Pergamon

Communist and Post-Communist Studies 35 (2002) 39–50

Communist and Post-Communist Studies

www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud

Are the communists dying out in Russia?☆

D. Roderick Kiewiet [a], *, Mikhail G. Myagkov [b]

[a] *California Institute of Technology, Pasadene, CA 91125, USA*
[b] *University of Oregon. Oregon, USA*

Abstract

Many predicted that the strength of the Communist Party in Russia would wane as the elderly pensioners who disproportionately supported the party died off. Contrary to this prediction, the findings of our analysis indicate that voters who reached retirement age during the past decade were even more supportive of the communists than the cohort of pensioners who preceded them. We believe this occurred because it was workers approaching retirement, not pensioners per se, who were disproportionately injured by the transition to a more market-oriented economy. Like pensioners they lost savings, but in many cases they also lost their jobs. They also had little opportunity to learn the new skills that the Russian economy increasingly calls for. There is as yet no indication that the communists have begun to die out.
© 2002 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Over the past decade many observers of Russian politics have surmised the march of time must inexorably work against the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). While support for the party was concentrated among elderly pensioners, younger cohorts of voters were much more supportive of political and economic

* Corresponding author. Fax: +1-626-577-9246.
E-mail address: gradofc@cco.caltech.edu (D.R. Kiewiet).
☆ A previous version of this paper was presented at the Conference on Initial Conditions and the Transition Economy in Russia: the Weight of the Past in Comparative Perspective, The Unversity of Houston, April 2001. The research it reports was supported by a grant to the California Institute of Technology by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. We would like to thank Sergei Beriozkin, Jim Gibson, Paul Gregory, Carol Leonard, Tom Remington, Peter Ordeshook, and Steve Smith for their comments and criticisms.

0967-067X/02/$ - see front matter © 2002 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.
PII: S0967-067X(01)00023-X

reform. As Vyacheslav Nikonov, a leading analyst of Russian politics, put it, "There is no correlation between living conditions and the communist vote. The correlation is age" (quoted by Lally, 1997).

A substantial body of survey data backs up Nikonov's assessment. In interviews conducted in the waning years of the Soviet Union, Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992) report finding that elderly respondents (those over age 60) were far less supportive than those in younger age groups of the basic tenets of political and economic reform.[1] They were less likely to attach value to competitive elections and freedom of speech, less likely to assign responsibility for one's well-being to the individual rather than to the state, and less tolerant of income disparities. Miller et al. (1994) similarly report that in a series of surveys conducted between 1990 and 1992, elderly Russians were considerably more likely to agree that an orderly society took precedence over individual freedom, that Stalin was not being given enough credit for building socialism, and that political reform in Russia was advancing too rapidly. Similar findings abound, including those of Bahry (1993) and Reisinger et al. (1994).

It might seem surprising that elderly Russians in these surveys were so supportive of the communists, in that it was this generation that directly suffered the calamities wrought by Stalinism. There are two major explanations that are usually given as to why this is nevertheless the case. First, it is argued that during the early, formative years of their life, the currently elderly were subject not only to the horrors of totalitarianism but also to "totalitarian socialization" (Gibson, 1996). In the world in which they grew up, it was the Communist Party, unerringly directed by Comrade Stalin, that brought about rapid industrialization, victory in the Great Patriotic War, and Sputnik. This explanation thus posits a generational effect, as it is understood in cohort analysis. A similar phenomenon in this country is the association of Franklin Roosevelt and the Democratic Party with ending the Great Depression. Voters who entered the electorate at about this time, the "New Deal" Democrats, remained disproportionately supportive of the party over the course of their entire lifetimes (Andersen, 1979).

