Expenditures on state-provided services are in slow but noticeable decline. The total share of national income spent on social services declined from 26.9% in 1975 to 26% in 1982. The downswing is especially noteworthy for expenditures on education, which dropped from 7.2 to 6.3% of the national total during the same period. Employment in the social services sector rose from 12.8% of the work force in 1960 to 19.6% in 1980, but leveled off in the 1970s.

It is true that home production is on the increase in the Soviet Union, but these activities are difficult to quantify. Not including figures for home production, one Soviet author estimates that in 1975 the Soviet Union offered 64% of the American amount of social services and 37% of the amount of "paid services." In the United States, the

service sector accounted for over 60% of the gross national product, while American data suggest the corresponding figure for the Soviet Union in 1980 was about 38% if statistics for communications and transportation are included. It is also interesting to note that the share of consumer services in the Soviet Union itself remained constant at 19.5% from 1970 to 1980.

Given the Soviet government's neglect of the service sector, a certain stagnation on the road to post-industrial society has become obvious. Soviet statistics show that most expansions of the service sector have been aimed at producers instead of consumers. Naturally, there are also great discrepancies in the consumption of services between regions, with the highest levels found in Estonia and Latvia and the lowest levels in Central Asia. Another aspect of regional disparity concerns the lack of availability of basic services in the northern RSFSR, especially in newly created cities. The creation of service facilities often lags behind the construction of new housing in such cities. On the other hand, workers who live in housing units sponsored by important organizations or enterprises can expect to receive better services than ordinary citizens.

The proportion of unskilled workers in the social welfare system is very high for an industrialized nation. Indeed, skilled employees in the services sector are rare except among economic, managerial and administrative personnel. The Soviet Union is still a country run primarily by engineers. Retail trade and household service organizations employ mostly women who are generally less well-educated than Soviet men. Even among new employees of the service sector in Moscow, almost 30% had no vocational training at all in 1979. Young workers in the service sector disply a high rate of turnover as many leave for industrial jobs which offer far better salaries. In 1982, the average Soviet worker earned 177 rubles per month, but employees involved in the services made only about 130-140 rubles. Moreover, there is no recognizable trend to increase the very low incomes of these workers.

According to Soviet economic rationale, which attempts to foster production and a high rate of investment return, Soviet economic planners invariably attempt to skimp on consumer goods and services and live with consumer complaints. In addition, the sheer size of the Soviet economy--the "economy of scale"--favors large multifunctional service enterprises which do not operate efficiently in samll towns.

The existence of widely divergent consumer tastes is indicated by the fact that some parts of the population buy only certain goods and use only certain services. Unsold goods are fairly common in the Soviet economy, but it is more surprising to find unused services, given their relative scarcity as compared to consumer goods. For example, in the Baltic republics, dry cleaners and shoe repair stores are used only up to 60 or 70% of their capacity, and in Moscow, very few choose to use self-service laundries. Poor quality is the primary

reason why these public services are so infrequently used. Cultural preferences may also play a role in such consumer preferences.

There is an obvious discrepancy between the living standards of white- and blue-collar workers in the Soviet Union. Unskilled workers actually spend more of their income on consumer goods and services than skilled workers, and the intellegentsia consumes far more than one might expect considering the relatively small discrepancies in family income between groups. The divergence between the intelligentsia and the working class is greater in the Soviet Union than in other socialist nations. This variance in the supply of goods and services cannot be explained merely in terms of money, but must also reflect estatist claims to certain standards of living. In general, the intelligentsia is more dissatisfied with its material standing than other groups.

In the 1970s, the Soviet Union still contained large numbers of poor families who, for the most part, could satisfy their basic needs only by spending a large portion of their earnings on food and clothing. It seems these families can be appeased by a slow but steady growth in the quantities of available consumer goods. They are generally less dissatisfied than other groups with their material condition. Medium income groups express more dissatisfaction with their standards of living than the poor, and they also display a greater variation in consumer preferences. Although the Soviet economy has entered a period of slow growth, the rising purchasing power of about half the population is evident. This will lead to a greater differientation in consumer preferences over the years.

While the importance of black market activities should not be ignored, variations in living standards are still best explained by one's socio-occupational position in the employment system. Secondary activites mainly contribute to existing disparities found in any economy, but they do not significantly alter them.

It is not difficult to predict that given the current small growth rates of the Soviet GNP, the Soviet Union will probably continue to under-invest in the services sector.

X. Alcohol Abuse and the Quality of Life in the USSR

Western Sovietologists have been remarkably successful in quantifying and analyzing most aspects of the Soviet economy, but the study of the Soviet quality of life is an area where our knowledge is rather scant. This area encompasses a large number of phenomena such as age- and sex-specific mortality rates, life expectancy, mental health, crime, homicide, suicide, abortion, alcoholism, and drug abuse, to name but a few.

