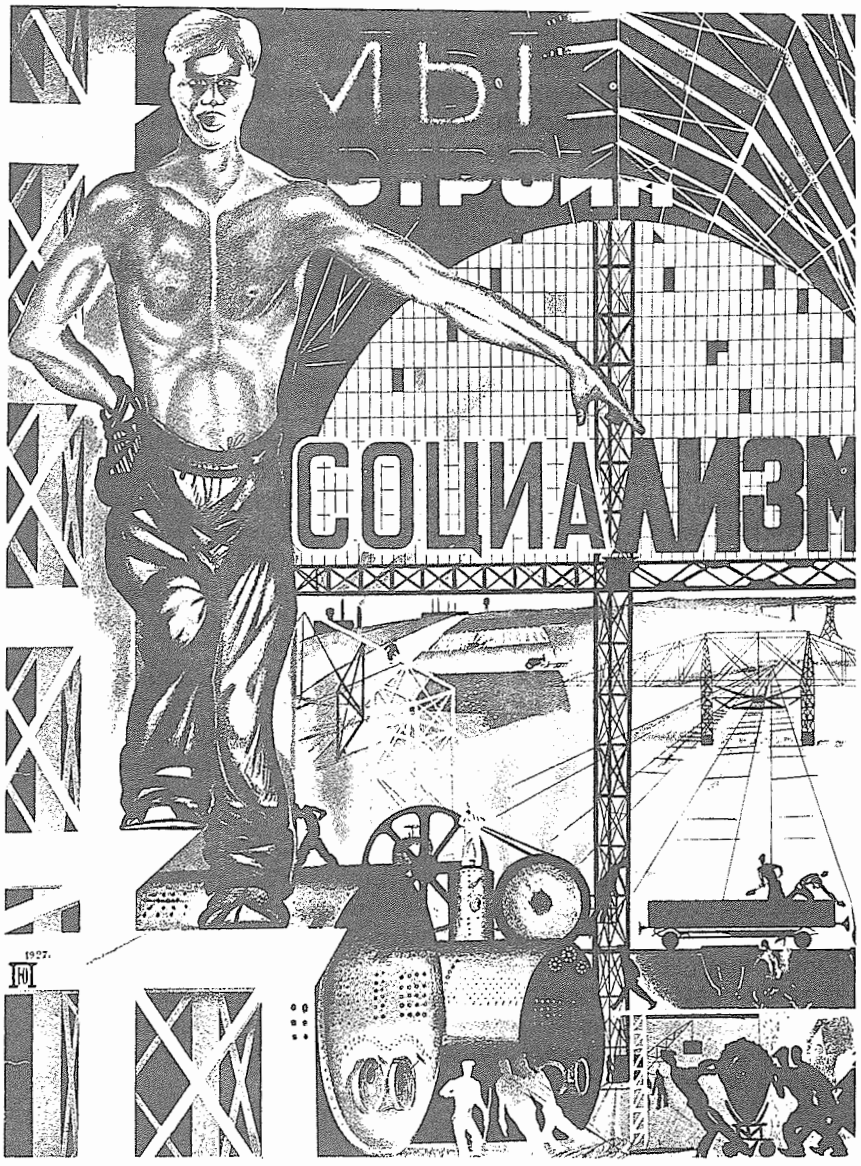


Used by permission of Ästhetik und Kommunikation, Berlin.

"We are building socialism," proclaims this worker, drawn by Y. Pimenov in the early 1930s to promote the First Five-Year Plan. Such art is characteristic of a peculiarly persistent Soviet genre, the "production poster."

The Soviet Future

Most public American discussion of the Soviet Union focuses on its foreign policy and military capabilities. Among the specialists, another, quieter debate is underway. The subject: looming economic and social crises inside the USSR. Here, two Soviet affairs specialists—demographer Murray Feshbach and political scientist Blair Ruble—argue less about the nature of those problems than about their significance. Feshbach contends that during the next two decades the Kremlin must undertake drastic actions to cope with unprecedented change. Ruble contends that the Soviet system will "muddle through" without much basic alteration. Finally, critic John Glad supplies a portrait of everyday life in the USSR with selections from recent Russian fiction.

A DIFFERENT CRISIS

by Murray Feshbach

During the next two decades, the Soviet Union will face special problems that have never before afflicted a major industrialized nation during peacetime. Simply stated, the European part of the population is not replacing itself, while the non-Russian, non-Slavic, non-European people of the Soviet Union—most of whom are of Muslim origin—are experiencing a strong growth in numbers. By the year 2000, ethnic Russians will be a clear minority in the country that most Americans still call "Russia."

From this simple fact flow consequences that may, over the next two decades, lead the Soviet Union into peculiar economic, military, and political difficulties.

The USSR's annual rate of economic growth now stands at a low 2 percent; shortages of skilled labor caused by the slowdown in the ethnic Russian rate of increase could trim that to zero or even induce a decline. Barring some unforeseen change in the Kremlin's world view, the Soviet military will continue to require hundreds of thousands of conscripts each year through the 1980s and '90s—but in 15 years, the Red Army may well find itself with large numbers of soldiers who turn toward Mecca at sunset. In short, between now and the end of the century, the ethnic Russian primacy long taken for granted by both tsars and Bolsheviks will be challenged—not by individuals but by inescapable demographic trends.

Single Sex Cities

The Soviet Union, of course, will have other headaches in the years ahead. The question of who will succeed Leonid Brezhnev, for instance, looms larger with each passing day. The Soviet economy is beset by low worker morale, a leveling-off of oil production, sluggish technological progress, and the drain of massive military spending. To Soviet leaders, such ailments are painful, chronic, and familiar, like arthritis. The coming demographic shift is an altogether different type of crisis, one unprecedented in Soviet history.

The demographic shift will magnify the effects of a general demographic *slump*. Overall, death rates are up, and birth rates are down. Since 1964, the Soviet death rate has jumped by 40 percent; by the end of the century, it is expected to hit 10.6 annually per 1,000 population, nearly the same rate as China's is now. Meanwhile, the national birth rate has fallen by 30 percent since 1950; two decades from now, the rate likely will be down to 16.1 per 1,000. Labor is already short, and the available supply will tighten further over the next few years as the annual net increase in the size of the working-age population sags from its 1976 high of 2.7 million to a projected 1986 low of 285,000. For a variety of reasons, the 1980s should also bring a long-term

Murray Feshbach, 51, wrote this essay while he was a Wilson Center Fellow on leave from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, where he is chief of the USSR Population, Employment, and Research and Development branch. Born in New York City, he received his B.A. from Syracuse University (1950), an M.A. in diplomatic history from Columbia (1951), and a Ph.D. in Soviet economics from American University (1974). He is the author of Demography in Soviet Society *(forthcoming). The views expressed in this essay are not necessarily those of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.*

THE USSR: POLITICAL AND ETHNIC DIVISIONS

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Names of Soviet republics are in capital letters.

In 1980, out of a total Soviet population of 265 million, the eight southern republics accounted for 57 million, and the RSFSR, 138 million. Like most Central Asians, Turkic peoples are traditionally Muslim.

decline in Soviet capital formation—just when more investment in machinery will be needed to help offset labor shortages by boosting productivity.

How did the Soviet Union get caught in this bind?

The past is partly to blame. Stalin's purges of the 1930s took many millions of lives. Battlefield losses during World War II claimed another 15 million Soviet *males* alone. The Soviet Union is still feeling the "demographic echo" of both events. To policymakers in the Kremlin, the phrase "generation gap" has a special gruesome reality.

But the continuing climb in the Soviet death rate indicates that whatever the other problems of the past were, many of them are still around. Indeed, during the last few years the mortality rate for 20- to 44-year-olds has shot up so fast that male life expectancy has dropped from 66 to 63 years, a full decade

less than the life span for females. (The only nation with a larger gap is Gabon.) The chief villain here is, in two words, rampant alcoholism. Among its well-known effects are ill health, malnutrition, and accidental death.

Short-sighted government planning has played a part, creating scores of "single sex cities" across the Soviet Union. Many an undiversified metropolis such as Bratsk and Abakan was built around a "hot, heavy, and hazardous" industry (e.g., steel, coal, oil-drilling) with almost no jobs for females. Men are correspondingly scarce in textile towns, including Orekhovo-Zuevo and Ivanova, known in the USSR as the "cities of brides."

Soviet babies are also dying in shockingly large numbers. During the past decade, the USSR became the first industrialized nation to experience a long-term rise in infant mortality, which grew, according to the Soviet definition, from 22.9 per 1,000 live births in 1971 to 31.1 per 1,000 in 1976. (The Soviets consider infant losses within a week of delivery as miscarriages, not deaths. If calculated by American methods, the 1976 figure would be 35.6 per 1,000, more than twice the U.S. rate.)

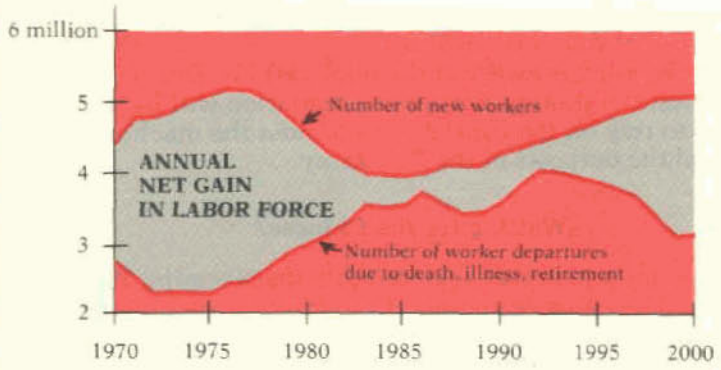
One reason for the rise in infant mortality is that abortion has apparently become the USSR's principal means of "contraception," with a present average of six abortions per woman per lifetime, 12 times the U.S. rate. When used repeatedly, abortion may induce premature delivery in subsequent pregnancies, and premature infants are 25 times more likely to die during their first year than full-term infants. Another baby-killer is female alcoholism, which weakens the fetus.

