

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

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NOTE FOR: DCI
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FROM: Herbert E. Meyer, VC/NIC

Here's an exceptionally rich com-
pendium of (unevaluated) reporting of
life in the Soviet Union.

HEM

Herbert E. Meyer

Attachment

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INTRODUCTION

The following comments on various aspects of the current Soviet scene were volunteered by emigrants who left the Soviet Union [redacted] 1983. [redacted]

[redacted] Also included in this report are a small number of observations by persons still resident in the USSR, who have been identified as Soviet citizens.

These brief comments are unevaluated and are provided for background information only. No attempt has been made to ensure that they present a balanced view of Soviet reality.

An index by subject heading is supplied at the back of the report.

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AFGHANISTAN

A friend of mine, a senior instructor at the Military Academy, complained to me that the Soviet army went to Afghanistan completely unprepared. "They thought they would crush the Afghans right away with their fire power, but they encountered more resistance than they expected. There are no specialized anti-guerilla units. The army and the KGB do not cooperate and there is friction with the Afghan commanding officers. None of the Soviet officers have real fighting experience. They are not flexible enough to adapt their tactics to the circumstances. The combat looks like repeating the pattern of the conquest of Central Asia in the twenties and thirties [i.e. the conflict will be a lengthy one]. The USSR is not interested in simply putting down partisan resistance, by burning villages and so on; instead it wants to take over the country completely, as it did with Czechoslovakia. Whatever happens, the USSR will be in Afghanistan for a long time to come." (Tashkent pensioner in his 60's, former CP member) [redacted]

At first people thought that serving in Afghanistan would be like serving in Poland or East Germany, and that their sons would come home with Western-made clothes. Not until the first zinc coffins began to arrive did they realize what it means to be on active duty in Afghanistan.... When a soldier is buried in his home town, a plainclothes KGB agent attends the burial to keep a look-out for any anti-government outbursts. I know this because it was the job of a friend of mine to do this. ([redacted] director in his 60's from Leningrad) [redacted]

In Tashkent people are used to seeing young invalids wandering around the streets in a state of drunkenness, and standing in line for meat at the special stores [for war invalids] along with the elderly ex-soldiers from the Second World War. However, according to a nurse who lived in my building who had worked in military hospitals, only a few of those wounded in Afghanistan returned to the USSR. The majority are treated on the spot or else taken to Kabul. The soldiers had also told her that in remote parts of the country the officers simply shoot their wounded. The majority of the soldiers smoked hashish. They told her that in Afghanistan it was easy to buy things like Japanese watches, cigarette lighters, jeans, etc.... (Tashkent pensioner in her 60's)

A woman set fire to herself in the city park in Kharkov because her son had been killed in Afghanistan, and her attempts to recover his body for burial had failed. A friend of mine saw the fire, and watched the police and the emergency services arrive. Later, a rumor circulated that the woman was crazy. (Kharkov mechanic in his 50's) [redacted]

They are sending fewer Tajiks to Afghanistan than they did to begin with. Not only were Tajiks unwilling to fight their "Muslim brothers," many of them even joined the Afghan partisans. So they have been replaced by Russians, who are being rushed into Afghanistan like cattle to the slaughterhouse. They are dying at

such a rate that coffins are in short supply, and so a new factory has been set up in Dushanbe to produce zinc coffins. It uses zinc-coated metal sheets from the Urals. Local residents call it the "grave mill." (Tajik technician, Soviet citizen)

I have heard that the Afghan partisans are showering the Soviet army of occupation with leaflets in Russian appealing to them to stop this senseless invasion of Afghanistan, and describing atrocities perpetrated by Soviet punitive detachments on the Afghan population. Large numbers of these leaflets have already reached the Soviet Union. But our organs claim that there is no partisan movement in Afghanistan, only American mercenaries, whom they call "enemies of the people," "bandits," or more simply "basmachi." All the motor vehicles produced by the automobile factory where I work are requisitioned by the army, and we are left with only unrepairable wrecks. (Tajik white collar worker, Soviet citizen)

Tashkent is full of soldiers from the European parts of the USSR. They receive training there before being sent to Afghanistan. Only Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians are sent there now, because many of the Central Asian troops who originally went there either joined the partisans or simply refused to fight. Most of the soldiers come from the countryside, rather than the cities, since there are fewer repercussions if they are killed. It is very depressing to see all those young men in uniform who are just beginning to understand that they are simply cannon fodder. Cases of desertion are becoming more frequent. In the city the number of crimes is on the increase. The soldiers are nervous and nationality tensions give rise to constant fighting. Officers and soldiers alike have been caught carrying drugs which they get from Afghanistan and sell, making huge profits. In the fall soldiers are sent to work in the nearby kolkhozy since there is such a shortage of manpower. (Tashkent engineer in his 30's)