The quantitative dimension of some of these phenomena is illustrated by an examination of mortality statistics. Between 1960 and 1980, the crude death rate in the Soviet Union increased from 713 to 1,033 deaths per 100,000, but data is available on only two major causes of death--heart disease and cancer. The sizable unexplained number of deaths amounted to 354 deaths per 100,000 in 1960, and dropped to a low point of 287 in 1966. This drop-off reflects major improvements in medical services, particularly in the treatment of infectious diseases. Since 1966, however, the unexplained residual rose to 351 deaths per 100,000 and currently accounts for about one million deaths per annum. The unexplained residual includes infant mortality rates, homicides, suicides, accidents and alcohol poisonings. Our inability to identify the unexplained residual is not surprising as the secrecy surrounding this information is comparable to the secrecy extended to Soviet military data. It is not even known what Soviet agencies have responsibility for the collection and processing of these data, but there is some evidence that the analysis of "social indicators" was long ago taken away from the Central Statistical Administration and entrusted to internal security organs.

The magnitude and scope of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union, and the severity of its impact on Soviet society, is unique in terms of the international experience. The 1980 consumption of alcoholic beverages converted to pure alcohol was over 17 liters per person 15 years old and older. Out of this amount, samogon, or illegal home-distilled moonshine, accounted for about 3.5 liters per person and homemade wines and beers another liter. Soviet and emigre sources also report that large quantities of industrial alcohol are stolen from factories and laboratories. According to some estimates, this could add another liter to the total.

At this level of consumption, the Soviet Union would rank fourth or fifth among some 30 countries for which the necessary data are available. The fact that France, Italy, and Portugal record higher levels of per capita consumption is somewhat misleading if consider the social impact of alcohol abuse. World experience shows that conuntries with high levels of per capita alcohol consumption drink mostly wine and beer, while countires with relatively lower consumption levels tend to drink large amounts of vodka and other strong beverages. With respect to per capita consumption of strong

alcoholic beverages, the Soviet Union ranks first in the world. It should be noted that strong alcoholic beverages are more detrimental to personal health and the social environment than wine and beer in their contributing to violence, accidents, mental disorders, and chronic and acute alcohol poisonings.

Another striking feature of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union is the very rapid growth rate of alcohol consumption for persons 15 years old and older. This figure averaged about 4.5% per year over the last 25 years (1955-1980) for the consumption of all alcoholic beverages including samogon and homemade wine and beer. Consumption of state-produced alcohol has increased at an even faster rate.

Alcohol abuse highly differentiated by region and nationality in the Soviet Union. In general, excessive drinking and alcoholism are concentrated in the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the three Baltic republics. Consumption of alcohol is also relatively high in the wine producing republics of Moldavia, Armenia, and Georgia, but the adverse social effects of this consumption is not as severe as it is in the Slavic republics. This is because a large share of the alcohol consumed in Transcaucasia is in the form of wine. In contrast, consumption levels decrease by almost half in the Muslim republics of Soviet Central Asia. These regional and ethnic differentials are reflected in mortality rates and other "social statistics" which help to explain differences in birth and death rates among the various Soviet republics.

According to numerous studies by Soviet demographers and medical specialists, heavy drinking is an important factor contributing to mortality rates in the Soviet Union. Numerous Soviet studies indicate that heavy drinking accounts for anywhere from one-third to two-thirds of all deaths caused by traffic, home, and industrial accidents, homicides, suicides, fatal poisonings, and even freezing and drowning. Mortality statistics classified as "accidents, traumas, and poisonings" are not generally available, but it is estimated that during the late 1970s they accounted for between 140 and 150 deaths per 100,000 (370,000-400,000 actual deaths), a figure which accounts for over half the total.

Acute alcohol poisoning is one of the most alarming causes of death in the Soviet Union. Estimates based on Soviet forensic medical statistics indicate the number of deaths attributed to alcohol poisoning rose from 12,500 per year during the mid-1960s to 51,000 in 1978. This is the equivalent of 19.5 deaths per 100,000. The corresponding figure in 19 nations for which data on the 1970s are available is approximately 0.3 per 100,000. The rapid increase in fatal alcohol poisonings is partially explained by the lowering of quality standards for alcoholic beverages produced in the Soviet Union. Lowered quality standards have resulted in the increased toxicity of alcohols used for beverage purposes. Increased consumption of various alcohol surrogates such as aftershave lotions, varnishes, cleaning

fluids and stolen industrial alcohol (caused by increasing prices for state-produced beverages), has also contributed to the increase in fatal poisonings.

