

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY	USSR (Sverdlovsk Oblast)	REPORT	
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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2. Following are corrected spellings for some Russian names and words appearing in the report:

- Page 2, Paragraph 6: For Proektstroi read Proyektstroy
For Sveipromstroi read Sverpromstroy
- Page 7, Paragraph 33: For Kazakni read Kazakhi
- Page 8, Paragraph 40: For Elektro-Tekhnisheski Institut read Elektro Tekhnicheskij Institut.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

REPORT

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY : USSR

DATE DISTR. 14

SUBJECT : Living and Social Conditions in Sverdlovsk

NO. OF PAGES 10

PLACE ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCL. 50X1-HUM
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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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HOUSING AND COMMUNAL FACILITIES

1. [redacted] the entire city of Sverdlovsk was provided with electrical facilities. [redacted] no more than 10 - 15 per cent of the the dwellings in Sverdlovsk were furnished with running water. Only newly-built sections of the city were completely provided with sewerage and running water. Most houses and apartment buildings in the center of the city (the older part of the city) had outdoor toilets. Drinking water was obtained from large hydrants located on the streets. There was no shortage of water, and it was provided without charge. 50X1-HUM

2. The streets within the city of Sverdlovsk were in terrible condition in 1946 [redacted]. But a large number of the main streets were paved with asphalt during the following six years. Many prisoners of war [redacted] were employed in this work as were Soviet citizens sentenced to forced labor. By June 1952, the main street (Ulitsa Lenina) and the larger cross-streets had been paved. It was planned to pave a certain number of streets each year.

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3. The condition of streets on the outskirts of the city was somewhat better. A regulation of some years' standing required that all streets located in newly constructed housing developments be paved with asphalt. [redacted] 50X1-HUM
[redacted] 50X1-HUM
4. The public transportation facilities of Sverdlovsk included a streetcar network consisting of 12 lines, two trolley-bus lines, and one bus network which primarily serviced outlying suburbs and villages. There was also an electric railway, extending from 80 to 100 kilometers outside of the city, which connected the city with more remote villages and workers' settlements. [redacted] 50X1-HUM
[redacted] the transportation facilities were entirely inadequate in the morning and evening rush hours. The streetcars, the primary means of transportation, were filled far beyond capacity. One generally waited a long time before a streetcar came along which had standing room. Streetcar facilities were expanded in recent years with the addition of new and modern streetcars. They generally met the needs of the population, even during rush hours. 50X1-HUM
5. Most inhabitants of Sverdlovsk lived in apartment buildings by the enterprise employing them. And almost all housing construction in the postwar period was undertaken by industrial enterprise for their own workers and not by communal authorities. [redacted] no more than 25 buildings were constructed by municipal authorities [redacted] in Sverdlovsk. As a result, housing not owned by industrial enterprises was at a premium. In short, considerable progress was made in alleviating the housing situation in plant-owned housing settlements, but very little improvement was observed in the city itself. 50X1-HUM
6. Housing constructed by Plant No. 659 was financed by funds provided by the Ministry of the Electrical Industry. The plant had its own construction office which drew up plans for these apartment buildings. The actual construction of the buildings was carried out by local construction agencies on a contract basis. These agencies were reimbursed by the plant for this work. The two largest construction agencies in Sverdlovsk were Proektstroi and Sverpromstroi. 50X1-HUM
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7. The amount and quality of housing available was related to the three industrial categories mentioned above. Plants in the first category had considerably more funds at their disposal for the construction of housing than plants in the second or third category. [redacted] for example, [redacted] a neighboring plant, a first-class enterprise, was able to build far more housing [redacted] As a result, workers at the other plant enjoyed much better housing.
8. It was possible for a person to build his own house. These houses were one-story bungalows with two to four rooms. Construction costs amounted to about 20,000 rubles. Loans, running for about 15 years, could be obtained to finance these private undertakings. But relatively few people took advantage of this opportunity. Only a very small percentage of dwellings was privately owned. 50X1-HUM
9. [redacted] a two-room apartment located in a building owned by Plant No. 659. Total living space amounted to about 55 square meters. Facilities included electricity, running water, sewerage, and our own bath, toilet, and kitchen. Normally, such an apartment would have been occupied by six to eight people. [redacted] a foreign specialist [redacted] was entitled to this relative luxury. For this apartment [redacted] paid a monthly rent of 54 rubles, three rubles per month for water, and from 70 to 80 rubles for electricity.