Secondly, the correlation observed between age and support for the CPRF is also attributed to the hardships elderly pensioners suffered during the collapse of the communist regime. The extremely high rates of inflation that occurred in 1992–94 wiped out much of their retirement savings. Pensioners also experienced degradation in medical care and other support services. This resulted not only from cuts in direct government expenditures, but also from the desire of newly privatized enterprises to minimize social welfare expenditures on current and former employees. To be sure, retirement in the Soviet Union was never to be confused with that experienced by the residents of Ft. Lauderdale, but it did afford a certain modicum of security. With the affluence of the New Russians there has also come the New Poor—the elderly pensioners one sees on the streets of Russian cities, selling off their belongings to help make ends meet (Varoli, 1996).

[1] The category of "elderly" needs to be adjusted downward in a country in which normal retirement age has long been 55 for women, 60 for men, and where current male life expectancy is about 58.

As noted frequently in the Western news media, life expectancy in Russia, which was never all that high to begin with, fell dramatically in the 1990s, particularly among males. Table 1, taken from Hough et al. (1996) reports mortality rates for various age cohorts of Russian men and women for the years between 1990 and 1994. As these data indicate, mortality rates for all cohorts rose, but the sharpest increases were among Russian men over the age of 60.

Data in Table 2 show that there were approximately 27 million pensioners in Russia in 1989, and that this number increased to 30.4 million by 1999. About 15 million, i.e., roughly half, of the 1999 pensioners, however, had not been pensioners in 1989 (see bold data in Table 2). Based upon these figures, we can estimate that roughly one fifth of the voters who were pensioners at the time of the 1991 presidential election had died by the time of the 1996 election, and that by 2000 nearly half of the 1991 pensioners were gone.

The supporters of market-oriented reforms thus surmised that they had time very much on their side. The transition to a more market-oriented economy may have imposed a heavy toll upon the elderly pensioners that were the legacy of the Soviet past. But there are many fewer members of this cohort today than there were yesterday, and there will be fewer tomorrow than there are today. In his prognosis on the future of Russian politics, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (1997) put it this way:

> Perhaps the most significant and hopeful statistic I've seen: although 65% of those Russians over the age of 65 think things got worse over the last year, 60% of

Table 1
Mortality rates in Russia per 1000 population, by age and gender, 1990–94
Source: *Rossiiskii statisticheskii ezhegodnik* (Moscow: Groskomstat, 1996), p. 33. (Reprinted in Hough et al., 1996, p. 94.)

Age	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Men					
40–44	7.6	8.0	9.8	13.3	15.2
45–49	11.7	11.6	13.8	17.8	20.8
50–54	16.1	16.6	19.4	26.3	29.1
55–59	23.4	23.3	25.3	31.3	38.2
60–64	34.2	34.6	36.9	46.3	61.0
65–69	48.0	47.3	49.4	59.4	64.0
Women					
40–44	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.7	4.2
45–49	3.8	3.8	4.2	6.4	8.2
50–54	5.4	6.6	8.1	7.9	8.0
55–59	8.6	8.6	9.1	10.9	12.3
60–64	13.5	13.6	14.4	16.7	18.4
65–69	22.0	22.0	22.6	26.6	27.1

Table 2
Distribution of Russian population by age and gender, 1989–99 (in thousands)
Source: *Socialno-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossiii 1999* (Moscow: Groskomstat, 2000), p. 28.

Age	1989			1999		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
0–6	16814	8559	8254	9646	4950	4696
7–15	19181	9729	9451	20688	10551	10137
Males 16–59, females, 16–54	83746	43440	40306	85547	43999	41547
Males 60–, females 55–	27195	6945	20249	30444	9109	21335
45–49	7954	3760	4187	11137	5335	5802
50–54	9593	4453	5139	6997	3264	3733
55–59	8399	3719	4679	7094	3091	**4003**
60–64	8360	3239	5120	8105	**3391**	**4713**
65–69	4510	1367	3142	6609	**2529**	4080
70–74	2652	1011	2641	5935	1903	4031
75–79	3333	819	2513	2812	682	2130
80–84	1769	364	1405	1635	345	1289
85–	890	143	746	1343	256	1086

those under 35 think things got better. So among the positive trends underway in Russia is perhaps the most basic of all, the one represented by the actuarial tables.