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COMMENTS ON SUCCESSION TO ANDROPOV

We expected a lot from Andropov: that he would re-establish order, bring about the necessary changes in the economy, improve the people's living standards, improve relations with the West, etc. We had been describing him in glowing terms: intelligent, educated, honest, modest, progressive. But this was more a description of what the people needed and wanted in a leader than an accurate description of the man himself. What we need is someone young, strong and well-educated; someone not exactly like Stalin perhaps but with some of his qualities. But Chernenko is an old man too. There's no point in expecting him to do anything important. He is an experienced bureaucrat, but he knows nothing about real life and he never will. All he knows is paper and

statistics. He has never been abroad. He doesn't even know how to read his speeches properly, and he can't hold his hands steady! When the camera showed them all standing there on the balcony, I found myself thinking: If only a strong young man would make a clean sweep of all these old fogies. (Leningrad white collar worker, Soviet citizen)

We don't have the same democratic traditions in the Soviet Union as in the West. Without going into the reasons for this, it must be acknowledged that the majority of the people long for a "strong" leader, who would be able to lead the country out of its problems. What they want is a kind of father figure: good, just, hard-working, but at the same time severe and firm. Could Andropov have fulfilled this role? We don't know. The things that he did succeed in doing in the few months he was in office were appreciated by the population as a whole, but would they have worked in the long run, if he had ruled for, say, 10-15 years? We don't know. Chernenko is also an unknown quantity. It is true that he said he was going to continue the work of Andropov, but they all say this when they come into office, and then later do as they please. He is said to be severe, but this is not enough to lead a country as large and complicated as ours. We know that he was close to Brezhnev, but most of all we know that the fate of our people and government are in the hands of an old man surrounded by other old men. (Leningrad engineer, Soviet citizen)

INHUMAN TREATMENT OF ZEKs

I heard about conditions on the Urengoi gas pipeline from a young man who used to frequent the library where I worked, who had been drafted into military security. He told me that camps had been built along the route of the pipeline to house the zeks who were working on it. Every 100 km, four or five camps had been built, each holding between 1000 and 2000 prisoners. There were also camps for women. Work started at 5 a.m. every day. The zeks received no protection against mosquito bites and there were numerous cases of blood poisoning. At least five people were buried in each camp every day. My informant knew of eight instances when the Central Asian guards shot down zeks. After a spell on the pipeline, his regiment was sent to Eastern Siberia to guard coal quarries. A vein of uranium was discovered and the geologists immediately alerted Moscow. Two weeks later a plane flew in bringing protective clothing for the guards but none for the zeks, who went on working without masks or protective clothing. According to the regimental physician, they would be dead within the year. (Moscow [redacted] in her 30's)

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Our factory had a secret workshop manned by zeks which produced, among other things, metal mesh for heavy artillery and tanks. Rumors circulated about an increase in radioactivity and cases of terminal cancer, but the management and the factory physician denied them all. [redacted] from Dnepropetrovsk in his 30's)

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RIGORS OF MILITARY LIFE

Breaches of discipline in the army are becoming increasingly frequent. There have been many cases of alcoholism, drug addiction, and fights. Soldiers on leave have raped women, drunk themselves into a stupor and resisted the military police patrols. Drunkenness extends from young officers and the high command to ordinary soldiers. Of course it is the latter who suffer the worst consequences if they are caught breaking military discipline. If this happens, they are sent to work in the penal construction battalions. Cases of madness and suicide are frequent in the penal battalions. In October 1983, in the Kola peninsula a young recruit wrote on his chest "Mama I can't stand it any more," and shot himself. Many young soldiers die during training. Their families are told that they "Met with death while on military duty," and that's all. There are many deserters too.... Parents do everything they can to prevent their sons from going into the army. They invent diseases, obtain medical certificates, ask for postponements and so on. Families are not told where their sons are serving, but if a letter comes from Central Asia, then it means they are preparing to go to Afghanistan. (Director of a Leningrad [redacted] in his 60's) [redacted]

