



University
of Glasgow

White, S. (1977) *Political socialization in the U.S.S.R.: a study in failure?* *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 10 (3). pp. 328-342. ISSN 0039-3592

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/7930/>

Deposited on: 4 November 2009

STEPHEN WHITE

Political Socialization in the U.S.S.R.: A Study in Failure?*

Whatever its merits or demerits as a system of government, its supporters and opponents have usually agreed upon at least one thing: that the Soviet Union, to an extent perhaps unique among contemporary states, is an ideocratic polity.¹ It is a political system, that is to say, within which a comprehensive and well-articulated ideology, Marxism-Leninism, informs the actions of government and the activities of citizens in both their public and "private" aspects. The theorists of totalitarianism were among the first to draw attention to the "politicization of society" which thereby resulted. All totalitarian states, as the most influential of these theories put it, had six common traits or features, the first of which was an "elaborate ideology, consisting of an official body of doctrine covering all vital

* An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association at Liverpool (England), April 4-6, 1977. The research upon which it is based was made possible by the generous support of the University of Glasgow and the Nuffield Foundation.

1. Recent work dealing with Soviet political socialization includes Ellen Mickiewicz, *Soviet Political Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); her "The Modernization of Party Propaganda in the USSR," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1971), pp. 257-276; Gayle D. Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Robert W. Clawson, "The Political Socialization of Schoolchildren in the USSR," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (December 1973), pp. 684-712; David E. Powell,

aspects of man's existence to which everyone in that society is supposed to adhere, at least passively"; an ideology, moreover, which is "characteristically focused and projected towards a perfect final state of mankind," and based upon a "radical rejection of the existing society [and the] conquest of the world for the new one."² It was a total diagnosis which Soviet spokesmen could scarcely accept, but they did at least agree that the pursuit of Marxist-Leninism was one of the regime's most central goals, and that the regime based itself (as the CPSU *Program* puts it) "at every historical stage" upon the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.³

There has been less agreement about the extent to which Marxism-Leninism may in fact be said to influence the making of decisions by the Soviet government, or to imbue the consciousness of the average Soviet citizen. The regime itself certainly claims, as Brezhnev told the Twenty-Fifth Party Congress in 1976, that the long experience of Soviet rule has now brought into being a new "Soviet man" combining "ideological conviction and enormous human energy," an "ardent patriot" and a "consistent internationalist";⁴ a man who (in the words of a *Pravda* editorial) is "in a word, always and in all things—a dedicated and active fighter for the Party's great cause, for the triumph of Communist ideas."⁵ Western writers have generally drawn attention to the difficulty of assessing such claims in the absence of direct evidence, and many have expressed skepticism. Alfred Meyer, however, has argued that

"Television in the USSR," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Fall 1975), pp. 287-300; Charles D. Cary, "Political Socialization of Soviet Youth and the Building of Communism," in Gary K. Bertsch and Thomas W. Ganschow (eds.), *Comparative Communism: The Soviet, Chinese, and Yugoslav Models* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1976); Gayle D. Hannah, "Soviet Public Communications in the Post-Stalin Period," in Jane P. Shapiro and Peter J. Potichnyj (eds.), *Change and Adaptation in Soviet and East European Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1976); Ruth W. Mouly, "Values and Aspirations of Soviet Youth," in Paul Cocks, Robert V. Daniels, and Nancy W. Heer (eds.), *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); and Stephen White, "The USSR: Patterns of Autocracy and Industrialism," in Archie Brown and Jack Gray (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1977).

2. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 22.

3. *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Moscow: Izd. Politicheskoi Literatury, 1971), p. 6.

4. L. I. Brezhnev, *Leninskim kursom* (Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1976), Vol. 5, pp. 548-549.

5. *Pravda*, March 14, 1976.