The persistence of communist support

As we have just seen, only about half of those Russians receiving pensions in 1991 lived long enough to see Yelstin leave office and to participate in the 1999–2000 election cycle. The “new” pensioners who replaced them, it is generally presumed, had less nostalgia for the Soviet past, had fared relatively better during the wrenching period of privatization, and were thus less supportive of the CPRF. If this “dying out of the communists” scenario is valid, we should have observed a significant decline in support for the communist party during the decade of the 1990s, as well as a decrease in the strength of the relationship between old age and support for the communists.

What we observe instead is that across these elections overall support for the communists persisted at previous levels. In December of 1999, approximately 30 percent of voters cast their ballots for the CPRF and their closest allies (“Communists for the USSR”, “Stalin’s Block” etc.), a total that was actually a bit higher than the 28 percent they garnered in the December 1995 elections. Similarly, Zyuganov received 30.2 percent of the popular vote in March of 2000, compared to the 32 percent he won in the first round of the 1996 presidential elections. Contrary to many

expectations, then, it does not appear that Russian communists are going the way of the dinosaurs. Questions about the nature, source, and the future of support for the communist party thus remain open.

In order to account for the stable level of communist support across a decade in which many expected the party to inexorably decline, we are led fairly naturally to two competing hypotheses:

> H1: Support for the Communist Party is actually evenly distributed across age cohorts. The survey evidence and other data discussed above that detect a correlation between old age and support for the communists is thus faulty.
> H2: Russian voters become more supportive of the Communist Party as they move into retirement age. We should thus observe a correlation between age and support for the communists. However, in the parlance of cohort analysis, this correlation is a "life cycle" effect and not a "cohort" effect, and thus can be expected to persist.

The first hypothesis holds that the correlation between age and communist support that was observed in many previous studies is actually not present, or at least no longer present. It implies that Russian voters cast their ballots one way or another depending upon any number of factors, e.g., their approval or disapproval of the incumbent president, their evaluation of the consequences of market reforms, events in Chechnya, but not factors that covary strongly with age. Contrary to Talbott's speculation, this hypothesis also implies that support for continuing market reforms depends upon the extent to which reforms are actually successful in improving conditions in general, and not just in redistributing resources to the young from the old, who then oblige the reformers by passing away.

The second hypothesis, in contrast, holds that we should continue to observe a correlation between age and support for the CPRF. This correlation, however, is due to the ongoing success of the communists in attracting the support of "new" older voters, and not a product of the fading legacy of the Stalinist generation. If this is the case, it would presumably be because Russian pensioners find the policies favored by the communists, e.g., higher levels of state-sponsored benefits and price controls on consumer goods, preferable to the policies favored by their opponents.[2] Contrary to the cohort effect posited by the "dying out of the communists" scenario, a life-cycle effect of this nature means that support for the communists among pensioners

[2] Russian observers have proffered a variety of other explanations for the persistence of communist support among the elderly. One theory is based primarily upon nostalgia. As Ozerova et al. (2001) put it, "There is no reason to believe that the main electoral base of CPRF—pensioners—will substantially shrink in the next couple of years. Survey data (VTSIOM) and the CPRF's own electoral analysts show that many of Russia's pensioners began voting for Zyuganov after they reach retirement age, even though many of them had had other political views before. According to psychologists there is an easy explanation for this phenomena: The communists promise to take us back to the past, and who of the older people does not dream about bringing his/her youth back? The aggregate data we analyze in this paper do not allow us to test (and to therefore reject) this nostalgia-based explanation. Our theoretical inclination, however, is to give priority to explanations base upon objective material circumstances.

is constantly being replenished by the influx of new pensioners (Converse, 1976; Mason and Fienberg, 1985). If present, we would continue to observe a strong correlation between age and vote choice, and a persistence of overall support for the communists.