40 Million Muslims . . .

But the prime culprit may well be the USSR's prenatal and postnatal health-care system, in which the flaws of Soviet medicine and social planning seem to converge. Fed inferior artificial milk, placed in overcrowded day-care centers when only three months old (owing in part to the labor shortage, most Soviet women must work full-time), and left there for 8 to 12 hours a day, hundreds of thousands of Soviet babies have become easy prey to epidemic diseases, particularly influenza.

The labor shortage and its economic implications would, by themselves, be enough to worry the Kremlin. Yet the problem is worsened by regional differences: It is the USSR's Russians and other Slavs who are not producing as many children as they once did. Soviet Central Asians, by contrast, are flourishing. Relatively unaffected both by Stalin's purges and World War II, traditionally shunning both alcohol and abortion, and keeping

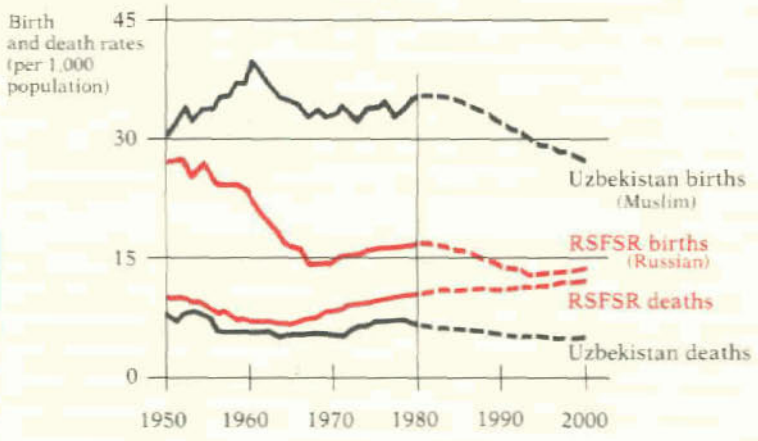
THE SOVIET LABOR "SQUEEZE"



Source: Murray Feshbach.

Declining from a 1976 peak of 5.2 million, the number of 16-year-olds annually entering the Soviet labor force will hit a low of 3.9 million in 1985. Departures add to the squeeze: Soviet workers will retire or die in increasingly high numbers until 1993. Below, a comparison of vital statistics. In Uzbekistan, births have so exceeded deaths that the population of the republic (figured as a proportion of the Soviet total) will more than double between 1950 and 2000, from 3.5 to 8.6 percent.

ETHNIC RUSSIAN AND MUSLIM TRENDS: 1950–2000



Source: Murray Feshbach.

their birth rate high even as their death rate declines, the Soviet Union's 40 million ethnic Muslims have enjoyed a rate of population increase about five times that of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR).

Every Russian is aware of the implications: During the next two decades, the waning European population will increasingly be forced to rely on the rural Asians to man the machines of industry and the outposts of the Red Army.

Waiting for the Chinese?

This is not a prospect that delights the Kremlin. Relations between ethnic Russians and their Muslim neighbors have never been smooth. It was the Russian Bolsheviks who, in 1920 and 1921, used the Red Army to put the old tsarist empire back together. In 1924, partly in reaction to Muslim guerrilla groups (the *Basmachi*), the Bolshevik regime divided the vast Central Asian region of Turkestan into five "nations." Kazakhstan, the largest, stretches more than 1,500 miles from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border. The others—Kirghizistan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—lie in the arid southeastern corner of the Soviet Union, where they nestle up against China, Afghanistan, and Iran.

After a half-century of Communist rule, Central Asian resentment of the European "elder brothers" still flares up: In 1969, Uzbeks rioted in their capital of Tashkent, beating up all those who looked Russian. On the other side, Europeans living in the southeastern republics seem almost colonial in their habit of deriding the natives as *chernye*—that is, "blacks" (which they are not). While Brezhnev has proclaimed the Red Army "the living embodiment of Socialist internationalism," its senior command remains exclusively Slav, and mainly Russian.

Small wonder, then, that the Muslims of the borderlands reportedly taunt the Russians with the warning: "Wait until the Chinese come."

The Chinese may never come, but the year 2000 will, and it might bring a Muslim "victory in the bedroom." At century's end, the population of the Central Asian republics will have grown by one-half, from 40 to 60 million. These five republics, populated mainly by ethnic Turks sharing a common religion and culture, will then account for more than 20 percent of the entire Soviet population. If one adds the three Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, then the turn-of-the-century total for the "Soviet sunbelt" climbs to almost 30 percent. In 1970, only 1 out of 7 persons in the Soviet Union was

The USSR's ethnic groups range from Eskimo to German. In 1977, more than 40 languages of instruction were used in Soviet schools; in 1979, the Soviet census counted 22 "nationalities" with populations of more than a million. Here, in a 1957 poster, representatives of five such groups are shown beneath the hammer-and-sickle symbol of the Soviet state.

of Muslim origin. By the turn of the century, the ratio will be at least 1 out of 5, and perhaps 1 out of 4. Of the Soviet population as a whole, ethnic Russians will be a minority—48 percent.

While high Muslim fertility seems, at first glance, a partial solution to the USSR's overall manpower shortage, in fact it merely adds a cruel twist. As a practical matter, the Soviet leadership cannot simply replace each Russian worker with a Muslim. There is the problem of location: 60 percent of the Soviet gross industrial product originates in the RSFSR, and to this day Soviet Muslims are reluctant to emigrate from the "House of Islam" *(Dar ul-Islam)*, their native lands far to the southeast.

There are, of course, Soviet precedents for the coerced movement of large populations. In 1944, for example, six days after the liberation of the Crimea from the Nazis, all 200,000 of the local Tatars were condemned by Stalin as a "collaborator nation" and sent to Siberia, the Urals, and Uzbekistan. But slave labor is anachronistic in a technological world; it is better suited to the building of earthen dams than to the manufacture of silicon semiconductors.

The alternative is even more unwieldy: shifting the Soviet Union's industrial plant to the labor-rich southern tier. Again, there are precedents, as when, in 1942–43, up to 50 percent of

European Russia's factories were moved east from the combat zone to the safer Urals. But heavy postwar industrialization in European Russia has now made such an exodus prohibitively expensive. It would probably be vetoed on political grounds anyway, for fear of a Russian "backlash." Housing and food are already scarcer in the RSFSR than in Central Asia, and ethnic Russians would be less than happy to see their industries and resources siphoned off by people they consider inferior ingrates.*

Hence the government's present compromise: Whenever possible, it locates *new* plants for labor-intensive industries in the south, a move that recognizes the improbability of Muslim migration. This may help in the long term, but it will do little to dampen the labor squeeze coming in the 1980s.

Coping with Demography

The manpower problem will be exacerbated by the demands of the armed forces. If the Communist Party is the father of Soviet society, the military is its privileged eldest son. Come labor shortage or labor surplus, the Kremlin annually calls up about 1.7 million 18-year-olds to replenish the 4.8-million-man armed forces. But if it takes its usual quota, the Army will conscript enough manpower in 1986 to equal six times that year's net increase in the labor force.

This smaller pool will also include a higher percentage of the country's least educated, least "urban" menfolk. In 1970, only one-fifth of all Soviet conscripts came from the eight southern republics; in the year 2000, the proportion will be one-third. The Red Army's truck driver training course now takes a year. (The U.S. Army's takes five weeks.) One wonders what place the sophisticated technological army of the 21st century will have for unskilled and (perhaps) untrustworthy draftees from the "backward" border regions, many of them probably still unable to speak Russian fluently.†

The USSR has, in its short history, been hit by epidemics, invasions, and famines, all of them staggering blows that might have toppled the regime—but didn't. The Soviet people seem able to endure and survive almost any misfortune. But the USSR has never experienced simultaneous blows to both eco-

*A rather blunt 1971 dissident *samizdat* document complained that "Russia gets all the knocks" and warned that the regime's ideal of a "new Soviet people" would lead, through "random hybridization," to the "biological degeneration" of the Russian people. In Soviet demographic circles, the current euphemism for Russian "ethnic purity" is "*kachestvo* [quality] of the population."

†In 1970, only 16 percent of Central Asians of all ages claimed fluency in Russian.

nomic health and ethnic Russian supremacy.

Some Western analysts predict that life will simply grind on, that present birth and death trends will continue but that the Soviet Union will plod on without much change. Others see the Kremlin turning away from its domestic difficulties and embarking upon risky foreign adventures to divert the citizenry's attention and stir patriotic fervor.

Such forecasts, in my view, are plausible but improbable.

The Soviet Union will not be able to simply do "more of the same" during the crises of the 1980s and '90s as it did in the past. The Communist Party's goal is to retain power. To do so, it will probably be forced to increase production by implementing fundamental economic reforms, to loosen the state bureaucracy's strangle hold on the everyday workings of the economy, even to the point of permitting some autonomy for shopkeepers, farmers, and cottage industries, as in Poland or Yugoslavia.

Should such reforms succeed (and there is no guarantee of that), the USSR's ethnic Russian leaders will be able to deal with the growing numbers of Central Asians from a position of renewed strength, which will make economic and political concessions to the Muslims seem less dangerous.

Continued economic decline, conversely, might lead to an anti-Muslim crackdown by an insecure and embattled party. And the Muslims themselves might get ideas about autonomy. Nothing breeds solidarity so much as repression; as historian Alexandre Bennigsen has noted, the USSR is the only place in the world where Shiite and Sunni Muslims, often bitter foes elsewhere, regularly take part in the same religious rites.