"Soviet citizenship training has succeeded and the basic tenets of the ideology have been internalized"; and Samuel Huntington, more recently, has gone so far as to declare that the Soviet Union is probably the "most dramatically successful case [which exists] of planned political culture change."⁶

The remainder of this article will examine this question more closely in the light of a body of little known (and in some cases unpublished) research that has recently appeared in the Soviet Union, concerned with the general problem of the "effectiveness of Communist propaganda."⁷ The Soviet Party authorities, it is perhaps not sufficiently realized, have certainly as much reason to wish to find out the results of their massive and fairly expensive propaganda offensive as do political scientists in the West, and since at least the late 1960s much greater emphasis has been placed upon discovering the extent to which the Party's message has in fact reached the "hearts and minds" of its audience than upon the crudely quantitative indicators that were thought adequate for such an assessment in the past. Research of this kind, much of it sponsored by the Department for the Study of Party Propaganda and Political Information of the Academy of Social Sciences attached to the Central Committee of the CPSU,⁸ is the basis for most of this article, together with the conclusions of an interview-based investigation into the political beliefs and values of former Soviet citizens now resident in Israel, which I conducted in the autumn of 1976.⁹

6. Alfred Meyer, "USSR Incorporated," in Donald W. Treadgold (ed.), *The Development of the USSR* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 24; Samuel Huntington and Jorge Dominguez, "Political Development," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975), Vol. 5, p. 31.

7. To quote the title of a recent book on this theme (P. V. Pozdnyakov, *Effektivnost' kommunisticheskoi propagandy* [Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1975]). It goes without saying that findings of this kind must be handled with some caution, but where the conclusions advanced are not likely to be favored by the Party authorities themselves, as in the case of most findings in this article, it would seem unreasonable not to attach at least a certain measure of validity to them.

8. The Academy, a Party higher educational institution, was founded in 1946; it offers courses in a variety of Party-relevant specialties, and sponsors periodical publications such as *Voprosy effektivnosti partiinoi propagandy i politicheskoi informatsii* (Moscow, 1973-1975), Vyp. 1-3, and *Voprosy teorii i metodov ideologicheskoi raboty* (Moscow, since 1972), Vyp. 1-7.

9. Stephen White, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Political Culture: An Emigré Study," *Comparative Political Studies* (forthcoming); the methodological problems involved in research of this kind are considered more fully in *ibid.*

Political Socialization: The Program

About the scale and vigor of the regime's program of political socialization there can clearly be little dispute. It embraces, first of all, a system of *formal political instruction*, established at an early stage for Party members and extended to the population at large somewhat later. As currently organized, this system comprises three levels: primary (elementary political school), intermediate (schools of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism), and advanced (universities of Marxism-Leninism, schools of the Party *Aktiv*, theoretical seminars, and so on). For Party officials and propagandists, there is a wide variety of further more specific courses and seminars, extending ultimately to the Higher Party School attached to the Central Committee in Moscow.¹⁰ The distribution of numbers in this system in two recent years was as follows:

System of Party Study	Number of Participants (millions)	
	1970-1971	1974-1975
Primary level	2.3	2.5
Intermediate level	6.7	7.5
Advanced level (including propagandists)	6.3	9.6
Total, of which:	15.3	19.6
Party members	10.3	12.1
System of Komsomol study	6.2	6.5
System of economic education	13.8	36.1

Source: *Partiinaya zhizn'*, No. 10 (1976), p. 23.

Political instruction is also carried on through a well-developed system of *agitation and propaganda* (the latter supposedly somewhat more advanced). Mass agitational work is currently conducted by about 3.7 million "agitators," 2.2 million "propagandists," 1.8 million "political informers," and 300,000 "lecturers."¹¹ A further 2.8 million are members of the All-Union 'Znanie' [Knowledge] Society, one of whose principal tasks is the provision of lectures for the broad mass of the population. More than 60,000 such lectures were delivered every day during 1974, to a total audience in excess of 1,000 million.¹² Particular attention is devoted to events

10. N. A. Petrovichev et al. (comps.), *Partiinoye stroitel'stvo. Uchebnoye posobie*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1976), pp. 301-309.

11. *Partiinaya zhizn'*, No. 10 (1976), p. 23.