Analysis

In order to examine these hypotheses we have undertaken an analysis that compares the size and nature of the "pensioner" vote in the 1991, 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. This analysis is based upon voting returns and demographic data, aggregated at the *rayon* level and consists of two parts: (1) comparison of 1991 and 1996 returns, and (2) comparison of 1996 and 2000 returns.[3] Although we do not have observations from all rayons, we do have, as shown in Table 3, an adequate

Table 3
Regional breakdown of rayon-level sample

Central		**Volga**	
Moscow	33	Astrakhan	10
Briansk	31	Volgograd	38
Vladmir	26	Penza	32
Vanovo	26	Samara	34
Kaluga	26	Saratov	47
Kostroma	24	Ulianovsk	23
Orel	26	Kalmikia Republic	14
Riazan	27	**Volga-Viatka**	
Smolensk	26	Kirovsk	35
Tver	38	Mari-El Republic	17
Tula	17	Mordovia Republic	23
Yaroslavl	18	Chuvashia Republic	25
Central-"Black Soil"		**Northern Caucasus**	
Belgorod	26	Adygeiya Republic	8
Voronezh	37	Karachaevo-Cherkess Repbulic	9
Kursk	30	Rostov	52
Lipetsk	19	Kab. Balkar. Republic	11
Northwestern		North-Ossetia	8
St. Petersburgh Region	17	Ingushetia Republic	1
Pskov	26	**Ural**	
Northern		Kurgan	24
Arkhangelsk	23	Orenburg	45
Vologda	28	Perm	35
Murmansk	14	Komi-Perm Autonomous Region	6
Karelia Republic	18	Sverdlovsk	54
Komi Republic	19	Chelyabinsk	29
		Bashkiria	63

[3] We are indebted to Sergei Beriozkin and to the late Alexandr Sobianin for making these data available to us.

and representative sample of 1436 rayons distributed across all major economic and political subdivisions of the country.

The most obvious way in which to test our hypotheses would be to regress change (between 1991 and 1996, and between 1996 and 2000) in the percentage of votes going to the communist candidate upon change in the percentage of pensioners in each rayon. The relative performance of the communists would be expected to decline in those rayons that lost the largest number of pensioners. This turns out not to be feasible, because in most rayons the percentage of pensioners changed very little over the ten-year period. It is hard to explain variance in the dependent variable with an independent variable that has so little variance.

There is, however, another estimation strategy available. As indicated earlier, by our estimates roughly one-fifth of those who were pensioners in 1991 were gone by 1996 and nearly one-half were gone by the year 2000. To the extent they were replaced by individuals from a younger, less Stalinist cohort, we would expect support for the communists in this category of voters to be diluted. We can thus estimate an equation of the following form:

$$\frac{y^1}{y^2} = \alpha\left(\frac{1}{1}\right) + B_1\left(\frac{X^1}{X^2}\right) + (B_2 - B_1)\left(\frac{0}{X^2}\right)$$

where: y^1=the percentage of vote won by the communist candidate in each rayon in the first presidential election (1991/1996); y^2=the percentage of vote won by the communist candidate in each rayon the second presidential election (1996/2000); X^1=the percentage of pensioners in each rayon in the first presidential election year; and X^2=the percentage of pensioners in each rayon in the second presidential election year.

If support for the communists among pensioners became diluted between the first and the second elections in the manner described above, we would expect the coefficient for the pensioner vote in the second election relative to that in the first ($B_2 - B_1$) to be negative. In order to properly specify this equation we need to also estimate the cross-the-board changes in support for the communist candidate between the two elections. We thus specify a dummy variable for observations made in the second election, in addition to a constant term. We also specify dummy variables for each of the 48 regions and republics from which the rayons in our sample are drawn. This is necessary because of the substantial regional variation in support for the communist party.