I used to be a member of a military medical commission responsible for examining potential new recruits. We usually refused about 10% of them on grounds of physical unfitness. But there were all kinds of attempts to deceive the authorities and avoid being drafted. No one wanted to serve in the army! Some of the people we examined were all swollen up from injections of dental bacteria or saliva; others had aggravated wounds, or were simulating madness. Some of them even feigned arthritis, short-sightedness and color blindness. (Physician in his 50's from [redacted])

SABOTAGE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT

In the fall of 1983, a trial took place in Kirov concerning theft and sabotage at warehouses that kept spare parts for automobiles and military equipment. The trial went on behind closed doors, but it seems that an enormous quantity of parts for artillery and tanks were sabotaged, while others simply disappeared. No one knew who was responsible for this. It seems that there had been instances of tanks' gun barrels blowing up in Afghanistan, and incidents where the tanks' engines wouldn't start, and then burned up. All of these parts came from the Kirov warehouse. (Kirov bookkeeper in his 50's) [redacted]

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FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES OF MILITARY CONSTRUCTION WORK

A colleague of mine went to work in Siberia in 1981-1982. He said that in Omsk and Irkutsk, welders could earn up to 400 rubles a month on military construction sites. Construction of anti-nuclear shelters at the military factories in Perm was even better paid. Each big military factory has a huge underground shelter in which are stored large supplies of food and water. (Krasnodar technician in his 40's) [redacted]

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TENSION BETWEEN KGB AND MILITIA

The KGB is trying to get its own people into key positions in the militia, and the militia is not happy about this at all. A divisional police inspector told me that his boss was constantly coming under fire from the KGB, which was anxious to find a way of getting rid of him and replacing him with one of its own "blue angels." (Pensioner in his 60's from Moscow) [redacted]

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INCREASED KGB ACTIVITY

Since 1981, all economic crimes have been investigated with the participation of the city KGB (at least this was true of all the cases I came across in my capacity as a criminal defense lawyer). Not only that, but since the accession of Andropov, the regional KGB departments have been supervising even ordinary cases that had nothing to do with economic crime. The purpose of this was to ensure that the militia didn't accept bribes either to cover the affair up, or to ease the situation of the suspect while under detention. But before the trial opens, the KGB actively tries to recruit informants. Their interference aggravates the situation of the suspects, who are left with no rights at all. (Lawyer in his 50's [redacted] former CP member) [redacted]

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An economic clean-up is under way in Tbilisi, and the KGB is busy making confiscations and arrests. If, for instance, they search someone's house and find a hoard of precious stones, they will take the person down to KGB headquarters and lock him up until he confesses. If no confession is forthcoming, then they simply give him an injection [of truth serum]. Beating people up has become a thing of the past. Many of the people who made a fortune selling fruit in the RSFSR before this was forbidden are leaving Tbilisi and taking their money with them. (Driver in his 40's from Tbilisi)

In 1981-1982, the authorities moved against dentists and dental technicians, in an attempt to recover gold meant for dental work that had been misappropriated. The price of gold has gone up by 400% during the last 8 years, but it seems that some of those on trial had nearly a kilo of gold stashed away. I was arrested in May 1982 at my workplace and taken home so that they could search my apartment in my presence. They ripped open all the mattresses (despite the fact that they had mine detectors with them), tore the floorboards up, and ripped apart my coat. I kept all my work

notes at home, and they took everything away. Of course, they didn't find anything. I had hidden my gold in the potato patch of my garden plot outside the city. A friend of mine was less lucky. -His wife denounced him, in the hope of getting her hands on the gold herself, and he was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. (Dental technician in his 20's [redacted])

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A patient of mine who was a lieutenant-colonel in the militia told me that the KGB is rumored to have the city telephone system hooked up to US-made computers making it possible for them to monitor all the telephone conversations that take place. [redacted] in his 40's from Riga) [redacted]

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ARSON ATTEMPT ON KGB HEADQUARTERS

In November 1982 the KGB headquarters in Vinnitsa was set on fire in the middle of the night. As far as I know, no one was arrested for this, and in fact the arson attempt was never officially acknowledged. However everyone in town knew about it, for several of the building's windows were burned. The next morning they began to repair the damage and after three or four days everything was back to normal. The only official reaction was a spate of lectures in the schools about the imperialist, Zionist threat. [redacted] in his 40's from Vinnitsa) [redacted]