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10. [redacted] Each inhabitant was supposedly entitled to a given number of square meters of living space. The monthly rent for this minimum amount was somewhat more than one ruble per square meter. [redacted] the monthly rent for living space above this minimum amount was 1.75 rubles per square meter per month. 50X1-HUM
11. At first, most of the furniture in apartment buildings belonging to Plant No. 659 was plant property. The situation changed in 1948. Families using this furniture were given the choice of either returning it or buying it from the plant at a moderate price. Since that time, the plant has rented no furniture to its employees. Plant authorities apparently believed in 1948 that the supply of furniture available to purchasers in state stores was sufficiently adequate to warrant such a step.
12. The intelligentsia occupied better housing than did the working class families. This distinction was made because of the positions held by the former group, and not because they could afford to pay higher rents. Indeed, there was no great difference between the income of the average worker and that of the average employee.
13. At the bottom of the housing ladder were the barracks, the so-called obshchezhitie, which housed unmarried workers. Four to six individuals were quartered in a room approximately 16 square meters in size. Each person had his own bed, a small night table, and that was about all. On the average, one person occupied four to five square meters of living space in these dwellings.
14. At the next level were rooms in one-story wooden buildings owned by Plant No. 659. These rooms were allotted to married workers with little seniority.
15. Married workers who had demonstrated their intention to stay at the plant received in due time (several years or more) a one-room apartment in one of the newly-constructed apartment buildings. Unlike the other dwellings just described, they were equipped with running water, indoor toilets and central heating. A typical working-class family of four was normally allotted one room, 20 square meters in size. However, a room this size would also be given to a married couple with no children who were both members of the intelligentsia; that is, ten square meters per person instead of five. Furthermore, a larger percentage of employees than workers was allowed to occupy new housing space.
16. Apartment buildings constructed before 1951 normally contained two-or-three-room apartments which were occupied by an equal number of families. Thus, two or three families shared a kitchen and bathroom facilities. It was the trend after 1951 to construct one-room apartments in Sverdlovsk; that is, an apartment consisting of a single living-bedroom, small kitchen and toilet.
17. [redacted] the housing situation in Sverdlovsk was a continual source of complaints. It caused much dissatisfaction among the Soviet population. 50X1-HUM

CONSUMER GOODS

18. A decided improvement in the consumer goods market set in immediately following the currency reform of 1947. The standard of living continued to rise until about the beginning of the Korean war. From that point on, the standard of living remained at about the same level or even decreased somewhat.


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- 19. This slow-down or deterioration was manifested in two ways. First, the price reduction laws of 1951 and 1952 affected food products almost exclusively. The prices of clothing, shoes, radios, furniture, bicycles, etc., were not lowered. And these were articles which were in increasing demand by Soviet consumers as a result of the post-currency-reform improvement.
- 20. Secondly, many articles became scarce or unavailable in state stores. This deterioration in the food products market was first noticeable in the middle of 1950. (Sugar had been the only food product in short supply in the period from the end of 1948 to the middle of 1950 -- the best period in terms of availability of food.)
- 21. A particularly sharp slump developed in January 1952. Meat, sausage, milk, butter and cheese almost completely disappeared from the shelves of state stores. It was a stroke of luck when they were found. Oil and fats derived from plants were the only fat products available.
- 22. The availability of bread remained unchanged during this period of deterioration; sufficient quantities of black bread and first-grade white bread were available, but cheap white bread was hard to find.
- 23. The high point in respect to availability of clothing and "hard" consumer goods was also reached in 1949. In contrast to the food market, the decline in the availability of clothing and other articles set in at the end of 1949. This downward trend continued until my departure in 1952. The availability of imported clothing and other articles from the "peoples democracies" also reached its maximum in 1949 and steadily declined thereafter.
- 24. Cheap cotton cloth (cotton prints sold to the rural population) and cheap shoes made of fabric and rubber soles were an exception to this general rule. They were available in undiminished quantities during this period. 50X1-HUM
- 25.  the shortage of certain consumer goods which set in about the time of the Korean War was not due to increased consumer demand but was the result of a policy directing more goods and productive capacity to the army. It is noteworthy that woolen and leather goods were suddenly in very short supply. Radios were also difficult to obtain, probably because part of the radio industry had been converted to military production. And among those food products which became difficult to obtain were items which could be canned or preserved.
- 26. The Soviet population generally attributed these shortages as well as the general leveling off of the prevailing living standards to the hostilities in the Far East. The average Soviet was dissatisfied with this development; dissatisfied because the steady improvement which followed the currency reform suddenly ceased. 50X1-HUM

27.  prices in rubles of certain food products on sale in Sverdlovsk in February 1952 (before the 1952 price reduction): 50X1-HUM

<u>Article</u>	<u>State Price</u>	<u>Free Price</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1 kilo dark rye bread	1.00	-	Always available after 1948.
1 kilo white bread poor grade	1.80	-	Always short.
1 kilo white bread expensive grade	2.20	-	
Cookies (Keks)	9.00-11.00	-	Always short.