12. Yu. K. Fischevskii, "Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya effektivnosti lektionnoi propagandy v organizatsiiakh obshchestva 'Znanie,'" *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 4 (1975), p. 109.

or anniversaries of note, such as Lenin's birthday and the anniversary of the October Revolution, and to campaigns in connection with elections, Party congresses, five-year plans, and the like. The thirtieth anniversary of the victory over Fascist Germany, for instance (May 9, 1975), was commemorated by a series of lectures and articles; radio, TV, and film programs; the issuing of a jubilee medal and one-ruble coin; the unveiling of memorials; the awarding of decorations and distinctions; an amnesty; and an increase in the pensions of survivors and their families. No opportunity is lost on such occasions to stress the Party's interpretation of the anniversary in question: in this case, that the "Party and the people are united, that there is no force that can break their unshakable unity," as Brezhnev told a memorial meeting in the Kremlin.¹³

Special care is taken to ensure that youth are brought up in the revolutionary tradition. Schoolchildren are enrolled at the age of seven in the Young Octobrists, then, at the age of ten, in the Pioneers, and finally in the Komsomol, the "trustworthy ally of the Party," as Brezhnev described it to the Twenty-fifth Party Congress, "its immediate and militant reserve."¹⁴ Young people are engaged through these organizations in forms of political activity and instruction appropriate to their years. Regular meetings are arranged with veterans of the civil and second (Great Fatherland) wars, and with Old Bolsheviks. Schoolchildren are also encouraged to collect information about local historical figures and events. Ceremonies are arranged when young people depart to serve in the armed forces; expeditions are organized to nearby places with military or revolutionary associations; and "military-sporting" camps are arranged in which young people can spend their summer holidays. Figures or events of particular importance are commemorated by obelisks, memorials, plaques, and street names; and the places of birth or residence of major political figures are often turned into "house-museums," with a regular program of lectures, exhibitions, and visiting school parties.¹⁵

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the mass media are not neglected. "In the major and complicated task of the formation of the new man, in the ideological struggle with the capitalist world," the Twenty-Fourth Party Congress was told, "the means of mass information and propaganda are a powerful instrument of the Party—

13. *Pravda*, May 9, 1975.

14. *Leninskim kursom*, Vol. 5, p. 545.

15. Visits to such memorials in Moscow are apparently particularly popular, as they can be combined with a good day's shopping in the capital.

newspapers, journals, television, radio, and agencies of information.”¹⁶ Their output, accordingly, has steadily increased. The daily print run of all newspapers was 7 million in 1925; by 1950, however, it had risen to 36 million, and, by 1975, it had reached more than 168 million copies a day. About one-third of this total is accounted for by the major central dailies, such as *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, and a further quarter represents publications intended specifically for younger age groups, such as *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* and *Pionerskaya Pravda*. Books, of course, are not forgotten: in 1975, nearly 4 million copies of works by Marx and Engels and nearly 17 million copies of works by Lenin were published.¹⁷ Television is an institution of relatively more recent origin; already, however, it is received by 70 percent of the Soviet population, and it is intended to increase this coverage to 85 percent in the near future. The number of television sets available for use has more than trebled since 1965.¹⁸

Impact of the Campaign—A Study in Failure?

This, clearly, is a political educational program of unusual scope and intensity, and it would be surprising if it failed to leave some kind of impression upon the consciousness of the Soviet citizen. The extent to which it has done so, however, has remained largely unexplored in Western writings. Frederick Barghoorn, for instance, acknowledges that he can provide no more than a “partial, somewhat speculative answer” to this question, and Darrell Hammer finds the same question simply “impossible to answer.”¹⁹ In what follows, my own somewhat less provisional answer to this question is based primarily upon the body of empirical evidence produced within the Soviet Union which was referred to in the introduction to this article.

Motives for Attendance

It has been established, in the first place, that many people attend political education classes only because they have been obliged to do so. This is not universally the case; an investigation in Buryatia,

16. *Materialy XXIV S'ezda KPSS* (Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1971), p. 89.

17. Figures derived from *Pechat' SSSR v 1975g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1976).

18. *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1974g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1975), p. 507.

19. Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Politics in the USSR* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), p. 139; Darrell P. Hammer, *USSR: The Politics of Oligarchy* (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1974), pp. 87–88.

for instance, found that 86.4 percent of those polled attended their classes "with enthusiasm,"²⁰ and similar findings have been reported from elsewhere. Indifference and apathy, however, appear to be rather more frequently encountered. In Taganrog and Saransk, for instance, 35 percent of those attending political education classes reported that the main reason for their attendance was "Party discipline," "administrative pressure," or a "feeling of duty or obligation."²¹ At Kamensk, an industrial town in the Sverdlovsk region, almost 39 percent reported that they attended political education classes "because they were obliged to do so."²² Even Party members (31.2 percent in one investigation) offered no more exalted explanation for their attendance, and those with higher education were more than twice as likely as those whose education was less advanced to report that they had attended only because they were obliged to do so.²³ Lack of enthusiasm, however, is by no means a monopoly of the better educated; in a poll in a Leningrad factory, for instance, no fewer than 75 percent declared that they attended political education classes only because they were obliged to do so by Party or administrative pressure, and a further 5 percent reported that they attended simply because they "did not wish to offend the lecturer." This interesting finding, not surprisingly, was omitted from the published version of this report.²⁴