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VICTIMS OF POLICE BRUTALITY

While working at the Kharkov hospital I ran into several victims of police and KGB brutality. In February 1983 a zek was brought in suffering from a rupture of the lowest part of his oesophagus and his stomach. He had swallowed two nails and it was a miracle that he didn't have peritonitis. He had to stay two months in hospital after his operation. He told me that he had tried to commit suicide. The investigator was trying to wring additional evidence out of him, even though his trial was over, and he was suffering torture and constant persecution as a result. In March 1983, an Armenian in his late forties was carried to the hospital. According to his "friends" (all of whom were in civilian clothes), he had fallen down the stairs. He had a cracked skull and serious brain damage but no external injuries. He had heavy bruises around the waist area, and his liver and kidneys were badly damaged. When he regained consciousness he told me that he had been accused of being a member of an Armenian nationalist organization and was beaten up when he denied it. Two weeks later they came for him in spite of strong protests from the director of the traumatology section. In July, a badly beaten up woman was brought in by people who said they had found her in the street. A few days later she was able to tell me that two police investigators had beaten her up with sticks. She had been accused of speculating in furs and foreign currency. She too was taken back to the police station. (Kharkov [redacted] in his 40's) [redacted]

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A fellow worker of mine, a computer programmer, was mugged for no reason by three drunk militiamen. He had two broken ribs and had to stay a month in the hospital. He lodged a complaint but the case was dismissed. He had the name of the three militiamen, but the judge took their word against his. (Riga [redacted] in his 30's) [redacted]

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SECOND ECONOMY

Gasoline is in such short supply that people will do anything to get their hands on it. This is all to the good as far as people who work in gas stations are concerned. Taxi drivers prefer to work unofficially and to do this they need gas. Factories in need of urgent deliveries have truck drivers working on the side and they are ready to pay a high price to keep them supplied with gas. As for ordinary motorists, it's been a long time since they were able to fill up their tanks by giving a "little something" to any passing truck driver. In our gas station, we used to buy gasoline coupons from truck drivers who economized on gas by not filling up their tanks, and falsifying the number of kilometers covered [in their log books]. We would also sell cheap gasoline mixed with high-quality gasoline as high-quality ethylene. Even an ordinary gas pump attendant can make 100 or 150 roubles a day on the side. Of course, to get the job he has to give the manager a bribe of at least 3000 roubles and then pay him a minimum of 30 roubles a day thereafter. As for me, I could make more than a thousand roubles a day. Of this, I had to give my director about 500 to 600 roubles. He, however, used to give some money to whoever delivered the gas. (Ukrainian trade worker in his 50's from Odessa) [redacted]

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I was an auto mechanic and I lived like a prince. I didn't have to run around; everyone came to me. If someone had a car that was not running because it was missing some little screw that couldn't be found in the store or the repair shop, then they would come to me--and make it well worth my while! And why did I happen to possess the right screw? Because of my connections with the automobile factory. To obtain spare parts that weren't available in the stores, I would go all the way to Togliatti. At the pre-arranged time I would go up to the factory fence and, just like in the movies, a few packages of spare parts would be lowered down by rope and laid at my feet. Then I would tie to the rope my own bag containing enough [money] for everyone: the person who delivered the spare parts, the person who kept silent about it, and the person who will help out in the future. It's my belief that all the illegal machinations which Soviet citizens get mixed up in in order to get by are actually planned from above. Keep people shaking with fear and they will never get involved in politics. (Baku mechanic in his 20's) [redacted]

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In 1982, five people were found guilty of buying black market goods from kolkhozy for the Restaurant and Cafeteria Organization. At the time, there was nothing to eat in the city. The trial was not open to the public. Three people received sentences of about 10-12 years in the camps, and the other two got 5-6 years. The local paper commented that, "The plunderers got what they deserved." Two of the condemned were Jews, and so the rumor started around town that the Jews were enriching themselves at the expense of the workers, but this gossip died out very quickly. (Teacher in his 40's from [redacted] Odessa oblast)

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I used to buy meat from the kolkhozy and resell it in the market in Baku. This brought in about 300 rubles a month on top of my regular salary. To buy meat from the kolkhozy, I had to give a bribe to the chairman and the head of the regional UVD [1]. Then I had to transport the meat to Baku and bribe the police in the market and the director of the market to be allowed to sell it. At present, the government pays the kolkhozniki about 1.20 roubles per kilo of pork, whereas I used to pay 4 them rubles, and then sell the meat for 9 rubles. ([redacted] in his 50's from Makhachkala)

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In June 1983 a number of people went on trial in Riga for tampering with stamped and sealed vodka bottles. They had drained out the vodka and replaced it with rubbing alcohol diluted with water. All of the accused were pensioners who had been employed at the depot. When they appeared in court they were almost lynched by outraged drunkards screaming "take them to the firing squad." (Riga [redacted] in his 40's)

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CAMPAIGN FOR LABOR DISCIPLINE

Without better wages, the campaign to improve labor discipline will never get off the ground. The manager of our shop keeps talking about "mobilization of developed socialist creative models" and other such rubbish, but no one in the shop is impressed by this. People buy what they need when they go shopping; I can't force them to buy more, especially if we don't have what they want. Of course we could show more willingness in serving customers, but with the salary we get I don't see any point in even trying. (Leningrad saleswoman, Soviet citizen)

1

Administration of internal affairs.