But these are only scenarios, dim visions of what might possibly happen in the years to come. This peculiar problem of *people* introduces a new element of uncertainty. The demographic trends now underway will in the next few decades challenge the regime in ways that simply cannot be foreseen. In discussions by American analysts of the Soviet Union's future—discussions that address, say, the USSR's bigger missiles, growing Navy, and poor economic performance —the coming population shift seems amorphous, distant, almost inconceivable. But it could easily become the Kremlin's most pressing problem of all. For better or worse, it will reshape the Soviet Union, producing a country that in the year 2000 will be far different from the one we know today.

MUDDLING THROUGH

by Blair A. Ruble

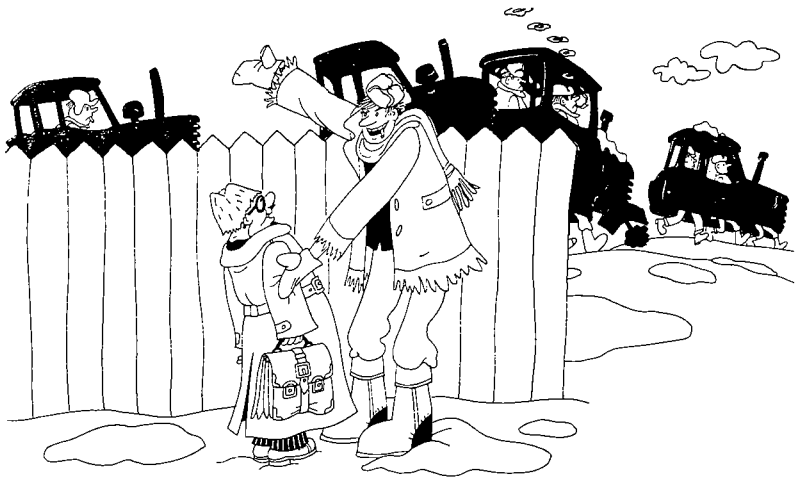
About the time that the first McDonald's fast-food stand started selling hamburgers outside Chicago in 1955, a potential competitor named Hubie's opened in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Hubie's was a fully automated "hamburger machine." At one end, attendants fed in ground beef, rolls, cheese, pickles, and ketchup; at the other end, hot hamburgers emerged to slide onto the plates of waiting stand-up diners.

But even the best-laid plans go awry, and Hubie's plans were flawed: The meat patties were not uniform in size, and so some fell into the fire; slow-ups on the conveyor belt resulted in buns toasted black; bits of melting cheese dripped onto vital cogs and bearings; and ready-to-go burgers slid not onto the customers' plates but onto their shoes. Rather than admitting failure and abandoning their "futuristic" system, Hubie's executives hired extra workers to supervise matters, and even put a few cooks in the back room to supplement the defective machine's output. Yet such expedients finally proved futile. The customers stayed away in droves. Hubie's soon went the way not of McDonald's but of another contemporary, the Edsel.

The Soviet economy—rigidly organized, overly complex, and less than a boon to consumers—is not unlike Hubie's hamburger stand. But the USSR is not the USA. If Hubie's had opened in Moscow, it would probably still be in business, since it would be a state-run monopoly. Muscovites craving fast food would have no alternative.

In short, there is more than one way to sell hamburgers or organize an economy. The Russians have no word for "efficient," but when their leaders decide to give one goal top priority, they can be *effective,* as when, during the early 1960s, the Soviet government decided to achieve strategic parity with the United States.

This distinction is often overlooked. Led astray by the Soviets' decidedly different methods, Western observers of the USSR have repeatedly concluded that a Soviet economic breakdown was at hand. When the First Five-Year Plan was promulgated in 1928, for example, Western specialists warned that the heavy



From Antologia del Krokodil. © *1979 by Casa Editrice Roberto Napoleone, Italy.*

"Here's proof," a devious foreman tells a visiting bureaucrat, "the tractors are ready, and are heading for the fields." Improvisation on the farm and in factories is a frequent subject of Soviet cartoons.

loads of freight and frequent usage stipulated by the plan would bend the tracks and ruin the roadbeds of the Soviet railway network. Yet the system endured. Indeed, the Soviets got along with only one main east-west railway line—the Trans-Siberian Railroad—until 1974, when construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline, or BAM, resumed after a two-decade hiatus.

Today, Western specialists variously see looming crises in Soviet energy, manpower and productivity, and agriculture. One must treat their forecasts with a certain prudence.

It is easy to poke fun at the Soviets. With a per capita gross national product (GNP) lower than Italy's, the Soviet economic performance is still far from Nikita Khrushchev's old goal of overtaking the United States by 1980. Indeed, Soviet trade patterns—that is, exporting oil and importing technology and food—resemble those of a resource-rich developing nation such as Saudi Arabia more than those of the United States.

The Kremlin's hopes for the Soviet economy are embodied in a five-year plan, which (officially, at least) is treated with veneration. Billboards, newspapers, and television programs endlessly repeat official incantations such as "Fullfill on time the tasks of the Five-Year Plan." This is the way it works: Before the outset of each planning period, *Gosplan*, the national state planning agency, draws up a schedule of long-term goals and distributes it to every industrial enterprise throughout the USSR. Each

manager, from the smallest provincial factory on up, reviews the proposals and passes a response up the administrative ladder to the next highest industry level. There it is coordinated with similar proposals and consolidated into a new united plan. By this process, plans, as they grow in scope, wend their way through the bureaucracy until they finally reach the national planning headquarters in Moscow, where *Gosplan* prepares the ultimate five-year plan for the nation.

Bitter Cold and Crumbling Coal

A Communist Party Congress and the USSR Supreme Soviet then approve the plan. Thus ratified, the plan puts managers who fail to follow it in violation of national statutes; as journalist Hedrick Smith observed, the plan comes close to being "the fundamental law of the land." The fundamental flaw in the plan is that it is "finalized" in Moscow but largely implemented at the local level, so the officials who set each factory's targets are not the people who have to meet them.

The new plan that comes before the 26th Communist Party Congress, scheduled to convene in February 1981, will have to deal with the usual strains resulting from poor agricultural performance and heavy military spending (which Western analysts estimate to account for at least 8 and perhaps as much as 18 percent of the GNP, versus U.S. figures of about 13 percent in 1954 and 5 percent in 1979). In effect, the Kremlin has been imposing what strikes many Westerners as a perpetual gray wartime austerity, with top priority given to military needs. But Soviet leaders will also confront difficulties unimagined a decade ago: If Western specialists are correct, the 1980s, for the Soviets, will be a time of a shifting labor supply, declining productivity, and energy shortages. *Gosplan* will, in one way or another, have to "solve" those problems.

That the Soviet Union could come up short in energy is perhaps the biggest surprise. During the 1970s, the USSR became the world's largest oil producer, pumping 11.7 million barrels a day in 1979. (In second place was Saudi Arabia with a 1979 daily

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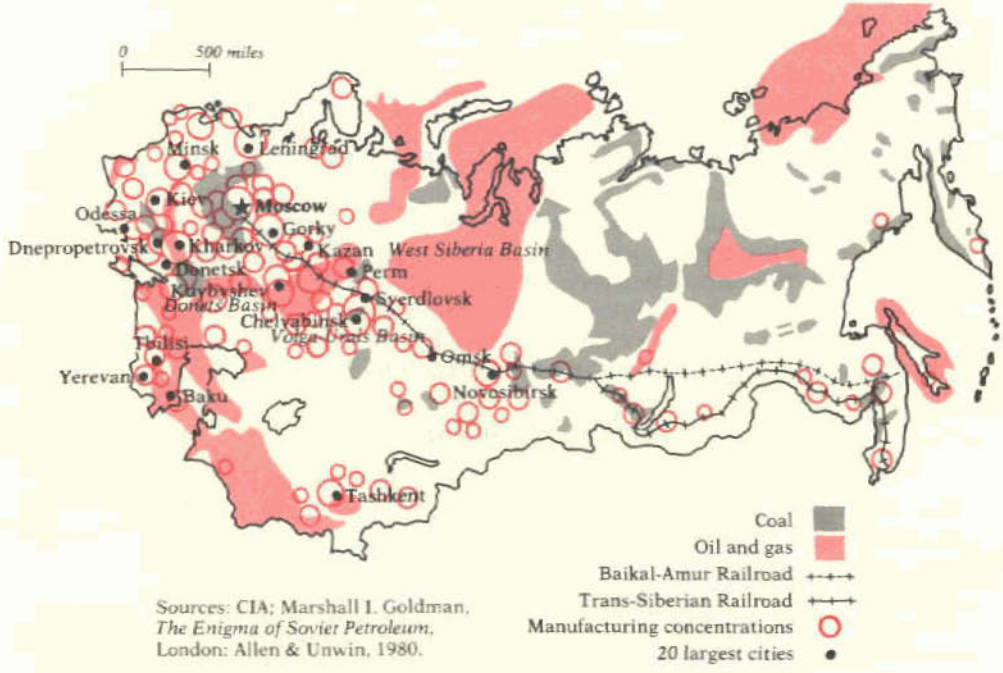
THE USSR: ENERGY IN THE EAST, USERS IN THE WEST



Sources: CIA; Marshall I. Goldman, *The Enigma of Soviet Petroleum*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1980.

average of about 9 million barrels.) Through sheer volume of production, the USSR manages to be both the world's second largest oil consumer (after the United States) *and* exporter (after the Saudis). Since 1977, oil exports—to such Western countries as Italy, West Germany, and France—have accounted for more than half of all Soviet hard currency earnings.