Content of the Classes

The classes offer no greater grounds for satisfaction. Many students, for instance, fail to consult the Marxist classics, or even the Party literature prescribed for their course. More than two-thirds of those who attended political education classes in Rostov-on-Don, in one investigation, admitted that they rarely made use of the classics, and a further 15 percent confessed that they made no

20. G. I. Balkhanov, *Ustnaya propaganda i ee effektivnost'* (Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1974), p. 60.

21. N. S. Afonin, *Effektivnost' lektsionnoi propagandy* (Moscow: Znanie, 1975), pp. 95-96.

22. *Usloviya povysheniya obshchestvennoi raboty* (Volgograd: Volgogradskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1973), p. 80.

23. I. S. Soltan, "Politicheskaya ucheba i razvitie obshchestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti rabotnikov promyshlennogo predpriyatiya" (avtoreferat kand. diss., Kishinev State University, 1973), pp. 18-19.

24. N. S. Afonin, "Sotsial'no-politicheskie aspekty povysheniya effektivnosti partiinoy propagandy" (avtoreferat kand. diss., AON pri TsK KPSS Moscow, 1973), p. 20 (the published version is entitled *Lektor i auditoriya* [Saransk: Mordovskoe Knizhnoe Izd., 1973]).

use of them at all.²⁵ No more than a quarter of those polled in Khar'kov made regular use of the classics, and a further 12 percent admitted that they made no preparation for their classes at all.²⁶ In Buryatia, only about one-fifth of the students at the primary level read any Marx, Engels, or Lenin, despite the requirements of their program, and, in an investigation in Uzbekistan, as many as 61 percent were reported to make minimal or no preparation for their classes.²⁷

The content of such classes, not surprisingly, has frequently given rise to complaint. Official theorists admit to two main shortcomings: either a tendency toward "abstract theorization" cut off from the "concrete tasks of Communist construction," or else "crude empiricism" and "a narrowly utilitarian approach." Students of a course in the "fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism," for instance, reported that about half their time was devoted, not to questions of Marxist theory, but to current political issues.²⁸ Despite a recent attempt to secure an increase in the amount of discussion in such classes, moreover, lively debate seems to remain the exception rather than the rule. In Krasnoyarsk, for instance, many members of the class made no contribution at all to discussion, or did so only once or twice a year.²⁹ Students have reported that their lectures were not in effective command of their material, and that they failed to communicate it in a relevant and interesting manner; while lecturers for their part (49 percent in one investigation) were of the opinion that students had simply memorized the material that they were required to study but had not absorbed it. As few as 8.9 percent believed that their students had absorbed the material covered and had altered their beliefs as a result (and this despite a general tendency to exaggerate their attainments).³⁰

Tests conducted upon the students of political education classes tend largely to bear out these gloomy conclusions. Investigations in Moscow and Tomsk, for instance, have found that at the end of a year of Marxist-Leninist study about a quarter of students polled were unable to define "proletariat" or "productive forces," almost

25. *Usloviya povysheniya*, p. 101.

26. *Voprosy obshchestvennoi aktivnosti mass i razvitie politicheskoi organizatsii sovetskogo obshchestva* (Khar'kov: Izdatel'stvo K.G.U., 1968), p. 90.

27. Balkhanov, *Ustnaya propaganda*, p. 66; *Problemy nauchnogo kommunizma* (Moscow: Mysl', 1968), Vyp. 2, p. 116.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 166; Petrovichev et al., *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, p. 287.

29. *Usloviya povysheniya*, p. 101.

30. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya v ideologicheskoi rabote* (Moscow: AON pri TsK KPSS and ISI AN SSSR, 1974), Vyp. 1, p. 142.

one-half were unable to define "dictatorship of the proletariat," and more than 60 percent were unable to define "reformism." Even lower scores were obtained by students of a School of the Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, whose subjects of study include the history of the CPSU and Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Three-quarters were unable to distinguish between confiscation of the estates and nationalization; only 16 percent were able to define "essence" (*sushchnost'*) and "appearance" (*yavlenie*); and as few as 4 percent were able to identify the "essence" and "appearance" of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s.³¹ Even on a more straightforward topic, *détente* (or the "relaxation of international tensions"), students were generally no better informed. Nearly 80 percent were unable to provide an acceptable answer as to why *détente* had become possible, and more than half of those polled were unaware that it would not lead to relaxation in the ideological field as well, a mistake about as basic as it is possible to make in this connection.³²

Other Types of Propaganda

The situation with regard to other forms of propaganda appears to be no more gratifying. Some lectures, for instance, are simply too short; in the time available (typically a lunch break, or just before or after work) there is no time to deal adequately with a subject of any complexity. A more frequent complaint, however, is that lectures are too long and too repetitive, too formal in character (symposia or "question and answer" sessions are preferred), and too little connected with the affairs of the local audience in question. There is also a general preference for lecturers to deal with current events of one kind or another rather than with questions of a more theoretical character. One investigation into this matter found that only 37 percent of those polled expressed any interest in extending their knowledge of Marxist-Leninist philosophy or scientific Communism, compared with 96 and 95 percent, respectively, who expressed interest in current developments on the international and domestic scenes. Among those who did not habitually attend such lectures the disparities were even more marked: only 17 and 19 percent, respectively, expressed an interest in hearing more about

31. P. V. Pozdnyakov et al., *Effektivnost' ideino-vospitateĭnoi raboty* (Moscow: Mysl', 1975), pp. 106, 110.

32. N. S. Afonin (comp.), *Politicheskaya agitatsiya v trudovom kollektive* (Saransk: Mordovskoe Knizhnoe Izd-vo, 1976), p. 27.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy or scientific Communism, compared with almost half who indicated the opposite.³³

The lecturers themselves are frequently overburdened with other sociopolitical tasks and their main employment, and relatively few are able to specialize in a field of particular interest and keep up with the relevant literature (it has also to be noted that lecturers on ideological matters tend generally to be less well qualified than their colleagues in other areas, and to suffer a higher turnover).³⁴ As a result they are often obliged to base their lectures upon a prepared text, which they duly read out (in which case the audience rapidly evaporates), or else to reduce the proceedings to a less than serious level. *Pravda*, for instance, reported that a lively "political information session" had been devoted to the "latest sporting sensations." Other sessions were reportedly devoted to the reading out of "funny stories from the newspaper humor columns."³⁵ As many as 80 percent of those polled, in an investigation in Latvia, complained of the "insufficient and unconvincing argumentation" of such lectures, and more than 40 percent of those who organized the lectures, and 25 percent of the lecturers, were prepared to concede that their level left much to be desired.³⁶

The effect of the printed word appears to be little more successful. Surveys have typically disclosed that the sports and foreign news columns are eagerly consulted, but not the editorials or ideological articles; that relatively little credence is attached to the press in general, compared with foreign and word-of-mouth sources; and that it is generally the younger and better educated who are most skeptical.³⁷ Visual propaganda seems to have a similarly limited impact. "Abstract and banal" slogans are still put up, the head of the Ukrainian Party organization has complained, such as "weeds are the enemies of the fields" and "harvesting is a serious matter";

33. V. S. Korobeinikov (ed.), *Sotsiologicheskie problemy obshchestvennogo mneniya i sredstv massovoi informatsii* (Moscow: ISI AN SSSR., 1975), p. 103.

34. See, for example, *Partiinaya zhizn'*, No. 8 (1977), p. 35, and No. 11 (1976), p. 59. Some lecturers even make ideological mistakes, such as underestimating the role of the working class in contemporary socialist society and failing to indicate that the class nature of U.S. foreign policy remained unchanged, *détente* notwithstanding (*Za vysokuyu effektivnost' lektzionnoi propagandy* [Moscow: Znanie, 1975], pp. 17 and 20).

35. *Pravda*, October 5, 1976.

