

# Soviet infant deaths at Third World level

by Luba George

Statistics published by the Soviet government late in 1987 on infant mortality rates expose the “white race” versus “bantustan” differential between the European U.S.S.R., and the Transcaucasus and the Muslim-Turkic Republics of Central Asia. Besides underscoring the racist reality of the multinational Soviet Union—whose propaganda organs never tire of branding the Western countries as racist—the statistics on infant mortality expose the scandalous condition of health care in the U.S.S.R. Contrary to propaganda, Soviet infant mortality on average is worse than in some developing nations, and in the Muslim republics is at appalling Third World levels.

The situation in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia became so critical that, in the summer of 1987, some 1,500 doctors and nurses were dispatched from Moscow and other Russian cities to these regions.

The danger that wretched health conditions in Central Asia could accelerate the rate at which AIDS will spread in the entire U.S.S.R., spurred the Kremlin to send Health Minister Yevgenii Chazov on a tour last August of the regions, and to begin to publicize the true situation and take action.

In February 1987, the Communist Party daily *Pravda* broke the official silence on conditions tolerated for decades. *Pravda* described the situation in Uzbekistan as “appalling,” citing the figure of 55 infant deaths per 1,000 live births for the Surkhandaya Oblast as an example, and disclosing that the true number of infant deaths was four times higher than that registered in hospitals. Then *Moskovskaya Novosti* (No. 28, 1987) reported that every second infant death in the U.S.S.R. occurs in Central Asia. Other Soviet press items cited unsanitary living conditions, polluted drinking water, overcrowded maternity wards, and the low skill level of local medical personnel, as among the main reasons for the high infant mortality rate.

A July 1987 resolution of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party criticized the overall situation in

the republic, highlighting one particularly shocking case in which two newborn infants, left without medical supervision, were mauled by rats.

## Cover-up exposed

These claims have been substantiated by Soviet pediatrician Dr. Vyacheslav Tabolin, a member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Medical Sciences, who declared that the Soviet Union ranks 50th in the world in combatting infant mortality, when interviewed by *Sovetskaya Rossiya* on Oct. 23, 1987. Dr. Tabolin also revealed that official statistics on infant mortality are “doctored.” The U.S.S.R. admits to an official rate of 25.6 deaths per 1,000—scandalous enough, as this puts the superpower U.S.S.R. on a par with Paraguay and Thailand. According to Dr. Tabolin, the actual rate in the U.S.S.R. is at least 30 per 1,000. One way the statistics are changed is by recording the deaths of infants 10 and 11 months old as being children of “13 months,” i.e., over one year of age, and thus appearing in the non-infant category.

The Third World health care standards in the Muslim Central Asian republics, reflecting Russian racist policies, is evident from the October-November 1987 infant mortality figures issued by the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Statistics (Goskomstat), made available by the Munich-based Radio Liberty research staff (Table 1).

One additional point should be mentioned regarding the sampling from the table issued by Goskomstat: The figures for the relevant Muslim ethnic groups are much worse, not only because of the cited cover-up, but because the figures shown are averages for the entire republic, including the Russian minority living there.

Meanwhile, in total accord with the campaign of Prince

TABLE 1  
**Infant mortality in the U.S.S.R.  
 by union republic**

(number of deaths within a year per 1,000 live births)

	1970	1980	1985	1986
R.S.F.S.R.	23.0	22.1	20.7	19.5
Ukrainian S.S.R.	17.2	16.6	15.7	14.8
Lithuanian S.S.R.	19.4	14.5	14.2	11.6
Uzbek S.S.R.	31.0	47.0	45.3	46.2
Georgian S.S.R.	25.3	25.4	24.0	25.5
Tajik S.S.R.	45.9	58.1	46.8	46.8
Kirgiz S.S.R.	45.4	43.3	41.9	38.2
Azerbaijan S.S.R.	34.8	30.4	29.4	30.5
Turmen S.S.R.	46.1	53.6	52.4	58.2
U.S.S.R. (average)	24.7	27.3	26.0	25.4

Philip of Britain and his co-thinkers to stop population growth among the world's non-white peoples, Soviet authorities have launched a massive campaign to reduce the "exceptionally high birth rates" among the indigenous nationalities of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, creating "healthy family" services (*sluzhba zdorovoi semyi*) to push "family planning" and encourage relocation of populations into other parts of the U.S.S.R. Anti-natal policy is especially strong in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The Kremlin's selective demography policy has targeted in several *samizdat* (unofficial "self-published") publications accusing Soviet authorities of practicing "biological genocide" against these nations.

### Growing incidence of infectious disease

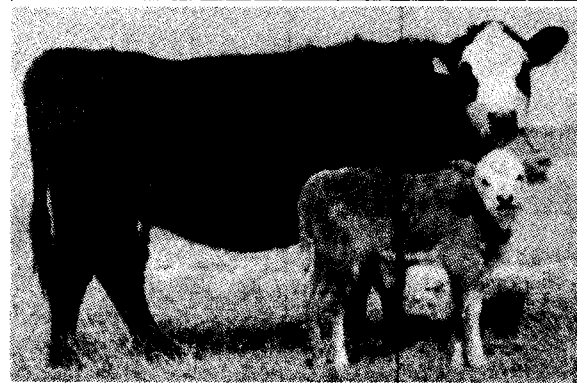
During and after Health Minister Chazov's "fact-finding" tour of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia regions, numerous articles appeared revealing previously unpublished data on the increase in infant mortality and death in childbirth, plus a growing, and rather alarming, incidence of certain infectious diseases.

In his meetings with regional party leaders, according to local and regional press reports, Chazov complained about the inadequacies in the public health system of "prophylactic screening . . . particularly in rural areas . . . which had given rise to a high incidence of TB among children and adolescents." He noted, for example, that in the Soviet Georgia, the incidence of "viral hepatitis" was higher than the rest of the U.S.S.R. More recently, articles stressed the imperative to increase the supply of disposable syringes, as the incidence of hepatitis B (transmitted by unsterilized syringes) in Georgia "has almost reached the dimensions of a national problem."

The Georgian party paper *Zarya Vostoka* on Sept. 15, 1987 reported that the incidence of venereal disease in Georgia was the highest in the U.S.S.R. Of the population as a whole, 21.5% are said to be infected (compared to 7.6% of the total Soviet population.) The problem was further stressed by Georgian party first secretary Patiashvili, who said that the incidence of various sexually transmitted diseases in the Georgian republic had increased between 26.1% and 47% in 1986, compared to the previous year. AIDS was not mentioned, but the VD statistics and prevalence of drug addiction in Georgia make it an obvious concern.

Soviet officials admit "about 130 people infected with the AIDS virus," most of whom are "foreigners." This is clearly an understatement, noted researcher Valeri Konovalov in West Germany. The Deputy Minister of the Health Service in Georgia, I. Pagava, in his interview with *Zarya Vostoka* on Sept. 15, 1987, warned about the spread of AIDS in the area. He said that among those tested in Georgia, some proved positive—inhabitants of Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Gori, Kaspi, Marheuli, Rustavi, Gardabani, and also inmates of the penal labor colonies.

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