Yet throughout the 1970s, Western analysts—most notably those employed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency—maintained that the Soviets were facing an energy crunch. Production in the giant Samotlor oil fields in Siberia, which account for a quarter of the Soviet total, was said to be leveling off. Other energy sources were thought to hold out little hope. The famous coal fields of the Donets Basin, in the Ukraine, were reportedly petering out after more than a century of mining. The ambitious nuclear power program has fallen well behind schedule, and today less than 4 percent of Soviet energy comes from atomic power—among other things, putting it behind firewood as a home heating source.

Moreover, these analysts noted, most of the Soviet Union's

fossil fuel reserves lie in Siberia, while some 80 percent of Soviet energy is consumed in the European part of the USSR. With its brief, blazing summers, and prolonged, bitterly cold winters, Siberia is a difficult area to exploit. The expense of laying an oil pipeline across the USSR could far exceed that of constructing the Alaska pipeline, which cost $8 billion and was built with sophisticated technology still unavailable in the USSR. Siberian coal, with its tendency to crumble and self-ignite when exposed to air, is of a far lower quality than that now mined in the European USSR, and coal transportation costs are generally 10 times those of oil. Those who predict a Soviet energy crunch argue that even an advanced Western nation such as France or West Germany would be hard put to conquer such problems, and that the Soviets will be further encumbered by their clumsy planning, lackluster management, and low-grade technology.

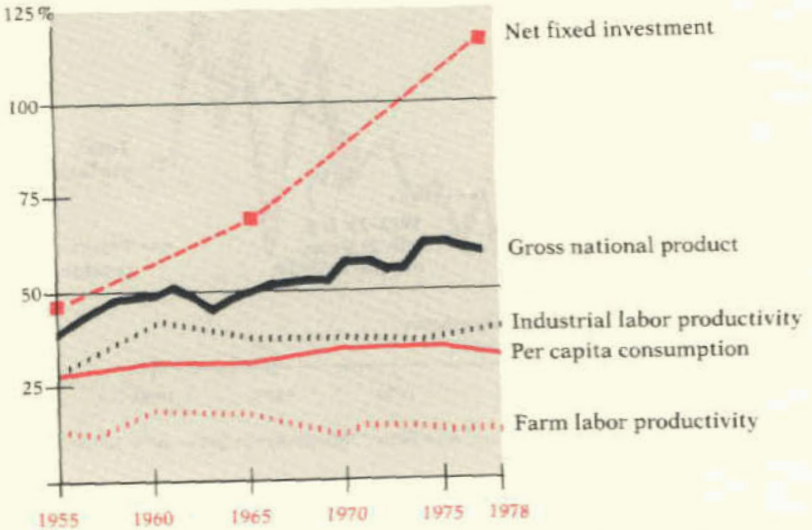
A Contrary Argument

Yet other Western specialists, most notably Harvard economist Marshall Goldman, have pointed out that at one time CIA experts told us that Soviet petroleum exports would begin tapering off in 1975. When that didn't happen, they changed their prediction to 1976, and then 1978, and more recently 1979 and 1980. In 1977, the CIA predicted that Soviet oil production would peak in 1981, with the output for Siberia stabilizing at around 5 million barrels per day. Siberian oil fields are now producing 6 million a day.

Goldman finds little reason to start agreeing with the CIA now. First, he says, the very fact that Soviet prospecting technology is so outmoded means that much of the USSR (unlike the United States) remains unexplored. Second, the CIA has overlooked possible Soviet offshore deposits in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans as well as in the Caspian Sea. Third, the Soviets could benefit from conservation measures: Soviet factories currently use as much energy as their American counterparts but produce only three-quarters the volume of goods. Fourth, the CIA has given short shrift to Soviet natural gas reserves, estimated to be 40 percent of the world total. Gas could soon replace oil at home; the bulk of Soviet energy consumption takes place in stationary boilers and furnaces, thus easing a switchover from oil to gas. Gas could also replace oil as an export, if yet another Soviet–West European pipeline is constructed, as now appears likely. Furthermore, the Soviet commitment to nuclear energy is firm, and untroubled by environmentalists' lawsuits and "anti-nuke" demonstrations. The "Atommash" factory at Volgo-

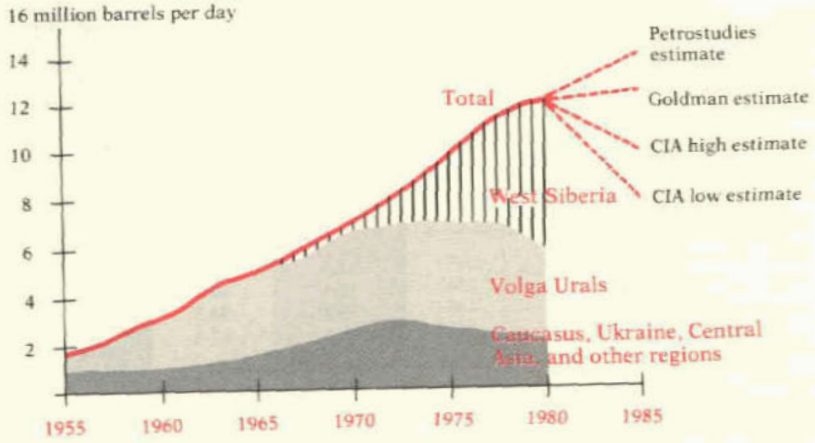
SOVIET ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

as percentage of U.S. performance (100%)



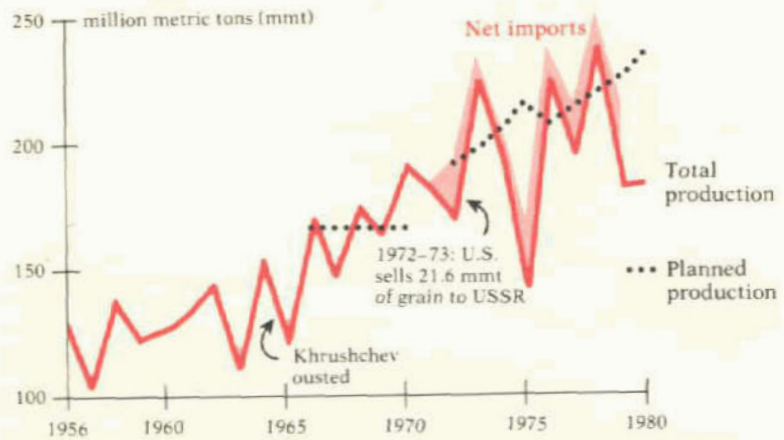
Source: CIA; Gertrude Schroeder; Stanley Cohn; Imogene Edwards, Margaret Hughes, and James Noren, "U.S. and U.S.S.R.: Comparisons of GNP," in *Soviet Economy in a Time of Change*, Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress, 1979.

SOVIET OIL: PRODUCTION AND PREDICTIONS



Source: CIA; Marshall I. Goldman; Petrostudies, "Soviet Preparations for Major Boost of Oil Exports," Malmo, Sweden: Petrostudies Co., 1978.

SOVIET GRAIN: GOALS, PRODUCTION, IMPORTS



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Alec Nove, "Soviet Agriculture under Brezhnev," *Slavic Review*, September 1970, p. 406.

SOCIAL INDICATORS		USSR	ITALY	USA
Per capita GNP[1] (in 1979 dollars)	1951	$1,820	$1,883	$ 6,157
	1961	2,870	3,127	6,802
	1971	4,260	4,654	8,847
	1977	5,070	5,325	10,224
Per capita meat consumption[2] (kg)	1951	26.0[3]	16.5	74.4
	1961	39.0	30.7	89.7
	1971	50.0	56.7	109.1
	1977	56.0	64.7	112.0
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)[4]	1951	84.0	67.0	28.4
	1961	32.2	40.7	25.3
	1971	22.9	28.3	19.1
	1977	31.5[5]	17.6	14.1

[1]Italian figures are gross domestic product. Italian GDP approximately equals GNP. [2]In carcass weight. [3]1950 figure. [4]Soviet data exclude infant losses within one week of delivery. [5]1976 estimate.

Sources: International Monetary Fund; CIA; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Government of Italy; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; United Nations; B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics 1750–1970*, New York, 1975; U.S. Bureau of the Census.

donsk will soon start turning out 8 to 10 reactors a year. Thus, Soviet energy difficulties are not insurmountable.

In its lagging industrial productivity, the Soviet Union remains in some ways still a "developing nation"—63 years after the Revolution. Here, the system *is* the problem, along with some persistent cultural and psychological hangovers from the past.

Leading the World

To begin with, the Soviets have been notably unsuccessful in transforming peasants into efficient eight-hour-a-day factory workers. With five or six months of winter and a short growing season, the Russian peasant was long accustomed to vast stretches of idleness followed by frantic bursts of energy. This habit lives on today in the industrial system of "storming" at the end of each month to fulfill the plan. Some factories are said to produce half their total output in the last 10 days of each month; Soviet economist Leonid Kantorovich, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1975, has estimated that the inefficiency of "storming" reduces national income by 30 to 50 percent. Researchers in the USSR discovered that factory hands are idle for as much as half their total worktime. For this and other reasons (poor planning, overmanning, shoddy materials, and outdated technology), the Soviet industrial worker is less than half as productive as his American counterpart.

The problem is not a new one. During the 1930s, Joseph Stalin sought to resolve it by enacting severe criminal penalties; by 1939, 20 minutes tardiness could win a worker a quick ticket to the Gulag (Stalin's "corrective labor" penal system). After Stalin's death, however, criminal sanctions were dropped in favor of economic rewards, first in wage hikes—between 1956 and 1978, the Soviet minimum wage rose by nearly 150 percent—and then in a system of bonuses for outstanding efforts. The incentives failed, for the simple reason that Soviet workers are not enticed by more money, which is of little use when goods are unavailable. As one Soviet wisecrack goes, "We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us."

