



U.S. FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE

"CONTINUING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF AMERICAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP"

BULLETIN

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Editor: Darren Grant



Seven Myths about the USSR

BY STEPHEN GOWAN (part 2)

Credo of the US Friends of the Soviet People

U.S Friends of the Soviet People is dedicated to supporting the struggles to restore socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. USFP is the US affiliate to the International Council for Friendship and Solidarity with the Soviet People. The International Council carries on the tradition of the "Hands of Russia" Committees that were established internationally in 1918 to help protect the young Soviet Republic from foreign intervention. The aim of all Friends of the Soviet People is international cooperation in building socialism and solidarity with the anti-imperialist forces of the world who are struggling against US Imperialism - the main enemy of humanity. USFSP acts as a unifying force to help consolidate and coordinate the anti-imperialist forces of the world with the ongoing movement to restore the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as socialist states. We act as a unifying front, but are not a forum for ideological debates. The people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe themselves will choose their paths towards socialism.

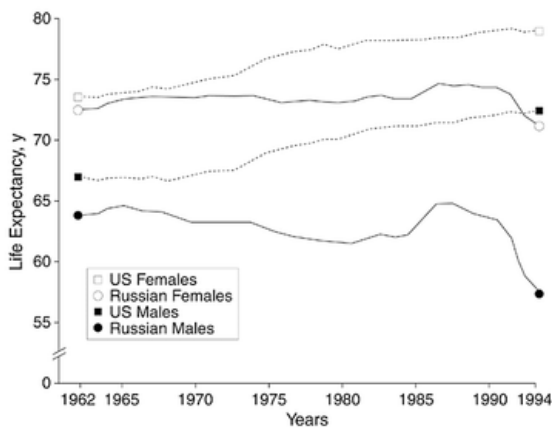
Myth #6. Citizens of the former Soviet Union are better off today. To be sure, some are. But are most? Given that more prefer the former socialist system to the current capitalist one and think that the USSR's breakup has done more harm than good, we might infer that most aren't better off—or at least, that they don't see themselves as such. This view is confirmed, at least as regards life expectancy. In a paper in the prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*, sociologist David Stuckler and medical researcher Martin McKee, show that the transition to capitalism in the former USSR precipitated a sharp drop in life-expectancy, and that "only a little over half of the ex-Communist countries have regained their pre-transition life-expectancy levels." Male life expectancy in Russia, for example, was 67 years in 1985, under communism. In 2007, it was less than 60 years. Life expectancy plunged five years between 1991 and 1994. [11]

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ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

<https://usfriendsofthesovietpeople.info>

Seven Myths about the USSR

Life Expectancy in Russia Over Time



Life expectancy in Russia drops sharply for both men and women after the counter-revolution in the former USSR in 1991.

(Source: Francis C. Hotzon, et al. Causes of declining life expectancy in Russia. 1998.)

The transition to capitalism, then, produced countless pre-mature deaths—and continues to produce a higher mortality rate than likely would have prevailed under the (more humane) socialist system. (A 1986 study by Shirley Ciresto and Howard Waitzkin, based on World Bank data, found that the socialist economies of the Soviet bloc produced more favorable outcomes on measures of physical quality of life, including life expectancy, infant mortality, and caloric intake, than did capitalist economies at the same level of economic development, and as good as capitalist economies at a higher level of development. [12])As regards the transition from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy, Pipes points to a poll that shows that Russians view democracy as a fraud. Over three-quarters believe “democracy is a facade for a government controlled by rich and powerful cliques.” [13] Who says Russians aren’t perspicacious?

Myth #7. If citizens of the former Soviet Union really wanted a return to socialism, they would just vote it in. If only it were so simple. Capitalist systems are structured to deliver public policy that suits capitalists, and not what’s popular, if what’s popular is against capitalist interests. Obamacare aside, the United States doesn’t have full public health insurance. Why not? According to the polls, most Americans want it. So, why don’t they just vote it in? The answer, of course, is that there are powerful capitalist interests, principally private insurance companies, that have used their wealth and connections to block a public policy that would attenuate their profits. What’s popular doesn’t always, or even often, prevail in societies where those who own and control the economy can use their wealth and connections to dominate the political system to win in contests that pit their elite interests against mass interests. **As Michael Parenti writes,**

“Capitalism is not just an economic system, but an entire social order. Once it takes hold, it is not voted out of existence by electing socialists or communists. They may occupy office but the wealth of the nation, the basic property relations, organic law, financial system, and debt structure, along with the national media, police power, and state institutions have all been fundamentally restructured. [14] A Russian return to socialism is far more likely to come about the way it did the first time, through revolution, not elections—and revolutions don’t happen simply because people prefer a better system to the one they currently have. Revolutions happen when life can no longer be lived in the old way—and Russians haven’t reached the point where life as it’s lived today is no longer tolerable.”