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<u>Article</u>	<u>State Price</u>	<u>Free Price</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1 kilo cake	23.00-28.00	-	Sufficient quantity available.
1 kilo wheat flour	6.50	9.00 -10.00	Seldom available in state stores. Always available in free market.
1 kilo rye flour	4.20	6.00	Seldom available in state stores. Always available in free market.
1 kilo butter	32.00-36.00	-	Less available after 1950. Almost disappeared after January 1952.
1 liter milk	2.20	3.00 -5.00	Short in state stores. Sufficient in market.
1 kilo cheese (40% fat)	36.00	-	Sufficient until Jan. 1952. Then almost disappeared.
1 kilo sour cream (<u>Smetana</u>)	18.00	20.00 -25.00	Sufficient until Jan. 1952. Then almost disappeared. Poorer grade in free market.
kilo margarine	18.00-22.00	-	Sufficient since 1949 when it appeared in stores.
1 kilo mixed fat (<u>kombizhir</u>)	18.00	-	Sufficient since 1949 when it appeared in stores.
1 kilo lard	28.00-31.00	-	Adequate supplies.
Sunflower seed oil, other vegetable oils	20.00	-	Always available.
10 eggs	12.00-13.00	18.00-24.00	Seasonal fluctuations in availability. Usually on hand in free market. Sold in state stores as meat substitute.
1 kilo beef	17.00	24.00-35.00	After 1951 little on hand in state stores. Almost completely disappeared in Jan. 1952. This was also true of pork, veal, and mutton.
1 kilo pork	23.00	26.00-35.00	
1 kilo veal	-	24.00-28.00	
1 kilo mutton	15.00	24.00-28.00	
1 kilo goose	25.00	-	Always available until 1951. Very little on hand after Jan. 1952. Little sold in free market. Also true of ducks and chickens.
1 kilo duck	28.00	-	
1 kilo chicken	19.00-23.00	-	

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1 kilo cheap haddock	7.00- 9.00	8.00	10.00	Some type of fish was always available in sufficient amounts.
1 kilo pike	12.00	-		
1 kilo salted herring	8.00	-		
1 kilo marinated herring	21.00	-		
1 kilo smoked fish	7.00-10.00	-		
1 kilo smoked salmon	42.00	-		
1 kilo smoked herring	20.00	-		
1 kilo sausage (average grade)	18.00-23.00	-		Sufficient until Jan. 1952, then seldom available.
1 kilo best sausage (salami)	36.00	-		Sufficient until Jan. 1952, then seldom available.
1 kilo crystallized beet sugar	11.50	-		Insufficient until 1949, then became available.
1 kilo potatoes	0.80	1.00-2.00		Insufficient quantities in state stores, always on hand in free market.
1 kilo cabbage	2.50	3.00		Always available.
1 kilo sauerkraut	3.00- 4.50	4.00-5.00		Usually available.
1 kilo onions	2.00	2.00		" "
1 kilo tomatoes	-	18.00-30.00		Only available in free market.
1 kilo cucumbers	-	18.00-30.00		" "
1 kilo apples	9.00-18.00	25.00-30.00		Available in state stores only in autumn. Always on hand in free market.
1 kilo dried fruit	12.00	20.00		Always available.

28. The following is a list of clothing prices in rubles as of July 1952 (following the 1952 price reduction). The items refer only to state store prices in Sverdlovsk.

Article	Men's Clothing	Price
Linen shirt		40-60
Artificial silk shirt		112
Silk shirt		245
Undershirt		16
Pair of long underpants, cotton tricoot		48
Pair of plain socks		8-10
Pair of kapron(nylon) reinforced socks		15-17
Pair of rubbers		35
Pair of overshoes		70
Pair of cloth shoes, rubber soles		75
Pair of leather work shoes, rubber soles		150
Pair of oxford shoes, genuine leather, imported		220-320
Ready-made cotton suit		220-400
Ready-made wool suit		600-1200
Most expensive tailor-made wool suit	about--	1800
Suit material (1 meter long, 1.40 wide)		150-450
Raincoat, rubber material		128
Winter overcoat, padded with fur collar		500-1500
Cap		25-38
Felt hat		125
Pair of felt boots (valonki), gray		40-60
Pair of felt boots, white, with leather trimming		160