Another complication we need to address derives from the fact that there were three major candidates in the 1991 presidential election—Boris Yeltsin, the communist candidate Nikolai Ryzhkov, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Also, there were two rounds in the 1996 presidential election but only one round in the 2000 presidential election. Rather than speculate as to the best way to specify the dependent variable, we thought a preferable strategy would be to run the regression on several different permutations. To the extent our results do not vary with the way we specify the dependent variable, we can be confident in their robustness. It should be noted that in some of these equations the dependent variable is pro-Yeltsin, and thus our expectations about the signs of the coefficients would be reversed.

At any rate, we used the following pairs of votes in the first part of the analysis: (1) for Ryzhkov in 1991, for Zyuganov in the first round of 1996; (2) for Ryzhkov in 1991, for Zyuganov in the second round of 1996; (3) for all candidates other than Yeltsin in 1991, for Zyuganov in the first round of 1996; (4) for Yeltsin in 1991, for Yeltsin in the first round of 1996; (5) for Yeltsin in 1991, for Yeltsin in the second round of 1996; (6) for Yeltsin in 1991, for Yeltsin or Lebed in the first round of 1996. Also, out of curiosity we ran the regression using Zhirinovsky's votes in 1991 and in the first round of 1996.

In the second part of the analysis the following pairs of votes have been used: (1) for Zyuganov in the first round in 1996, for Zyuganov in 2000; (2) for all candidates other than Yeltsin in 1996 first round, for Zyuganov in 2000; (3) for Yeltsin in the first round of the 1996, for Putin in 2000. Results of the 1991/1996 part of our regression analyses are reported in Table 4. The first number in each entry is the regression coefficient, the second number the standard error. Coefficients that are more than twice the size of their corresponding standard error should be regarded as statistically significant. Note also that coefficients associated with the 48 regional dummy variables are not reported.

Looking first at the coefficients associated with the pensioner vote in the 1991 election, we see that this category of voters was, relative to the rest of the electorate, quite supportive of Ryzhkov and correspondingly unsupportive of Yeltsin. This is exactly what the findings from the survey data discussed previously would have portended. But contrary to the hypothesis that pensioners' support for the communists had become diluted over the intervening five years, we see that the elderly were actually much *more* supportive of the communist candidate in 1996 than they had been previously. Clustered around 0.5, the coefficients we estimated in the first three equations for the "pensioners, second election" term must be added to the coefficients of the "pensioners, first round" term (which average about 0.3) to gauge their effect. This means that in 1999 that a one percent larger share of pensioners in a rayon

Table 4
Pensioners' choices in Russian Presidential elections, 1991–96

Variable	Ryzhkov 91Zyuganov 96-1	Ryzhkov 91Zyuganov 96-2	Anti-Yeltsin 91Zyuganov 96-1	Yeltsin 91Yeltsin 96-1	Yeltsin 91Yeltsin 96-2	Yeltsin 91Yeltsin+ Lebed 96-1	Zhirinovsky 91Zhirinovsky 96-1
Constant	4.7(2.1)	6.8(2.0)	22.2(2.5)	78.8(2.2)	77.7(2.4)	80.7(2.3)	0.4(0.6)
Second election	5.6(0.19)	11.3(1.9)	−19.5(2.3)	−9.5(2.1)	13.3(2.2)	4.9(2.1)	0.6(0.6)
Pensioners, first election	0.29 (0.05)	0.19 (0.05)	0.28 (0.06)	−0.33 (0.06)	−0.28 (0.06)	−0.42 (0.05)	0.16 (0.02)
Pensioners, second election	0.45 (0.06)	0.55 (0.06)	0.52 (0.8)	−0.22 (0.07)	−0.45 (0.08)	-0.23 (0.07)	−0.15 (0.02)
R^2 (adj)	0.64	0.74	0.46	0.59	0.45	0.46	0.43

was associated with a 0.8 percent increase in the share of votes won by Zyuganov. Contrary to expectations, then, support for the communists became relatively *more* concentrated among Russian pensioners, not less!