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Seven Myths about the USSR



FILE PHOTO: Demonstrators carry flags and a portrait of Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin during a rally held by Russian Communist party to mark the Red October revolution's centenary in central Moscow, Russia November 7, 2017. REUTERS/Sergei Karpukhin/File Photo

Breakup of Soviet Union More Harmful Than Good?

In general, did the breakup of the Soviet Union benefit or harm this country?

	Benefit	Harm	Neither	Don't know/Refused
Total*	24%	51%	15%	11%
Armenia	12%	66%	10%	12%
Kyrgyzstan	16%	61%	8%	14%
Ukraine	23%	56%	10%	10%
Russia	19%	55%	18%	8%
Tajikistan	27%	52%	12%	10%
Moldova	26%	42%	10%	22%
Belarus	26%	38%	15%	21%
Georgia	37%	33%	9%	21%
Azerbaijan	44%	31%	8%	18%
Kazakhstan	45%	25%	12%	19%
Turkmenistan	62%	8%	9%	22%

Surveys conducted in 2013.

*This question was not asked in Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Estonia, or Latvia, which were also part of the Soviet Union.

GALLUP

Interestingly, a 2003 poll asked Russians how they would react if the Communists seized power.

Almost one-quarter would support the new government, one in five would collaborate, 27 percent would accept it, 16 percent would emigrate, and only 10 percent would actively resist it. In other words, for every Russian who would actively oppose a Communist take-over, four would support it or collaborate with it, and three would accept it [15]—not what you would expect if you think Russians are glad to get out from underneath what we're told was the burden of communist rule.

So, the Soviet Union's passing is regretted by the people who knew the USSR firsthand (but not by Western journalists, politicians and historians who knew Soviet socialism only through the prism of their capitalist ideology.) Now that they've had over two decades of multi-party democracy, private enterprise and a market economy, Russians don't think these institutions are the wonders Western politicians and mass media make them out to be. Most Russians would prefer a return to the Soviet system of state planning, that is, to socialism.

Even so, these realities are hidden behind a blizzard of propaganda, whose intensity peaks each year on the anniversary of the USSR's passing. We're supposed to believe that where it was tried, socialism was popularly disdained and failed to deliver—though neither assertion is true. Of course, that anti-Soviet views have hegemonic status in the capitalist core is hardly surprising. The Soviet Union is reviled by just about everyone in the West: by the Trotskyists, because the USSR was built under Stalin's (and not their man's) leadership; by social democrats, because the Soviets embraced revolution and rejected capitalism; by the capitalists, for obvious reasons; and by the mass media (which are owned by the capitalists) and the schools (whose curricula, ideological orientation and political and economic research are strongly influenced by them.)

So, on the anniversary of the USSR's demise we should not be surprised to discover that socialism's political enemies should present a view of the Soviet Union that is at odds with what those on the ground really experienced, what a socialist economy really accomplished, and what those deprived of it really want.

New Application

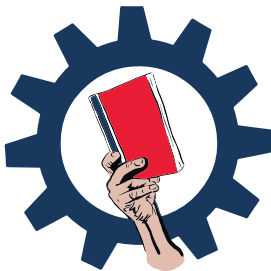
Membership Renewals

Please send me information on how I can get involved with USFSP

I want to become a member of USFSP. Please enroll me as a member in the category indicated below: Please make checks payable to **U.S. Friends of the Soviet People, P.O Box 140434, Staten Island, NY 10314-0434**

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip Code:
E-mail:		Phone:
I want to support USFSP's critical efforts to save Soviet film legacy! My contribution:		

- Student: \$5.00
- Senior: \$5.00
- Individual: \$10.00
- Family: \$15.00
- Contributing: \$25.00
- Patron: \$50.00
- Donor: \$100.00



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CAN BE NO REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT."
-LENIN**