36. Fischevskii, "Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya," p. 115.

37. See further Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination*, and Nils H. Wessell, "The Credibility, Impact and Effectiveness of the Soviet General Press" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972), *passim*.

they are rarely changed, and they are frequently placed beside safety or fire regulations notices.³⁸ An investigation among industrial workers in Minsk found that between 26 and 30 percent of those polled were unable to recall any example of propaganda of this kind, and another established that only 15–17 percent of those who walked past a poster paid it any attention.³⁹

Effects of Political Education on Behavior

The practical effect of such efforts, finally, appears to be distinctly modest. Only 31 percent of those who attended political education classes in Saransk, for instance, were of the opinion that they would be able to make use of their knowledge in everyday life,⁴⁰ and in an investigation in Kishinev only about half of those who were engaged in political study took an active part in sociopolitical life.⁴¹ Workers at an aluminum plant in Novosibirsk, in one of the most detailed investigations of this kind ever to have been conducted, were asked what influence their attendance at political education classes had had upon them. Their answers were distributed as follows: 22.5 percent replied that they listened more frequently to political broadcasts on the radio and TV; 21.8 percent replied that they read more fiction; 17 percent wished to know more and to be useful to society; 11.2 percent wished to raise their educational and political level; 11.1 percent took a more critical view of their colleagues' behavior, and 9.1 percent were more critical of the TV and films they saw; 8.6 percent took a more active part in sociopolitical life; 5 percent reported that they felt better equipped to take part in mass political work; and 4.7 percent read more sociopolitical literature. As many as 16.6 percent, however, replied that their political education had had no influence at all upon their subsequent behavior; and 30 percent refrained from answering the question altogether.⁴² These are scarcely the kind of results that would gratify Party propagandists.

38. V. V. Shcherbitskii, *Vospitat' soznatel'nykh, aktivnykh stroitelei kommunizma* (Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1974), p. 28.

39. *XXIV S'ezd KPSS i problemy povysheniya proizvodstvennoi i obshchestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti trudovykh kollektivov* (Minsk: Minsk. gorkom KP Belorussii, 1972), p. 69; A. M. Shumakov, *Naglyadnaya propaganda* (Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit., 1973), p. 191.

40. Afonin, *Lektor i auditoriya*, p. 73.

41. Soltan, *Politicheskaya ucheba*, p. 15.

42. G. I. Mel'nikov (comp.), *Kollektiv i lichnost'* (Irkutsk: Izd. I.G.U., 1973), pp. 133–134.

Implications

It should not be inferred from the foregoing that Soviet citizens are actively hostile toward the system within which they live, or that they would seek to modify every aspect of that system if they had the opportunity. A number of investigations, on the contrary, have established that many of the system's most basic institutions, such as public ownership of the economy, the comprehensive provision of welfare, and strong leadership, are firmly rooted in popular expectations and values, and that most Soviet citizens would prefer to retain them whatever kind of government were in power.⁴³ But this is by no means necessarily to imply the success of the program of socialization which the regime has sponsored since 1917, a success, on the evidence so far examined, we would have to describe as doubtful. There was in fact considerable support *before* 1917 for many of the institutions now regarded as basic to the Soviet system, such as strong central leadership, state regulation of economic activity, censorship, and so forth, and we need no program of socialization to explain their popular acceptance.⁴⁴ The regime's success in advancing beyond these traditional attachments and securing a widespread commitment to Marxist-Leninist values appears rather more limited. So far, at least, it would seem fair to suggest that the regime has failed to generate a commitment to the values it espouses sufficient in itself to legitimate its rule.

It has, of course, been argued that a commitment of this kind would be generated automatically by the passage of time, as successive generations grew up knowing only the experience of Soviet rule and subject from an earlier and earlier age to its program of socialization. This was certainly the conclusion of the émigré studies conducted in the early 1950s. Raymond Bauer, Alex Inkeles, and Clyde Kluckhohn, for instance, found a "greater tendency for the younger generations to take for granted the institutional features of Soviet society and to concentrate on how the institutions work, rather than to question the institutions as such." Overall, they wrote, there was a "very definite impression of greater potential and actual support of the whole Soviet system by the rising younger generations," a support which "developed 'naturally' through time, becomes taken

43. Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959); David Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976), pp. 82-92; White, "Political Culture," *passim*.