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<u>Article</u>	<u>Women's Clothing</u>	<u>Price</u>
Pair of tricot underpants		12
Tricot undershirt		12
Linen nightgown		45
Silk nightgown		210
Pair of <u>kapron</u> stockings		35-42
Pair of all-leather shoes		180-420
Pair of leather shoes with rubber soles		130
Pair of cloth shoes, rubber soles		25-75
Pair of rubbers		32
Pair of overshoes		76
Cotton dress		70-120
Wool dress		260-600
Tailored suit made of good woolen material		800-900
Winter overcoat, padded and with fur collar		500-800
Hamster fur coat		700
Rabbit fur coat		1200
Persian lamb fur coat		6000-10000

29. living conditions in the USSR were far worse than in the West. 50X1-HUM

The Volga Germans were in fairly close contact with Germany before the war and were aware of living conditions there.

30. Furthermore, those Soviets who had previously lived in Leningrad and Moscow certainly were probably familiar with conditions in the West. And even the difference in the standard of living in Moscow and Leningrad on the one hand and the provinces on the other was very great. People who had been evacuated from Leningrad to Sverdlovsk during the war had lived on a far higher plane in the metropolis. They had had larger apartments, better furniture and lower prices. In fact, food prices in 1952 were still almost three times as high as they were before the war.

31. The low standard of living in the USSR was a primary source of dissatisfaction among the Soviet population. Open and public complaints about living conditions were very common. Shoppers expressed their dissatisfaction that prices were so high and goods so hard to find. Or while standing in line to buy a certain product, they griped that queueing up was still necessary. It seemed that the Soviet population was allowed complete freedom in complaining about living conditions and other such concrete matters, as long as such criticism was not directed against the state itself. The people had to have at least one outlet.

32. The Soviet population seemed to blame the Western powers for this state of affairs. They evidently believed that the aggressive policies and threats of the Western powers prevented the USSR from producing more consumer goods; that it was necessary to maintain a large army and to divert a large part of industrial capacity to military purposes. This clever propaganda strategy on the part of the Soviet Government was apparently accepted by the population.

ETHNIC RELATIONS

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33. There were many minority group members, so-called natsmony, in Sverdlovsk. they constituted 20 per cent of the Sverdlovsk population. There were Uzbeki, Kazakni and quite a few members of the smaller nationality groups along the Volga. Most of them were workers. It was my impression that many of these workers had been recruited, almost compelled to take up employment in Sverdlovsk.

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34. The Russian population lived on a higher economic level on the average than the ethnic minority groups. Higher positions calling for some degree of responsibility were filled almost exclusively by Russians. And the cultural life was predominantly Russian. All schools, without exception, were conducted in Russian. However, a few attempts were made to present stage plays in the languages of the minority groups. An attempt was made to establish a Tatar theater, and a touring Yiddish stage company from Ukraine appeared in the fall of 1951 in Sverdlovsk. 50X1-HUM

35. Relations between the various nationalities were remarkably good. The only prejudice was directed against Soviet Jews, but this was very common. 50X1-HUM

36. no aggressive anti-Semitism on the part of the Great Russians. But this antagonism found expression in conversations which could be heard every day. For example, a Russian was always quick to point out that a fellow worker was Jewish whenever the latter did something wrong. 50X1-HUM

37. In my opinion, anti-Semitism has remained alive in the USSR while other ethnic tension has died out because Soviet Jews occupy so many leading positions in Soviet life in proportion to their number. The fact that Soviet Jews were, on the whole, better educated than the Russians is one explanation of this dominance. Furthermore, Soviet Jews played an important role in the Communist Party during the early years of its power and thus were able to occupy a disproportionately large number of top posts. At any rate, the above situation has created envy among the Russians and has kept anti-Semitism alive. 50X1-HUM

38. About one-third of the technical intelligentsia at Plant No. 659 was Jewish. However, plant authorities made an obvious effort to reduce the number of Jews in leading positions by demoting some of them and replacing them with Great Russians. As this action first became apparent in 1950 it was launched in the middle or end of 1949. 50X1-HUM

39. "A re-examination of professional qualifications" was the official explanation of these personnel actions. It was claimed that the individuals affected did not have the necessary education or experience for the posts they held. 50X1-HUM