Worker dissatisfaction is expressed in high turnover rates, absenteeism, and on-the-job vodka parties. Protected by a labor shortage and by trade union officials, who since the 1950s have been able to discourage and even prevent management from dismissing unproductive workers, the Soviet worker finds that it is almost impossible to lose his job (except for political reasons). In the late '70s, nearly one-fifth of the USSR's labor force moved

on to new jobs each year. And it is difficult to overstate the devastating effect alcohol has had on the Soviet economy—not to mention the health of the population. Per capita sales of alcoholic beverages nearly tripled between 1957 and 1972; during the last decade, the USSR led the world in per capita consumption of distilled spirits.* One Soviet economist has calculated that "drying out" the working population would boost industrial productivity by 10 percent.

Thus, during the 1970s, the Soviets went shopping abroad for new technology with which to sidestep altogether the labor productivity problem. Between 1965 and 1977, annual Soviet machinery imports more than quadrupled, with entire "turnkey" plants, such as the Fiat factory at Togliatti, being purchased from abroad.

One Bad Crop in Three

Yet managers as well as workers have stubbornly resisted "the scientific-technical revolution," as the Kremlin calls it. One might paraphrase Lincoln Steffens: They have seen the past, and *they* think it works better. Under constant pressure from their superiors to meet output quotas every month, Soviet factory managers shy away from the production losses inevitably incurred during any switchover to a new production system. Even when lower-level innovation is welcomed, it leads only to a pat on the back and the same old orders—fulfill the plan. Moreover, turnarounds in American trade policy, most recently with President Carter's post-Afghanistan embargo, have made some top Moscow officials uneasy about industrial policies dependent upon purchases of Western technology. Without such purchases, the task of increasing productivity will be close to impossible; even with them, the system is likely to keep any production gains rather small.

Even so, one might ask, why should the 1980s be so critical? In the past, the Soviets have muddled through; in my view, if the labor shortage squeezes industry too hard, they will (to borrow Sovietologist Seweryn Bialer's phrase) simply start "muddling down." The military will continue to get what the Kremlin decides it needs; the squeeze will be felt by the civilian consum-

*Duke University economist Valdimir Treml notes that the alcohol problem places the government in a fiscal dilemma: Although alcoholism damages health and productivity, taxes on alcohol generate about 12 percent of all government revenues, enough to cover the Soviet Union's officially announced defense budget. (True military expenditures are believed by most Western experts to far exceed the published figure.)

ers, who will not challenge the system. Here and there, over the next 20 years, factory workers may protest or strike, but Soviet history suggests that such disturbances will be both rare and brutally suppressed.

The Soviet Union's most intractable failure has been in agriculture. But nature bears part of the blame. Indeed, as Harvard historian Richard Pipes has observed, the Soviet Union's poor soil, erratic rainfall, and short growing season (about half that of Western Europe's) explain why, throughout its history, the country has suffered "one bad harvest out of every three."

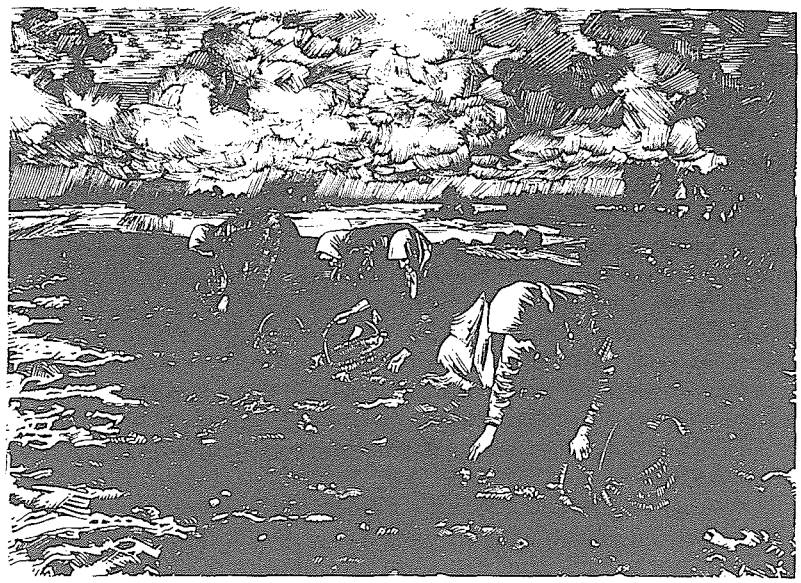
Early on, farm productivity was further hamstrung by Stalin's policies, which amounted to class warfare. During the late 1920s and early '30s, Stalin wiped out the well-to-do peasants—the *kulaks*—and collectivized agriculture. The results: famine and the deaths of millions. For the regime, the price was right. For the first time, the party gained total political control of the countryside.

Once implemented, Stalin's brutal policies became a kind of theology; its abandonment would signify an abandonment of socialism itself. Nevertheless, soon after Stalin died in 1953, his successors attempted to eliminate his worst excesses. In agriculture, these efforts became closely connected with the fate of Nikita Khrushchev.

Promoting himself as a farm expert, Khrushchev, an old Ukraine hand, reached for power in the mid-1950s by advocating a liberalization of agriculture policy. From 1956 to 1959, these changes—increased investment, higher rural living standards, and tolerance of private cultivation—coincided with beneficial weather to produce abundant harvests. Khrushchev's policies appeared to be vindicated.

Tomatoes at $5 a Pound

But as Khrushchev consolidated his position, his early pragmatism ebbed. During the early 1960s, he pushed for stricter state control and introduced the "forced crop program." The centerpiece of the program was the conversion of the Ukrainian wheat belt to corn cultivation, an ill-fated policy derived largely from official belief in Soviet agronomist T. D. Lysenko's "Marxist" theory of genetics, which (absurdly) held that plants could be made to adapt to their environment and could then transmit those adaptations to their offspring. According to Lysenko, corn would soon flourish in the Ukraine. It did not, and the spectacular failure of the Soviet European "forced crops" came just as drought hit the Soviet Asian farmlands. The 1963 harvest was a



"Potato Diggers," by R. Kaljo. In 1979, the labors of one Soviet farmworker fed 8 people, while his (or her) American counterpart fed 56.

disaster: The USSR decided to import significant amounts of food for the first time since World War II, and in October 1964, Khrushchev was ousted by the Central Committee. The Soviet Union, explained his successors, had had enough of Khrushchev's "hare-brained schemes."

Leonid Brezhnev's farm plans, introduced in March 1965, involved an enormous increase in outlays—for machinery, construction, fertilizers, and land reclamation. By 1977, the annual Soviet investment in agriculture ran to nearly $80 billion, more than six times the U.S. expenditure. Even so, the Soviets have developed a farming system capable of meeting only the most elementary needs of an industrial society. Grain imports have supplemented the domestic harvest in every year since 1971. Those imports—to feed beef cattle, chickens, and hogs—are perhaps a major cause of the relative stability of Soviet consumption in the Brezhnev era: The impact of agricultural difficulties on the Soviet economy and people has been softened through grain imports paid for by oil exports.

Meanwhile, Soviet farmers supplement official production and imports with their own "private" crops. During the mid-

1970s, the private sector occupied 3 percent of cultivated land; but it is estimated to have produced 59 percent of the USSR's potatoes, 44 percent of its fruit, 34 percent of its vegetables, and 31 percent of its meat and milk.

It is not only in agriculture that such "hidden" production enables the official state-run system to survive. Throughout the Soviet system, life is made tolerable by what Western academics call the "Soviet second economy." After six decades of socialism, notes University of Virginia economist Gertrude Schroeder, "nearly everyone seems to have devised ingenious ways to turn its shortcomings to his individual advantage." Indeed, to keep one's job, to meet the plan, to simply operate within Soviet society, it is virtually impossible *not* to participate in the unofficial "gray market" or illegal "black market." Thus, a bureaucrat seeking top quality medical attention will arrange for an appointment in a doctor's home—for a fee—rather than in a government clinic; a Moscow housewife hungry for tomatoes in mid-winter will find them being sold at $5 a pound by a Georgian farmer who has flown via Aeroflot to the capital with two basketloads; a factory manager, striving to meet his monthly production quota, will use barter or bribes to ensure the timely delivery of needed parts or supplies.

It is, of course, impossible to gauge the true extent of unofficial economic transactions. Workers with access to prized goods tend to be thoroughly corrupt: During 1971, no fewer than one in five Moscow gas station attendants was arrested by the "Department for the Struggle Against Plundering of Socialist Property" for profiteering in petrol. One might call the second economy the Soviet "10 percent solution"; overall, Western economists figure its contribution to be between 5 and 15 percent of the total official GNP. And, to repeat, it provides the kind of lubrication that allows the official system to function as well as it does.

Remembering Papa

Since the early 1970s, U.S. specialists have held up three alternative visions of the Soviet reaction to an uncertain economic future. The first sees the introduction of a hawkish, repressive neo-Stalinism; the second portrays an enlightened leadership brought to understand that economic production will not increase without liberal reform; and the third simply predicts "more of the same." Neither of the first two possibilities seems plausible.

True, some close observers of the USSR do detect an emerg-

ing grassroots neo-Stalinism, and many Soviet citizens both great and small seemingly yearn for a romanticized past when Papa Stalin made all decisions, when the Soviet people enjoyed the strange luxury of not having to think. But Stalin's answers do not address today's questions. A neo-Stalinist revival could not bring Siberian oil closer to the factories of Central Russia; it would not make workers of the technological age more productive. Stalin's agricultural policies only barely managed to feed the smaller, less urban population of a half century ago. The possibility of a Stalinist revival persists for no better reason than that it has antecedents in the past. The liberal reformist option, for its part, has no real precedent in Soviet history. It exists more as an exercise in Western logic than as a practical Soviet political choice.