Turning to the other equations reported in Table 4, we see that the coefficients in the Yeltsin equations are smaller, but still sizable. They thus indicate that pensioners' relative antipathy to Yeltsin, while already evident in 1991, was much stronger in 1996. We can thus be confident that our results do not depend upon any particular specification of the dependent variable. Finally, we see that although pensioners were somewhat more supportive of Zhirinovsky in 1991, by 1996 they were no more likely than younger cohorts of Russians to vote for him.

Results of the 1996/2000 part of the analysis are reported in Table 5. The first row of coefficients, which denote pensioners' support for a particular candidate in the 1996 election, is very close to the sum of the first and second election coefficients in Table 4. Given that the estimates are based upon virtually the same data, it would have unnerving not to have observed this. The tiny coefficients in the second row are indicative of very little change. Pensioners, as a group, were thus almost exactly as supportive of Zyuganov in 2000 as they had been four years earlier. This high level of support for the communist candidate persisted despite the large amount of replacement of individual pensioners (who had died) by new individuals who reached retirement age during the intervening period.

Table 5 also shows that in 2000 Putin garnered relatively weak support among elderly Russian voters. This is somewhat similar to Yeltsin's situation in 1991 and 1996, but the coefficients in the third column of Table 5 (−0.81 and 0.34) also indicate that Yeltsin's 1996 voters did not entirely go over to Vladimir Putin. This implies that Putin must have gotten a large share of his votes from those who were not previously Yeltsin voters.

Discussion

The results of our analysis are roughly consistent with our second hypothesis, in that we have clearly observed a persistence of the correlation between old age and

Table 5
Pensioners' choices in Russian Presidential elections, 1996–00

Variable	Zyuganov 96-1 Zyuganov 2000	Anti-Yeltsin 96 Zyuganov 2000	Yeltsin 96-1 Putin 2000
Constant	5.2(3.1)	17.8(3.1)	83.2(3.5)
Second election	1.4(0.46)	−15.3(2.4)	17.5(1.9)
Pensioners, first election	0.81(0.11)	0.77(0.7)	-0.81(0.14)
Pensioners, second election	0.03(0.004)	−0.01(0.02)	0.34(0.1)
R^2 (adj)	0.73	0.69	0.38

support for the communists. Explaining the significant strengthening of this correlation between 1991 and 1996, however, is another matter. One possibility, alluded to previously, is that this group of voters, i.e., pensioners, fared especially poorly during this period. While Russian pensioners tended to oppose Yeltsin in 1991 because of their apprehension over the political and economic reforms he was promoting, they strongly opposed him in 1996 because by then they had directly and personally experienced the severe, economic dislocations the reforms engendered. They kept voting communist in 2000 for the same reason, i.e., that their well-being had still not improved in the period leading up to the election.

One most always be cautious when making inferences about voters based upon aggregate data, but we doubt that this is the full story. Keep in mind that the regression equations we estimated included a dummy variable for the 1996 (2000) election, intended to register across-the-board changes in support for the communists and opposition to Yeltsin (Putin). The pensioner variables thus register effects over and above the nation-wide swing, and so this interpretation would imply that pensioners, as a group, were disproportionately injured by the transition away from a centrally planned economy.

According to our reading of the situation, however, this was not the case. The pensions that Russians receive are certainly quite modest, but payments have been indexed to inflation and are probably not much lower in real terms than they were before the reforms began. Although whatever savings they might have had in Sberbank were wiped out, most Russians have long kept much of their savings in other forms. They also received title to their apartments; this means that they would experience a windfall profit were they to sell their apartment. This is not meant to minimize the very difficult material conditions under which many elderly Russians live, but only to note, as Varoli (1996) reports, that "Their plight is not as severe as portrayed by the mass media" (p. 11).