However, such a policy undoubtedly existed. Its results could not be hidden. It became apparent by 1950 that these demotions of Jews were not isolated cases, but part of a general policy. Many of my Soviet colleagues at the plant were also of the opinion that there was a systematic drive to demote or reduce the authority of Jewish employees. Jews employed at higher educational institutions were being demoted if they lacked the full requirements for their jobs. 50X1-HUM
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40. [Redacted]

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41. Relatively few Jews at Plant No. 659 were affected by this drive. [redacted] no Jews being arrested in Sverdlovsk as a result of the so-called "cosmopolite" purge. It should be kept in mind that the Urals region is the first zone of exile in the USSR. All people living in this area were already classified as second-class citizens for one reason or another. That is to say [redacted] Jews in the Urals region were less affected by these measures than Jews in the western part of the USSR because they were already living a life of partial exile. [redacted] the Urals as the first zone of exile in the USSR. Although this statement undoubtedly contains an element of truth, it seems unlikely that "all people living in this area" were living a life of partial exile.
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RELIGION

42. Only one Orthodox church was open and functioning in Sverdlovsk. It was a medium-size church. Weekly services were held on Sunday, children were baptized and other religious ceremonies performed. There was also a small chapel at a local cemetery where religious funeral services took place.
43. All other church buildings had long since been put to use for other purposes. However, a group of Jews in Sverdlovsk regularly met in a small house in the city where they conducted religious services. This worship was not forbidden by Soviet authorities, but [redacted] was not officially encouraged. This synagogue or prayer house was attended primarily by elderly Jews.
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44. The Orthodox church was very well attended. Young and old, workers and intellectuals alike attended services there. Even some army officers went to church clad in their uniforms. Naturally there were more women than men in attendance, but that is true throughout the world.
45. The overwhelming majority of weddings were simply civil ceremonies and were not sanctified in the church. But church weddings were far less frequent than baptisms. An extraordinarily large number of baptisms took place, at least 30 per cent of all children. On days when children were baptized, parents awaited their turn for hours on end in long lines in front of the church.
46. Undoubtedly some of the parents no longer believed in religion, but felt that "it does no harm" or "you can never tell." However, [redacted] there were very many religiously devout among the Soviet citizenry, despite the constant propaganda conducted by the state against religion. The average Russian is by nature religiously inclined.
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47. Indicative of this is the [redacted] icons in Russian homes. This was particularly true of natives of Sverdlovsk who had a private house or of other families who had apartments to themselves. A Russian family usually put up an icon whenever it had an apartment large enough to call it home.
48. [redacted] discussions among the younger Soviet engineers as to whether religion was really "opiate of the masses" or whether religious traditions had really been eradicated from the minds of the Soviet people. [redacted] they doubted the validity of the Party line that all of religion is nonsense. On the other hand, [redacted] not believe that Western propagandists could utilize the
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theme "religion" - that is, the suppression of religion in the Soviet Union - with any great effect in arousing anti-communist tendencies among the Soviet population. Despite their doubts concerning the validity of the Party line on this question, the Soviet younger generation has been schooled too thoroughly in anti-religious thinking to be swayed by counterpropaganda on the part of the West. The younger generation is neither for nor against religion but simply passive in this matter.

CRIME AND VAGRANCY

49. Pickpocketing, the most common form of crime in Sverdlovsk, dropped off somewhat in recent years. This development was probably due to the better living conditions following the currency reform. The lower prices of goods sold in state stores depreciated the resale value of stolen articles. The business of pickpocketing became less profitable.
50. Crime in general and thievery in particular were well organized in the USSR. Pickpockets generally worked together in gangs. Almost all of them were relatively young boys, ranging from ten years of age on up. A gang "worked", one city for a certain period and then moved on to another city when things got too "hot." [redacted] 50X1-HUM
[redacted] grand larceny and other major crimes were also carried out by gangs of criminals. 50X1-HUM
51. Pickpocketing was far more common in Sverdlovsk than it is in western Europe. The incidence of grand larceny, murder and other major crimes was not particularly high [redacted]
52. The number of beggars to be seen on the streets at Sverdlovsk did not diminish during the course of my six years there. There always were a large number of beggars to be seen in certain areas of the city, particularly in the area of the kolkhoz markets. Other beggars made their rounds from house to house. 50X1-HUM
53. Most beggars to be seen on the street were either cripples or elderly people. The former were presumably war veterans who could not subsist on their pensions. The latter apparently received no pensions. There were also many women beggars who went from house to house asking for a few kopeks. Most of them were mothers of many children who thus were unable to work. They had to help support their family in this manner.
54. There were certainly far more beggars in Sverdlovsk than would be found in a German city of similar size.

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