The question to be answered by Brezhnev's successors is not whether to go left or right but whether there is any real alternative to more of the same. "Muddling through" (or "down") is not what will *save* the system—it *is* the system, and, in my opinion, it will absorb the impact of any attempts at neo-Stalinism or liberal reforms just as it has absorbed everything else. And though it is not painless, "muddling through" does possess the great virtue (in Soviet eyes) of predictability. Difficult adjustments by the citizenry may have to be made, but in economic matters, the Soviet threshold of pain is, like the sloth's, far higher than we might expect.

Should stagnation persist, as is likely, the Soviet leadership need not perceive disaster. Decline, after all, is relative. Zero economic growth might in the coming decade seem an outstanding accomplishment when one views the unpromising outlook in the West. Transporting oil from Siberia, no matter how costly, could well turn out to be considerably easier for Moscow than getting it from the Persian Gulf will be for the West.

We should not consider remarkable the fact that Soviet leaders face difficult problems. Rather, what is striking about the economic decisions Moscow will make—or avoid making —is not their difficulty but the fact that they are no more vexing than those that face political and business leaders in Bonn, Paris, London, Tokyo, and Washington. Indeed, the increasing uncertainty of the Soviet economic future may signify nothing more or less than the USSR's slow, stumbling entrance into the ranks of the developed world.

BREZHNEV'S PEOPLE

Scenarios, statistics, and theories abound in U.S. discussions of the Soviet Union. But such abstract (and often abstracted) information cannot fully convey what it is like to live in Soviet society. The *Wilson Quarterly* invited John Glad, a specialist in Slavic literature, to fill out the picture with illustrative excerpts from recent Russian fiction. Three of Professor Glad's choices—those by Natalya Baranskaya, Arkady Arkanov, and Fyodor Abramov—first appeared in Soviet publications. The current regime allows *some* criticism. The contemporary Soviet writer can portray some of the difficulties of Soviet life without being shipped off to a labor camp. Yet more than a few attitudes, ideas, and subjects—the secret police, or KGB, is a notable example—are still taboo. Thus our first piece, by émigré Ilya Suslov, which not only mentions but actually belittles the KGB, would never get past a Soviet censor.

Visiting the West

Born in 1933, Ilya Suslov achieved fame in the USSR as editor of "The Club of the Twelve Chairs," the popular humor section of The Literary Gazette. *Suslov emigrated to the United States in 1974. Here, he takes a wry look at that most precious of Soviet privileges, travel to the West:*

I had a girlfriend who worked in the Beryozka Dance Troupe. The troupe was frequently sent abroad to bring back hard currency, so the discipline had to be ironclad.

"What place did you like most of all?" I once asked my friend.

"We never saw anything," she said. "We were always on the road, rehearsing, or giving performances. We only got $10 a day for expenses, and we had to eat three times a day on that and save up enough to buy junk we could sell on the black market."

"How'd you manage that?"

"We always brought the biggest suitcases available. On the way over, we'd pack them with sugar, salt, cookies, sausage, canned goods, concentrates, tea, soap, coffee — everything we needed to survive and be able to save money. And on the way back, we stuffed them with blouses (our building was even called the 'blouse house'), watches, dresses, suits, sheepskin coats, pantyhose. A person could live real well on the earnings. You know how foreign things sell."

"Okay, suppose you're on tour for a month and you don't eat anything. Ten dollars a day is only $300. What can you buy for $300?"

"Sales!" my friend said. "You can't imagine the kind of sales they have in the West! They would take us to special stores where everything was virtually free. The items might have been out of style for them for two or three years, but for us it was still the wave of the future. Just look at this woman's watch. I bought it for $1.50, but I'll sell it for 80 rubles. They'll tear my hand off to get it."

"But at that rate you could kick the bucket from hunger. Just look at yourself after that trip — nothing but skin and bones."

"So what!" my friend answered. "As long as there's bones, you can always put on the meat. Look, I'm not a beggar, and I'm not a prostitute. The girls in our troupe get 79 rubles a month— the price of a pair of shoes. Who can live on that? And the money I've saved up from these tours has been enough to buy an apartment and a car. And I dress like a human being. . . ."

She said that they had stopped in a small hotel in Switzerland. That night, the lights in the hotel went out just before the performance. Then they went out again. The manager got all upset and sent for Nadezhdin, the head of the troupe. He said that if the fuses blew one more time, he'd kick the whole Beryozka troupe onto the street. It turned out that the lights were off because the girls were all plugging in their heating elements at the same time. They wanted some tea before the performance.

John Glad, 39, is associate professor of Germanic and Slavic languages and literature at the University of Maryland, College Park. Born in Gary, Ind., he received his B.A. (1962) and M.A. (1964) degrees from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Slavic languages and literature from New York University (1970). He is the author of Russian Pronunciation *(1978) and* Extrapolations from Dystopia *(1980). He has also edited and translated several books of Russian literature, among them* Russian Poetry: The Modern Period *(1977),* The Poems of Nikolai Klyuev *(1977), and* Kolyma Tales *by Varlam Shalamov (1980).*

As for ironclad discipline, that turned out to be a simple thing. They just announced that on the next trip abroad, only 80 people would be sent instead of 100. And the girls really put out an effort. Party headquarters were deluged with denunciations; all the girls were trying to curry favor and be included in that cherished list. They wrote that Pavlova had left the hotel in the evening on the last tour, even though that was not permitted. They wrote that Sidorova and Petrova went to a department store, even though Vasil Vasilich said that was off limits. "Vasil Vasilich" was the name used for all the KGB men accompanying the troupe during the trip. Officially, they had all kinds of jobs—balalaika player, stage worker, administrative assistant. They were all called "Vasil Vasilich," and they didn't even mind responding to the name; why not?

The Beryozka Dance Troupe was an outstanding success. Foreigners loved it and constantly invited it to go on tour.

A Day Like Any Other

Natalya Baranskaya, a historian and ethnologist, graduated from Moscow University in 1930 but did not publish until 1968, when she earned sudden celebrity with "One Week Like Any Other." This matter-of-fact account of a two-paycheck middle-class family struck a chord with Soviet women, whose burdens (cramped apartments, long shopping queues, unhelpful husbands) far exceed those of their American sisters:

I just can't wake up. I feed Dmitry's palm on my back as he shakes me.

"Olga, Olga, sweety, wake up. You'll be running around again like a chicken without a head."

I finally really do wake up. I make it to the bathroom, where I wash up and bury my face in a warm Turkish towel, nearly fall asleep for a half-second, and wake up with the words: "To hell with all of it!"

But all that is nonsense. There is no one and nothing to send to hell, and everything is fine and beautiful. We got an apartment in a new building. The children are wonderful, Dmitry and I love each other, and I have an interesting job. Who or what would I want to see in hell? Nonsense!

At work, I run into Yakov Petrovich on the third-floor stairway.

"You won't be late with your experiment, Olga Petrovna?"

I blush and say nothing in my confusion. Of course, I could say: "No, of course not." It would be best to do that. But I

remain silent. How can I be sure?

"In view of your interest in your work and . . . um-m-m . . . your ability, we agreed to transfer you to the vacant slot for a junior researcher and include you in a group working on an interesting problem. But I have to tell you that we are a little disturbed . . . um-m-m . . . surprised that you aren't conscientious enough in fulfilling your obligations."

I am silent. I love my work. I treasure the fact that I can work independently. It doesn't seem to me that I'm not conscientious. But I am frequently late—especially on Mondays. What can I say? I just hope this is only a normal chewing out and nothing more. I mutter something about icy sidewalks and snowdrifts, the bus that always arrives at our stop already packed, the crowds. . . . And with a sickening nausea I realize I have said the same things the other times.

Back at the lab, a heated discussion is raging with regard to point five of a questionnaire: "If you have no children, underline the reason: medical grounds, financial reasons, family situation, personal considerations, etc."

I don't see any point in arguing when all you have to do is underline "personal considerations" and move on to the other questions. I would even underline "etc." But point five has caught everybody's interest, even pricked the vanity of those women who have no children.

The comments come thick and heavy: "Some people let animal instinct run their minds." "People with no children are simply selfish." "They ruin their own lives." "Well, it remains to be seen—just whose life is ruined." "And who's going to pay you your pension if there's no young generation to replace us?" "The only real women are those who can bear children." There was even a remark: "Anyone who put her head in a noose should shut up."

I remember we didn't want a second child. Our boy, Kotka, wasn't even a year-and-a-half old when I realized I was pregnant again. Horrified, I cried and registered for an abortion. But it was a different feeling this time than with Kotka. It was better and different in general. I mentioned it to an older woman at the clinic who was sitting next to me in the waiting room and was taken completely aback when she replied: "That's not because it's your second, but because it's a girl." I got up and went straight home, where I told Dmitry that I was going to have a girl and that I didn't want any abortion. He was outraged: "How can you listen to that absurd chatter?" He kept trying to persuade me to forget this nonsense and go back to the clinic.

But I believed it would be a girl and even began to dream of

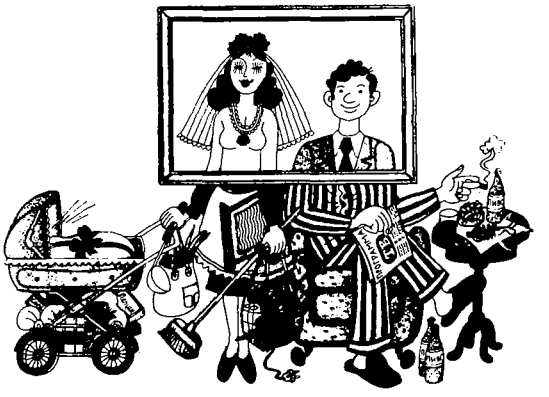


Image versus reality, Soviet-style. He smokes, drinks pivo *(beer) and watches television, while she works, shops, walks baby, and cleans.*

From Krokodil, *1980.*

her. She had fair hair and blue eyes like Dmitry's. (Kotka took after me with his brown hair and dark eyes.) The little girl would run around in a short dress, shake her curly head, and rock her doll. Dmitry got very angry when I told him of my dreams, and we had a quarrel.