THREE INDUSTRIAL INCIDENTS

In June 1983, a group of sausage production workers in the Kiev meat kombinat asked permission to buy sausage direct from the kombinat, since there was none to be had in the city. The administration of the sausage section replied that the kombinat was not entitled to do this, and that direct sales were out of the question. The workers stopped the conveyor belt and refused to work until representatives of the city Party committee came to the factory. After a long argument the kombinat promised to sell them the sausage, but that night after work the militia showed up and several people were taken off for an investigation of the circumstances of the incident. No one has yet been put on trial, but rumors of a strike at the kombinat have been circulating in the city, and it has been confirmed that three people were arrested for sabotage. (Kiev teacher in his 50's) [redacted]

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In January 1983 the workers in a Kharkov bicycle factory refused to take their pay. This incident was investigated for three days by the factory Party and trade union committees together with the city Party committee, the oblast Party committee and the city Soviet. It turned out that the reason the workers had refused their pay was that it was too low. The incident was hushed up and no reference was ever made to it in the press or in meetings. As for the workers, they were given production bonuses. (Kharkov mechanic in his 50's) [redacted]

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In November 1983 they did not pay bonuses in the factory where I worked and the workers organized a one-day strike. No one went to work that day. And it worked; they got their bonuses. When the Lithuanians show signs of discontent, the authorities take it seriously. They haven't forgotten the Lithuanian student who set himself on fire as a protest [2]. ([redacted] engineer in his 20's)

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ATTITUDES OF WORKERS

Most of the workers in our factory showed no interest in their work. They didn't believe the slogans and refused to attend meetings. Some of the engineers went to Party schools but the workers said "to hell with it." Before Andropov they would say openly, "This is not a country but a brothel." Yet conditions in the factory were not so bad. On the average, workers were better paid than engineers: we got about 200-220 rubles a month, while they got only 100-120. In addition, there was a pig farm attached to the factory where meat could be bought more cheaply

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This was Romas Kalanta, who set himself on fire on the main street of Kaunas in the spring of 1972.

than in the stores (of course the workers had to work on it in their free time without being paid). There was a lot of heavy drinking at the factory even though it was officially forbidden. Vodka was smuggled in despite searches. People injected it into bicycle tires and other hiding places. As a result, there were a great many accidents. ([redacted] from Dnepropetrovsk in his 30's)

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The Communist Party was noticeably unpopular among the workers in the wood-processing factory where I worked. A full time Party organizer, a man in his 30's, was sent there. He would invite three or four workers a month for a private chat in the course of which he would invite them to join the Party. They would find various pretexts for refusing: "I am a drunk," "I am unworthy of it", "I have been waiting 10 years for an apartment, give me one and I'll join the Party." Once he struck luck with a married man with two children who lived with his parents in a two-room apartment without modern conveniences. The Party organizer promised to find him an apartment, but two years passed and nothing happened. After that, no matter what the Party organizer offered us, we would remind him that "all your Party knows is how to lie." During the five years I stayed in the factory, only five men joined the Party. All were engineers, not blue collar workers.... There were eight informers in the factory (two per section) and they were under the supervision of the director of the First Department [3], a retired major. They got passes for rest homes and were allocated apartments without having to go on a waiting list. (Smolensk technician in his 30's) [redacted]

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SIGNS OF DISSENT ON ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER REVOLUTION

On the occasion of the November 7 celebrations the following sign was tied to an old horse: "66 Years of the Great Creation!" and someone had drawn a Stalin mustache on a portrait of Andropov. Apparently, eight people from the technical institute were involved, and three of them are in big trouble. I heard that the Ministry of Education has issued a severe warning and that it intends to crack down hard on teaching establishments for lack of vigilance with respect to political education. (Dnepropetrovsk [redacted] in his 40's) [redacted]

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The "First" or "Special Department" deals with personnel and security matters (including classified information) under the supervision of the KGB.