What we believe is more likely the case is that voters who reached retirement age during the past decade became even more supportive of the Communists than the cohort of pensioners who preceded them had been. For as we see it, it was not pensioners, but rather Russian workers *approaching* retirement who were disproportionately injured by the transition to a more market-oriented, less centrally-planned economy. They, too, suffered the loss of savings, but in many cases they also lost their jobs. Although many such workers officially remained on the payroll, there was in fact no work for them and they were infrequently paid, if at all. As a 49-year-old unemployed accountant related to Varoli (1996), "Pensioners are paid very little, but at least they get something…Nobody notices us." Perhaps just as importantly, workers approaching pension age, unlike younger workers, also lacked the time and the ability to learn the new skills and new habits that the economy increasingly calls for.

During the years spanned by the three Russian presidential elections, then, those who had been pensioners in 1991 were joined by large numbers of new pensioners who had suffered badly during the final years of their working lives. While not officially counted as unemployed, many in fact had no work and received little pay. For such people, becoming old enough to receive a pension could have actually

marked an improvement in their material conditions. As economic retrospective voters, they strongly supported Zyuganov in 1996 and in 2000. In short, what we surmise from our findings is that the "new" pensioners who reached retirement age between 1991 and 1996 were even more supportive of the communists than older pensioners who passed away during this period. As they were added to the ranks of the pensioners, the association between old age and support for the communists correspondingly increased in magnitude. That support remained intact in the 1999 parliamentary and 2000 presidential elections.

As of today, then, there is no indication that support for the Communist Party is dying out. But what about the next decade? At this point we can speculate, but only that. According to data on the age structure of the Russian population (see Table 2), there remain today approximately fourteen million people between fifty and sixty years old. Old workers (who are soon to be pensioners) will thus remain a large category of voters for many years to come. These workers no doubt faced serious difficulties in transitioning to the ways of the new economy. Perhaps though, the way for them was not as difficult as it was for those a decade older who became pensioners during the 1990's. If so, those reaching pension age may be less supportive of the communists than those who did so a decade earlier. On the other hand, it is also possible that as they enter the ranks of the pensioners they may find the policies espoused by the communists more attractive.

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that much depends upon the evolution of party politics in general. A major reason why the CPRF has succeeded in maintaining its roughly 30 percent vote share is because of continued disarray in the "middle left," as the Russians describe it. The failure of something like a social democratic party to coalesce has left pensioners (as well as other voters) in that range of the ideological spectrum with no real viable alternative to the communists. If a viable Social Democratic party were to form in the future, it is possible that they could siphon off a large share of the pensioner vote that the communists have garnered.[4]

References

Andersen, K., 1979. The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928–1936. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Bahry, D., 1993. Society transformed? Rethinking the social role of perestroika. Slavic Review 52, 512–554.

Converse, P., 1976. The Dynamics of Party Support: Cohort-Analyzing Party Identification. Sage, Beverly Hills.

Gibson, J., 1996. A mile wide but an inch deep? The structure of democratic commitments in the former USSR. American Journal of Political Science 40, 396–420.

Finifter, A., Mickiewicz, E., 1992. Redefining the political system of the USSR: mass support for political change. American Political Science Review 86, 857–874.

[4] We would like to acknowledge Steve Smith for relating this observation to us.

Hough, J., Davidheiser, E., Lehman, S., 1996. The 1996 Russian Presidential Election. Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC.

Lally, K., 1997. 'Mr. nyets' day is almost over. Baltimore Sun, November 7.

Miller, A., Hesli, V., Reisinger, W., 1994. Reassessing mass support for political and economic change in the former USSR. American Political Science Review 88, 399–411.

Mason, W., Fienberg, S. (Eds.), 1985. Cohort Analysis in Social Research. Springer, New York.

Ozerova, M., Rostovskii, M., Zverev, A., Galimova, N., 2001. "Patriot games." Moskovskii Komsoletz 22843, November 6, 2001.

Reisinger, W., Miller, A., Hesli, V., Maher, K., 1994. Political values in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania: sources and implications for democracy. British Journal of Political Science 45, 183–223.

Talbott, S., 1997. The end of the beginning: the emergence of a new Russia. Address given at Stanford University, September 19.

Varoli, J., 1996. There are more 'new poor' than 'new Russians'. Transition 2 (20), 6–11.