Finally, the last day arrived for us to make the decision, and we thrashed things out. I said: "I don't want to kill my daughter just to make our lives easier." And I burst into tears. "Alright, alright, but stop that bellowing, you idiot. If you want another baby, go ahead. But you'll see — it'll be another boy." Then, abruptly, Dmitry stopped talking, stared at me silently for a long time, slammed his palm against the table top, and resolved: "It's decided: Just stop bellowing and arguing." And he hugged me. "But you know, Olga, a second boy isn't so bad either. Kotka will have someone to play with." But it was a girl, Gulka, fair-haired, and absurdly similar to Dmitry. . . .

Getting home is no easy thing. I'm carrying two heavy bags with everything but vegetables. I have to stand in the subway, holding one bag in my arms and keeping the other between my feet. It's crowded and everybody is pushing, so there's no chance to even try to read. Mentally, I count up how much I've spent. It always seems to me that I've lost some of my money. I had two 10-ruble notes, but now only some loose change is left. There should be 3 rubles left over. I recount everything and go through the purchases in the two bags. The second time, I come to the conclusion that I have lost 4 rubles. I give up and begin to look at the passengers who are seated. Many are reading. The young women are reading books and magazines, and the better-dressed men have newspapers. A fat man is reading a humorous magazine, but his face is morose. The young men look away,

squinting lazily, so they won't have to give up their seats.

Finally, at Sokol Station, everyone leaps to his feet and rushes toward the narrow stairway. With my packages of milk and eggs, however, I have to bring up the rear. When I reach the bus station, the line is big enough to fill up six buses. Maybe I should try to squeeze into one of the full buses? But how about my bags? Nevertheless, I try to get on the third bus, but the bags in my arms don't permit me to grab onto anything; my foot slips off the high step, and I fall painfully on my knee. Precisely at this moment, the bus begins moving. Everyone is shouting, and I squeal. The bus stops, a man standing near the door pulls me in, and I lean into my bags. My knee aches, and I undoubtedly have an omelet in the one bag. But someone gives me his seat, and I can survey the damage to my knee and torn stocking smeared with blood and dirt.

When the bus reaches my stop, I rush home, the grocery bags bouncing against my aching knee. I just hope that Dmitry didn't let the children stuff themselves on bread and that he remembered to start the potatoes.

I knew it—the children are eating bread. Dmitry has forgotten everything and is engrossed in a technical journal. I light all the burners and put on the frying pan and the tea pot. In 20 minutes, we sit down to a meal of meat patties and potatoes.

We eat a lot. It's the first time I've really eaten that day. Dmitry is also hungry after a skimpy meal in the cafeteria. God only knows how the children ate.

The children grow sleepy from the hot heavy meal and support their chins with their little fists. Sleep is written all over their faces. I have to drag them under the stream of warm water in the bathroom, put them to bed, and they are already asleep at nine.

Dmitry returns to the table. He likes to drink his tea leisurely, look through the paper, read a book. But I have to wash the dishes and then the children's clothing. Kotka's leggings have to be darned; he's constantly wearing them out at the knees. I prepare their clothing and put Gulka's clothes in a bag. By that time, Dmitry brings me his overcoat; he lost a button in the crowded subway. Then, the kitchen has to be swept and the garbage has to be taken out. That's Dmitry's job.

I wake up in the middle of the night with a feeling of anxiety. I don't know why. I lie on my back with my eyes open. I can hear the heating pipes sighing in the silent night and the loud ticking of the upstairs neighbors' wall clock. The same time being evenly measured by their pendulum is being frantically ticked away by our alarm clock.

The Savior's Graffiti

The elaborate Church of the Savior on the Blood was erected on the spot in Leningrad where a revolutionary's bomb felled Tsar Alexander II in 1881. Closed during the 1917 revolution, it is now undergoing restoration and will eventually be reopened as a museum. Both believers and nonbelievers express their hopes and thoughts by penciling graffiti on the sides of the church. Some examples collected by John Glad:

"Lord, grant me luck, and help me to be accepted into the Art Academy in four years."

"Happiness and health to me and Volodya."

"Lord strangle Taritsyn!"

"Lord, help me get rid of Valery!"

"Lord, help me in love!"

"Lord, make Charlotte fall in love with me!"

"Lord, I'm hungry!"

"Lord, help me pass the exam in political economics!"

"Lord, help me pass the exams in: 1) electrical technology, 2) E.V.I. (Electrical Vacuum Instruments), 3) Marxism-Leninism. Pi. . . ." (Signature illegible.)

"Help me pass my driver's license test, Lord."

"Lord, help me pass the entrance examinations to LVXPU" (the Leningrad Higher Institute of Art and Industry). Added by another person: "Me too."

"Lord, take the arrogance out of my wife."

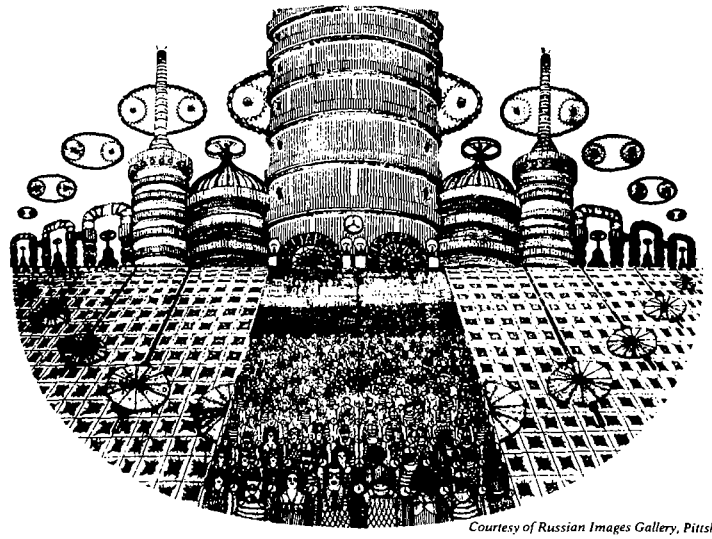
"Lord, help me win a transistor radio, model AP-2-14, in the lottery." Added on by another person: "All we have is P-201. Archangel Gabriel."

3×3 = 1,812

The distortions inflicted on Soviet life by the production quotas of the Plan are here taken to the absurd extreme by satirist Arkady Arkanov, 47, who has remained in favor in the Soviet Union, where he is on the staff of The Literary Gazette:

In the new director's office, everything was the same, but it had nevertheless changed.

The old director's desk had been on the right; the new director's desk was on the left. The safe had been on the left earlier, but now it was on the right. The new director was in a



Courtesy of Russian Images Gallery, Pittsburgh.

Estonian artist Vinn Vello's etching, The Shift *(1977), portrays one crew of workers emerging from a factory as the next crew enters.*

no-nonsense mood: "Why is your factory producing so few jar lids?"

"You see. . . ."

"I believe you are the chief engineer and have a Ph.D. in mathematics?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"That means: algebra, a^2, b^2. . . . We know a thing or two around here too. . . . So. . . . We're going to work differently from now on! No more of that old-fashioned fiddling around. . . . Am I right?"

"Well, yes," I agreed, still not understanding what was up.

He smiled, pleased to have found an ally.

In his new office, the new director had the free manner of a man who had been born and raised there.

"So . . ." he proceeded, smacking his lips over every word. "We're going to eliminate the main cause of our difficulties. We're going to dispose of the old-fashioned multiplication table."

I laughed, delighted to see that our new director had a sense of humor. He waited till I had finished laughing and continued: "I have carefully acquainted myself with the multiplication table and have come to the conclusion that the former figures have become antiquated and are restraining us from moving forward in a truly aggressive fashion. . . ."

I was beginning to take a real liking to this new director.

"I would like to make a suggestion in this regard," I said with a laugh. "Let's have 2 times 2 be 9, 3 times 3 be 34, and 5 times 5 be 81."

"I doubt that that would be sufficient," he said, blowing his nose. "I've made some preliminary calculations."

The director drew a sheet of paper from his desk and handed it to me. It was covered with all sorts of figures.

The sheet contained a new multiplication table: $2 \times 2 = 67$; $3 \times 3 = 1{,}812$; $6 \times 7 = 2{,}949$. The last column contained only 12-digit numbers.

I glanced at the director in a distracted fashion. He was staring at me with triumphant eyes.

"How do you like 3 times 3 equals 1,812? What do you say?"

"Isn't that sort of going overboard?" I asked with a weak smile.

"Maybe. But it is bold! But you're a scientist, and you can work out the details. Have it back in my office in a week for me to sign."

Death on the Collective Farm

Associated with neither the Kremlin "establishment" nor the dissidents, 60-year-old novelist Fyodor Abramov is an independent voice, best known for his blunt, gloomy depictions of rural life. In this excerpt, Pelageya is the widow of the farmworker Pavel:

All of Pavel's near and distant relatives had arrived at the collective farm to see him off on this, his last journey. As might have been expected, they were almost all country folk. But there was also a cousin from the city, an uncle-pensioner from a forest town, and a nephew who was an officer in the Army and who had flown in for the funeral.

Everyone was there except his beloved daughter, Alka, who had fled, pregnant, to the city.