After the November 7th demonstration, food products were distributed to Leningrad's war veterans. The veterans were in wheelchairs or on crutches and they were carrying anti-war posters. But one of these signs attracted the attention of Leningraders, and later of the militia. It read, "More Holidays - More Rations!" When the police moved in to seize the sign, the person carrying it managed to disappear without a trace. The invalids were summoned by the KGB and the City Soviet, but they all denied even having seen the sign. However, a report of the incident reached the leadership, and the episode turned out to the invalids' advantage, since they now receive special rations once a month, and not just on holidays. (Leningrad pensioner in his 70's) [redacted]

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ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION

In the Soviet Union, contraception is still at the Stone Age level, and it is common for a woman to have a vast number of abortions. To stop an unwanted pregnancy Soviet women drink iodine, poison, or herbs or use any object they think can help. Many of the young women who came to me were very ill. Inflammation of the reproductive organs is a common phenomenon. They end up in hospital with a blood infection or serious inflammation. (Gynecologist in his 60's from [redacted])

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A neighbour of mine used to practice abortions. Her husband had died, leaving her with a three-room apartment. She was a former nurse and she did abortions there for women who were afraid to go to the hospital. In Soviet hospitals abortions are done without anaesthetics. My neighbour had somehow got hold of some sort of imported preparation with which she injected her patients. It kept them drowsy for 24 hours after the operation. They were conscious all the time, but didn't feel anything. She was very much afraid of being caught by the OBKhSS or the Office of Public Prosecution, believing that she risked a 15-year sentence. She charged 80 rubles for an abortion, which was not particularly expensive. Most women were ready to pay anything she asked to avoid having to go to an overcrowded hospital. My neighbour always had a gynecologist on call in case anything went wrong. If she called, he would get there within 15 minutes. She worked like that for 7 years. (Kishinev pensioner in her 70's) [redacted]

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MEDICAL "EXPERIMENTS" ON PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

I have heard from an impeccable source that children with congenital defects are not given to their parents to raise. Instead they are kept apart till they reach a certain age, and then passed on to secret institutes of the Ministry of Defense, where they are used for experiments. Similarly, both children and adults with brain trauma are "given" to the government so that it can "take care" of them. Their families are ordered not to inquire about them, and not to ask for meetings. I also heard that the Ministry of Defense conducts experiments on soldiers and political prisoners. ([redacted] physician in his 50's) [redacted]

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SPECULATION IN MEDICINES

The wives and children of members of the nomenklatura have access to special pharmacies where they can buy rare medication including antibiotics and nitrofurantoin as well as contraceptive pills. They buy drugs ostensibly for themselves, but in reality for resale to doctors and others. (Even doctors who work in clinics for the elite do not have access to these pharmacies.) The prices are very high: tens, if not hundreds of rubles for a course of treatment. (Nurse in her 40's from Kharkov) [redacted]

STAT

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT BELIEVED TO AFFECT PUBLIC HEALTH

Since a nuclear power plant was built in Kandalaksha, there has been a deterioration in public health. There have been several cases of leukemia in children, and an increased incidence of miscarriages and impotency. (Geologist in his 50's from [redacted] Murmansk oblast) [redacted]

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RELIGIOUS HARRASSMENT

In 1982, a priest who had been distributing Bibles in samizdat form was put on trial in Kaunas. Two typewriters [used for typing the Bibles] had been confiscated from his apartment, along with paper and a large number of orders. But the witnesses who were called in to testify refused to identify the priest, and said they had never received anything from him. Since the priest was relatively unknown, he got off with a three-year sentence for "anti-Soviet propaganda." Apparently it isn't very hard to get Bibles in Kaunas, and the KGB doesn't want to draw attention to this. [redacted] technician in his 40's) [redacted]

STAT

Three of my fellow students in the engineering institute I attended were Baptists. They were subjected to considerable harrassment, and were finally refused their diplomas. They appealed to a court, but it will be a long time before things are settled. Meanwhile, although they have finished their studies they have no diplomas. Without diplomas, they cannot find work, and without work, how are they supposed to live? [redacted] engineer in his 20's) [redacted]

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SHORTAGES IN YAKUTIA

We have been receiving food rationing coupons in Yakutia for four years now. Clothes and footwear disappeared a long time ago and are only obtainable on the black market at fabulous prices. At a time when high-quality diamonds and other precious stones are being exported to the United States and Europe from newly discovered mines in the Yakut ASSR, this is a truly scandalous situation. The Soviet government is raking in huge amounts in foreign currency, while we are starving and living like paupers. (White collar worker from Yakut ASSR, Soviet citizen)