Aside from the medical and health problems mentioned above, heavy drinking and alcoholism significantly affect labor productivity and the general performance of the Soviet economy. Soviet reports of alcohol related labor problems were rare during the 1960s, but this began to change in the early 1970s. An ever-increasing number of reports emerged describing worker absenteeism due to drinking and workers drinking on the job or reporting to work drunk or hungover. Statistical data on labor discipline problems and industrial accidents have not been published in the Soviet Union for many years, but it is reasonable to conclude that the situation has significantly worsened since the 1960s. Soviet economists and labor specialists estimate that in the early 1970s alcoholism and drinking by workers reduced labor productivity by some ten percent. Evidence also suggests that drinking is a major cause of divorce in the Soviet Union, and that women in families with alcoholics have more than the average number of abortions. Soviet specialists repeatedly stress the high degree of correlation observed between violence and crime, and drinking.

Public drunkenness is controlled by the police who regularly sweep the streets picking up drunks and placing them in overnight sobering-up stations. Upon discharge, the culprits pay a fine, and their names and the charges made against them are reported to their employers. These sobering-up stations operate in virtually every city or town of any size. In the early 1970s, Lenningrad had 20 and Moscow had 29, one of which was exclusively for women. During the mid-1960s, over 300,000 drunks (including 5,600 women) were confined to sobering-up stations per year, accounting for 6% of the adult population of Moscow. In 1979, between 16 and 18 million drunks were processed through sobering-up stations. This figure representsapproximately 12-15% of the adult urban population of the Soviet Union. To place these statistics in comparative perspective, we should note that in the United States--which has a serious alcohol problem of its own--less than one percent of the adult population is arrested annually for drunkenness.

We can assume that the figures for Soviet drunkenness constitute only a part of the total number of heavy drinkers and alcoholics in the Soviet Union. Some simply escape the attention of the police, and others, such as soldiers or minors, are confined in regular police stations rather than sobering-up stations. A study of a large sample of drunks conducted by two prominent Soviet specialists in the early 1970s showed that out of the total number of people identified by the authorities as habitual drinkers or alcoholics, only 60% were registered through official sobering-up stations; another 15% were registered in various psychiatric clinics for alcoholics; and 20% were identified by emergency medical facilities. Therefore, it appears that several million more adults, possibly as many as 6-8 million,

must be added to the total number of heavy drinkers and alcoholics in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the extent of alcohol abuse in rural areas without sobering-up facilities cannot be measured.

Soviet authorities have been fighting drunken driving with increasing police patrols, stiff fines and penalties, and mandatory sobriety tests given to drivers of most state trucking enterprises. The new head of the MVD reported in a recent Pravda interview (June 12, 1983) that "over 800,000 drunken drivers lost their licenses in 1982." This translates into about 5.8 cases of drunken driving arrests per million vehicle-kilometers driven in the Soviet Union. The corresponding figure in the United States is 0.58. It should be noted that professional state employed drivers account for more than two-thirds of all licensed drivers in the Soviet Union.

Increased drinking by women (which, of course, is observed in a number of nations) can be explained by a number of factors in the Soviet Union. The first is demographic. Heavy war-time losses have created a serious and lasting male-female imbalance in Soviet demographic patterns. It is therefore not surprising that some of the 20 million Soviet women who found themselves husbandless after World War II turned to drinking. The second reason for increasing drinking by women is related to state policy. Recognizing the fact that strong alcoholic beverages are more socially detrimental than wine and beer, Soviet authorities have purposely sought to change the mix of state produced beverages, reducing the share of vodka and increasing the share of wine and beer. One of the unexpected results of this policy was that women, who traditionally prefer wine to vodka, were in a sense encouraged to drink by wider availability and lower prices for wine.

Policies to change the mix of alcoholic beverages in the Soviet Union were frustrated in yet another way. In the 1970s, most of the wines consumed in the Soviet Union contained between 16 and 18% alcohol. But light and dry naturally fermented wines have practically disappeared as Soviet wines are widely fortified to increase their alcohol content. Alcohol used for fortification, as a rule, is poorly rectified, and thus the greater availability of wine in the Soviet Union has contributed to health problems associated with heavy drinking and alcoholism.

According to one Soviet estimate, the social losses associated with heavy drinking and alcoholism clearly exceed tax revenues and profits derived by the state from the production and sale of alcoholic beverages. If this estimate is correct, in the early 1970s the total social cost of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union was between 7 and 8% of the total Soviet net material product (national income). Considering the growing per capita consumption of alcohol, we can estimate that the social cost of alcohol abuse had risen to about 8 or 9% by 1980.

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the Soviet authorities have never had a comprehensive set of policies for the reduction of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union. Since the 1930s, the Soviet government has heavily depended on alcohol for a large share of its budgetary revenues. Alcoholic beverages are price inelastic and this makes them an ideal product for taxation. As a result, alcoholic beverages are readily available in retail outlets and state dining facilities which are commonly known for their chronic shortages of most consumer goods. Because of the value of alcoholic beverages to the economy, Soviet authorities vacilate between the introduction of punitive and restrictive measures and the relaxation of such controls. Perhaps the only sustained effort to curb alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union has been the financial support given to medical research on alcoholism and an ongoing educational campaign warning of the dangers of alcohol abuse.