Pavel had died on the third day following his daughter's flight from home, and no one knew where to search for her. Fragments of whispered gossip reached Pelageya's ears as she stood at the feet of the dead man: "That's the way children are nowadays. . . . They're ready to bury their own parents alive. . . . You raise them—and that's your reward. . . ."

Pavel was buried old-style and new-style.

At home, everything was done as such things had always been done. And the chairman of the collective farm didn't interfere. While the old women were burning incense around the coffin and droning "Holy God," the chairman of the collective farm and his assistant smoked out on the street. At one point, the veterinarian, Afonka, came rushing into the hut, shouting drunkenly for them to stop making a mockery of a man who had been a real bolshevik even if he wasn't a party member. But they got rid of him in a hurry. The chairman himself. Just pushed him out of the hut.

The new rites began at the cemetery when they started making speeches over the open coffin:

"A dedicated worker. . . . From the very beginning. . . . Honest. . . . A model for all of us. . . . We'll never forget. . . ."

It was then that Pelageya lost control of herself. She had endured everything: the wailing, the condemnation in her neighbors' eyes for not having taken better care of Pavel, their whispered gossip. Immobile as stone beside the coffin, she had endured it without so much as gesture or even a sigh. But when the speeches began, the earth lurched beneath her feet.

"A dedicated worker. . . . From the very beginning. . . . Honest. . . . A model for all of us. . . ."

Pelageya listened to those words and suddenly thought: It was true—every last word. Pavel had worked in the farm without ever refusing—like a horse or a machine. He had even fallen ill at work. They brought him from threshing on a cart. And who appreciated his work while he was alive? Had anyone even thanked him? The chairman? She, Pelageya?

No. The truth had to be spoken: She had always regarded her husband's work [on the collective farm] as worthless. How could anyone value work for which there was no payment?

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Ilya Suslov's piece is taken from the author's manuscript; Natalya Baranskaya's is from* Novy mir, *no. 11, 1969; Arkady Arkanov's is from* The Club of the Twelve Chairs *(Moscow, 1974); and Fyodor Abramov's is from* The Selected Works of Fyodor Abramov *(Moscow, 1975).*

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE SOVIET FUTURE

"Homeland of patience" was the 19th-century Russian poet Fedor Tiutchev's sorrowful epithet for his country. As Berkeley historian Nicholas V. Riasanovsky explains in **A History of Russia** (Oxford, 1963; 3rd ed., 1977), the Russians have patiently endured invasion, isolation, and a backward economy. Looking West, Russia's rulers have repeatedly sought to catch up with Europe, "whether by means of Peter the Great's reforms or the [Soviet] Five-Year Plans."

Peter the Great (1672–1725), the father of modern Russia, set up technical schools; sent Russians abroad to study science, mathematics, and engineering; and himself toured Western Europe, sometimes in disguise.

Under Peter, Russia's foreign trade quadrupled, enabling him to build a European-style Army and Navy and to wage interminable wars. Thanks to his military outlays, asserts Riasanovsky, Russia remained at the end of the 18th century a poor, backward land, weighed down by "a large and glorious army" and a huge, complex bureaucracy.

It was not until Russia's shattering defeat by Turkey, Britain, and France in the Crimean War (1853–56) that large-scale borrowing of Western technology by Russian entrepreneurs began. The state encouraged industrial development. During the 1890s, the Ministry of Finance, directed by Count Sergei Witte, subsidized heavy industry by curtailing imports, balancing the budget, and introducing the gold standard. Yet Witte's approaches were inherently contradictory, argues Clark University historian Theodore Von Laue in **Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia** (Columbia, 1963, cloth; Atheneum, 1969, paper). The independence and spontaneity essential to entrepreneurial capitalism were incompatible with the long tsarist tradition of government initiative and control.

The Bolsheviks who led the revolution of October 1917 did not stray far from that tradition. But during the first years of the communist state, their hopes for economic revitalization were set back by civil war, drought, famine, and epidemic disease. In **An Economic History of the USSR** (Penguin, 1972, paper only), University of Glasgow economist Alex Nove quotes Lenin's confession of the time: "Such is the sad state of our decrees; they are signed and then we ourselves forget about them and fail to carry them out."

Faced with social and economic breakdown, Lenin in 1921 introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), under which the Bolsheviks abandoned extreme centralization in favor of a mixed economy. The state then controlled only the "commanding heights" of the economy (iron, steel, electricity, transportation, and foreign trade). Much retail trade and almost all farming reverted to the private sector. Taxes replaced requisitions; technical experts and foreign capital were brought in from abroad. In **Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development, 1917–30** (Hoover, 1968), Antony Sutton lists more than 200 firms that entered the USSR as "concessionaires" in the

1920s, among them Alcoa, Gillette, International Harvester, and Singer Sewing Machine.

NEP warded off disaster. But it came to an end in 1927, when Joseph Stalin outmaneuvered his competitors, gained total control of the Communist Party, and introduced the First Five-Year Plan. In **Planning for Economic Growth in the Soviet Union, 1918–1932** and **Stalinist Planning for Economic Growth, 1933–1952** (Univ. of N.C., 1971 and 1980, respectively), Eugène Zaleski, director of research at the National Center of Scientific Research in Paris, examines the Stalinist drive toward industrialization. His conclusion: The central national plan was—and is—a "myth," a "vision of the future." In reality, he contends, Soviet economic policy consists of "an endless number of plans, constantly evolving, that are coordinated . . . after they have been put into operation."

Stalin went on to rule the USSR for a quarter of a century. In the West, at least, he is best remembered for his murderous repression. In **The Great Terror: Stalin's Purges of the Thirties** (Macmillan, 1968; rev. ed., 1973, cloth & paper), Kremlinologist and poet Robert Conquest estimates that 20 to 30 million people perished during the Stalinist period.

Millions more were sentenced to long terms in the labor camps—"the Gulag archipelago," in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's memorable phrase. The Nobel Prize–winning novelist's first work, **One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich** (translated by Max Hayward and Ronald Hingley; Praeger, 1963, cloth & paper), portrays one Gulag prisoner's battle against hunger, cold, and despair.

Russia suffered terribly when the Nazis invaded in the summer of 1941, not least because half of the Red Army's senior officers had been purged and shot or imprisoned on Stalin's orders. Stalin's vast Army seemed to melt away as German forces pushed to the suburbs of Moscow and began the 900-day siege of Leningrad. Alexander Werth, Moscow correspondent for the *London Sunday Times* during World War II, presents a highly sympathetic account of the Red Army's retreat and resurgence in **Russia at War, 1941–1945** (Dutton, 1964, cloth; Avon, 1964, paper).

Germany's defeat left the USSR dominant in Eastern Europe, where local Communists soon set up Soviet-style regimes—and Soviet-style economies. Moscow orchestrated Comecon, the East's version of the Common Market, and the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet answer to NATO. Yet socialist economic cooperation could be rather lopsided: At one point, the foreign trade ministers of Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia were executed for haggling too hard with the Soviet Union. Former White House aide Zbigniew Brezinski comprehensively examines USSR–Eastern European relations in **The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict** (Harvard, 1960; rev. ed., 1967, cloth & paper).

Stalin finally died in 1953. In **Stalin: The Man and His Era** (Viking, 1973), Adam Ulam, professor of government at Harvard, likens the dictator's last years to "a tale by Kafka, with an occasional scene that seems to come from the chronicle of gangland warfare in Al Capone's era." Yet, under Stalin's leadership, the Soviet Union became one of the world's Big Two military powers.

Looking at today's USSR in **The Soviet System of Government** (Univ. of Chicago, 1957; 5th ed., 1980, cloth & paper), Columbia University law professor John Hazard argues that

"Stalinism is not dead, but muted." The Soviet Union's present rulers, he adds, are governed by a "determination to avoid change."

If that is indeed their aim, they have in the last few years been successful. Since Nikita Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, the Soviet people have enjoyed what has been, by Russian standards, a period of remarkable calm.

In recent years, two noted American newsmen have set out to describe Soviet life in the Brezhnev era. In **The Russians** (Quadrangle, 1976, cloth; Ballantine, 1977, paper), the *New York Times*'s Hedrick Smith mentions a particularly jarring example of official conservatism: *Goskontsert*, the state booking agency, regularly imposes quotas on Soviet popular bands—15 percent Western music, 20 percent Eastern European, and 65 percent Soviet. *Washington Post* correspondent Robert Kaiser suggests, in **Russia: The People and the Power** (Atheneum, 1976, cloth; Pocket Books, 1980, paper), that the Soviet system is "efficient" in the broadest sense: Through the centralized allocation of resources, Soviet leaders are able to "use what they have to get what they want."

A good deal more thorough is **Soviet Economy in a Time of Change** (Government Printing Office, 1979), a two-volume anthology prepared by 79 scholars and government analysts for the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress. In 58 densely documented articles, the specialists examine Soviet successes (in oil production, for instance) and setbacks (most notably in agriculture) during the 1970s.

Time alone will soon bring changes to the Kremlin. Seweryn Bialer calculates in **Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union** (Cambridge, 1980) that, in 1952, the average age of Politburo members was 55.4 years, while in 1980 it was 70.1.

Bialer, a Columbia University political scientist, warns that Brezhnev's successors *might* be "seriously shaken" in the 1980s, despite the apparent stability of the communist regime. Derived less from tradition than from political controls, that stability rests on a very narrow base of popular support. As Bialer sees it, the present-day Soviet political system resembles the 19th-century potato diet of Ireland. And he quotes Cambridge historian George M. Trevelyan, who wrote: "The potato is the easiest method of supporting life at a very low standard—until a year comes when the crop completely fails."

—Barbara Ann Chotiner

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