ARRESTS OF STUDENT NATIONALISTS

The son of my neighbors, a 23 year old student, was arrested and tried along with six other students. The boy used to tell me: "You and I see things the same way. You want an independent Israel and we want an independent Ukraine." Young people used to meet at his place and stay late, arguing loudly. It didn't surprise me that things went wrong. Three of the students confessed and received sentences of three years in the camps, but my neighbor and the other three got seven years, plus three years' exile for belonging to a Ukrainian independence group. (Salesclerk in her 40's from [redacted])

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EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Several local university professors, who were teaching Uzbek history with an emphasis on independent development, were fired recently. They were replaced by two professors from Moscow and two from Kiev. (Tashkent accountant in his 30's) [redacted]

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Schools are too small in Uzbekistan. One advantage of this is that the teachers know their pupils better, but they have to teach several disciplines and the educational level is not as good as it should be. To solve part of this problem, 13 new schools were built in Tashkent in 1982. Since the new schools are better equipped than the old ones, with laboratories and language labs, children from the old schools are shuttled to the new ones for special lectures, such as chemistry and physics and go back to their own schools for instruction in the other disciplines. (Tashkent teacher, Soviet citizen)

A SOVIET VIEW OF POLAND

Everyone in the USSR hates the Poles. This isn't because of any government decree, it is quite spontaneous. There are several different reasons why things should be this way. Firstly, the Poles are often arrogant and haughty: my parents remember that it wasn't easy living under Poland after the First World War. Secondly, there is envy of the Poles. The Russians see that the Poles live much better than they do, and they believe that this higher standard of living has been achieved at their expense. In the USSR, even though bread is rationed, we don't have enough of it, and yet we have sent thousands of tons of grain, meat and other products to Poland. But the Poles are by no means grateful for this. The events of the past few years have shown not only their ingratitude, but their hatred of us. Finally, the events in Poland have aroused our fear. Even though the Poles might have been right to do what they did, it is the sort of thing that the Soviet government would not tolerate for one second. They were attempting the impossible. What's more, it is certain that the trouble in Poland isn't over yet, and this is what frightens us.

An armed uprising in Poland would have unforeseeable consequences. We can accept hardship and food shortages because there is always the hope that conditions will get better, but not, please God, not war. But the Poles could lead us to just that. For us, Poland is a greater threat even than nuclear war. (Belorussian technician, Soviet citizen)

POLISH VISIT TO ESTONIA

A group of Polish workers from Gdynia came to exchange "work experiences" with their Estonian colleagues. However, they spent most of the time talking about the underground activities of Solidarity, and Lech Walesa's Nobel Peace Prize. (Estonian white collar worker, Soviet citizen)

JEWISH CITIZEN EXPLAINS UNWILLINGNESS TO EMIGRATE

I have no desire to emigrate from the Soviet Union, for several reasons. My wife is Russian and our children do not see themselves as Jews, but as Russians. They are already grown up and well-established, and if I were to emigrate it could significantly complicate their lives. As far as I myself am concerned, I enjoy my job and I have a good standard of living, at least in Soviet terms. Of course, people in the West live better and more comfortably than they do in the USSR, especially scientists. But the West, let's face it, is way ahead of the USSR in science. If I went to the West, they wouldn't even consider me a scientist. German is the only foreign language I know, and no one would even be able to understand my work. Culturally, I would feel myself in a total vacuum.

On top of this, Judaism doesn't mean a great deal to me; I have always considered myself an Estonian. Estonia is my country, not Israel. It means nothing to me that my Jewish ancestors may have lived there 2,000 years ago. My own family has been in Estonia for the last several hundred years, whereas the Russians have only been here for the last 50. As for anti-Semitism, that is a problem everywhere; not just in the Soviet Union. But millions of Jews, including my family and myself, have survived in the Soviet Union, and this shouldn't be forgotten either. During the time of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, anti-Semitism was more noticeable, but this was just a sign of laissez aller. Under Andropov, things became a bit more orderly.