44. This point is argued at some length in White, "The USSR: Patterns of Autocracy and Industrialism," and will not be elaborated here.

for granted by those who give it, and is not likely to be shaken by forces within the system itself." They argued that the regime might expect to "increase the breadth and stability of its social support with the passage of time," as death claimed the "older generations who characteristically opposed the system on principle and could not easily be reconciled."⁴⁵

In a study I carried out more recently in Israel, however, these propositions were not borne out. Younger respondents, admittedly, were more likely than their elders to take a favorable view of Lenin, and if they took an unfavorable view it was more likely to be qualified or with reservations ("perhaps it wasn't his fault," "his ideas were broadly positive, but their ultimate results were negative," and so forth). Younger respondents were also more likely to find particular aspects of the system to be praiseworthy, such as the educational and health systems, a "fairly high level of culture," full employment, and cheap housing and transport. As the earlier studies had hypothesized, this reflects the changed and improving circumstances within which most recent Soviet generations have grown up; younger respondents had no direct experience of Stalinism (most of those over forty, in contrast, had been arrested or had suffered the loss of family and friends), and they considered their material position in the Soviet Union to be either satisfactory or very good, and improving.

But while they were willing to accept many of the social and economic institutions of the Soviet system, such as public ownership of industry and the comprehensive provision of welfare, younger Israeli respondents were generally committed to a thoroughgoing democratization of the political system. There was virtually universal support for the principles of freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of belief (including religious worship), the right to choose one's place of residence, and a multi-party system. Virtually all the younger respondents, for instance, believed that "it should be possible for all who wish to do so to form their own political parties, without interference from the authorities," and there was strong support for the right to criticize the actions of the authorities to whatever extent was thought necessary. Those younger interviewees had been born and brought up under wholly Soviet conditions; they had parents who were often favorably disposed toward the regime; and they had generally been in no serious material difficulty. Yet there could be no doubt, comparing these findings with those

45. Raymond A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles, and Clyde Kluckhohn, *How the Soviet System Works* (New York: Vintage, 1961), pp. 224-230.

obtained in the earlier investigation, of the extent to which younger respondents had become both more reform-minded and less inhibited in expressing their views than their elders.⁴⁶

These findings are admittedly based upon a small and imperfect sample. Yet, whatever their faults, they do at least cast some doubt upon the widely shared assumption that the passage of time will be sufficient in itself to enhance the legitimacy of the regime, and of its political arrangements more specifically. There is simply no sign that successive cohorts of Soviet citizens, their better material circumstances and more comprehensive socialization notwithstanding, are any more willing than their predecessors to accept the restrictions that the regime places upon their work and self-expression, or that political institutions and practices, such as a single-party system and a controlled press, are becoming progressively more popular. This is not to suggest that actively reformist views are as yet widely held, even by the intelligentsia; and it was certainly the opinion of Israeli respondents that Soviet industrial workers, their restricted civil liberties notwithstanding, were broadly content with the tolerable and improving standard of living with which the regime has so far provided them in return for no more than the routine performance of their duties and the avoidance of open opposition. But it would probably be unwise to assume that the loyalty of this group would necessarily survive undiminished if the regime, for instance, were to raise prices and increase labor discipline (as falling growth rates and escalating budgetary subsidies may compel it increasingly to do),⁴⁷ while the loyalty of other social groups would appear even more problematic, at least in the medium and long term.

Overall, then, there would appear to be no need to dispute earlier findings that many of the most basic institutions of the Soviet socio-economic system are firmly based and widely supported, and to that extent "legitimate"; but the political institutions of the Soviet state would appear to have generated no comparable degree of loyalty, despite their sixty years of continuous existence and the regime's comprehensive program of socialization. This limited degree of commitment to the "regime," as distinct from the "system," in turn suggests the further and somewhat more tentative conclusion

46. White, "Political Culture," *passim*.

47. A number of official price rises were introduced early in 1977, and further increases may be in prospect: see *Pravda*, January 5, and February 8, 1977, and Radio Liberty Research, *Annotatsii (Current Abstracts)*, March 16, 1977, p. 3.

that the Soviet political system may be placed under some degree of strain by the unpalatable choices, economic and otherwise, which future decades appear likely to place upon it. Liberal democracies, buttressed by the "come rain or come shine" legitimacy which their political institutions confer upon them, may find it possible to survive a period of static or even falling living standards; a regime whose legitimacy is based more narrowly upon "performance" criteria may find it rather less easy.