

OTHER NATIONS

and Quandahār, have not been spared Soviet bombs.

The Soviets have not picked an easy task. As yet, they control little of the countryside, and their material losses have not been trifling (e.g., possibly 4,000 armored vehicles over the past five years). The Afghans show no signs of giving up.

In the end, however, Malhuret believes that the Afghan resistance "will probably be beaten." With no real need to answer to world opinion (thanks to what Malhuret calls the "negligence" of the Western press) or to placate its own citizens, the Kremlin can simply outlast the Mujahedeen. During the 1920s and 1930s, Malhuret recalls, the Soviets took 20 years to suppress the Basmachi (bandit) Revolt in their southern Muslim republics. But they did it.

How Well Off Are The Soviets?

"On Infant Mortality in the Soviet Union" by Murray Feshbach and Nick Eberstadt, in *Population and Development Review* (Mar. 1984), The Population Council, 1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

In the Soviet Union, official statistics for the early 1970s reveal a sudden jump in infant mortality. Demographers Murray Feshbach of Georgetown University [see "A Different Crisis," *WQ*, Winter 1981] and Nick Eberstadt of Harvard have argued independently that the change in numbers is symptomatic of widespread ills in Soviet society, a view that has deeply influenced some U.S. policy-makers.

Last year, Fred W. Grupp and Ellen Jones of the U.S. Central and Defense intelligence agencies, respectively, challenged the Feshbach-Eberstadt interpretation [see *WQ*, Winter 1983, pp. 42-43]. They contended that the upsurge—from about 23 to 28 deaths per thousand Soviet births between 1971 and 1974—was largely a statistical mirage, the result of improved medical reporting in the nation's five Muslim republics. But Feshbach says here that even Soviet researchers accept the infant mortality increase as real. Among the explanations for it cited by Dr. A. I. Smirnov of the Soviet State Planning Committee is the fact that an increasing proportion of Soviet births occurs in the "high mortality regions" of Central Asia.

Moreover, Feshbach asks, why would Moscow stop publishing statistics on infant mortality after 1974 if not "to hide an unhappy reality"?

Eberstadt questions much of the evidence used by Grupp and Jones. One Soviet expert they cited, Viktor Kozlov of Moscow's Institute of Ethnography, has since clarified his work, stating that most underreporting of births and deaths was eliminated by the late 1960s. And Eberstadt notes that infant mortality is not the only Soviet "quality of life" indicator that has taken a nose dive. Between the early 1960s and 1976, the last year for which data are available, the death rate per 1,000 people increased dramatically (by up to 43 percent) in almost every age group in the Soviet population.