Western attempts to establish the right for Jews to emigrate won't solve anything. The world is not in any kind of shape to accept the Jews that want to leave, and integrate them into society. Even Israel cannot do that. Our only hope is that if the situation in the world becomes more just, then the situation of the Jews in the USSR will become normal. (Jewish scientist, Soviet citizen)

PRESS AND POSTAL CENSORSHIP

I worked for the Vinnitsa Oblast's printing office. We used to receive circular letters from the raion Party committee telling us what we could or couldn't print. (One of the editors told me that they were actually written by the KGB, with the participation of oblast Party committee representatives.) Material on food shortages was outlawed, for example. Instead we were instructed to substitute something on the lines of the following: "In accordance with the directives of the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and the instructions of Comrade Andropov, the Party and the Government are doing their best to improve deliveries of food products, especially in working-class districts." When a forest fire broke out last August and seven people were killed, we were forbidden to mention the victims, and instructed to emphasize instead that the Zhmerinka fire brigade director had been arrested for carelessness. In September a group of Baptists went on trial. (The KGB investigator threatened witnesses with prosecution and deprivation of parental rights in order to make them testify.) On this occasion, we were ordered to increase anti-religious propaganda. It was forbidden to write anything positive about Israel, and from 1983 onwards this prohibition also applied to the United States. (Proof-reader in his 30's from Vinnitsa) [redacted]

STAT

I used to work as a postal clerk, and was constantly moved around to different departments. The mail from the mechanical sorter was brought in in "general" sacks, and there were also "special" sacks which were brought in by some very well-dressed young people. These sacks contained letters from abroad as well as some domestic mail. I was told that these letters went directly to the KGB. (Moscow pensioner in his 60's) [redacted]

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REACTIONS TO KAL INCIDENT

After the [television] interview with the pilot who shot down the Korean airplane in September, a leaflet was pasted up in Sestroretsk train station which read: "The Russian Fighting Cock [voyaka]! At the Nuremberg trials the Fascists also said, We were following orders!" The leaflet stayed up until evening. (Leningrad teacher in her 30's) [redacted]

STAT

I was in a bus one day when someone who was reading about the Korean airliner incident said under his breath: "I don't believe this." Suddenly an argument broke out. Most people kept quiet, but there were some who insisted that "if it is in Izvestia, then it is true." The incident ended with two of these people taking the man off to the police, claiming that he was disturbing the peace with his remarks. When they got off the bus there was a deathly silence, and no one dared to look up. (Minsk engineer in his 50's) [redacted]

STAT

After the Korean airliner incident, a series of protests against American espionage were organized in factories in Kirov. Posters denouncing imperialism and espionage appeared in high schools and institutes. (Bookkeeper in his 50's from Kirov) [redacted]

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DIFFICULTIES ON THE KOLKHOZY

I worked in an office which designed spare parts for agricultural equipment. We had two main problems with our work: firstly, there was no material with which to make the necessary models and no equipment with which to test them; secondly, the factories were not interested in receiving these parts, because the profit to be made from ready-made machines was much higher. This means that the work of the kolkhozy often gets held up when something needs repairing. Often the only way to get the spare parts they need is to dismantle totally a tractor or combine harvester. (Lvov engineer in his 30's) [redacted]

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Twice a year we were sent to work on the kolkhozy. Life out there wasn't easy for city-dwellers like us, but it wasn't an entirely negative experience since it gave us a rare opportunity to buy meat.... Fertilizers were kept in sacks and stored in the open. When they weren't stolen by the kolkhozniki, they were washed away in the rain. Even though the form, concentration level and utilization methods of the fertilizers changed all the time, the kolkhozniki were given no information or training on how to use them.... The head of the kolkhoz distributed piglets from the kolkhoz pigsties to the kolkhozniki and sold them black-market feed. In return, he received 40% of the earnings made from the sale of the meat on the open market. (Chemist in his 30's from Vilnius) [redacted]

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My fellow students and I were sent to help out in the kolkhozy in summer. We found no one but old people there. The kolkhozniki are paid per harvested field and not according to actual yield. As a result, the fields were harvested, but the potatoes and beets were then left outside to rot. Meanwhile, the kolkhozniki were tending the same beets and potatoes with the utmost care in their own fenced-in private plots. The vegetables were washed, thoroughly dried, sorted, and sold in the city market. Many of the students voiced the opinion that only private farming, as in Poland, or cooperatives, as in Hungary, could save Soviet agriculture. (Student in her teens from [redacted])

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The government has lowered the price it pays to the kolkhozy for high quality meat, and at the same time is forcing them to provide more meat. But the feed they have been given to do this has a lower vegetable blend and a higher gluten content. You can't fool around with the laws of physiology, however. If you give less feed to a pig you get less meat, and if the feed is of low quality, the meat will be too. Complaints about this were sent to the Central Committee, but to no avail. (Pensioner in his 60's from [redacted])

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