

## Moral crisis or immoral society? : Russian values after the collaps of communism

Kääriäinen, Kimmo

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Forschungsbericht / research report

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Kääriäinen, Kimmo ; Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien (Ed.): *Moral crisis or immoral society? : Russian values after the collaps of communism*. Köln, 1997 (Berichte / BIOst 26-1997). URN: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-43030>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Die Meinungen, die in den vom BUNDESINSTITUT FÜR OSTWISSENSCHAFTLICHE UND INTERNATIONALE STUDIEN herausgegebenen Veröffentlichungen geäußert werden, geben ausschließlich die Auffassung der Autoren wieder.

© 1997 by Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, Köln

Abdruck und sonstige publizistische Nutzung - auch auszugsweise - nur mit vorheriger Zustimmung des Bundesinstituts sowie mit Angabe des Verfassers und der Quelle gestattet.

Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, Lindenbornstr. 22, D-50823 Köln, Telefon 0221/5747-0, Telefax 0221/5747-110; Internet-Adresse: <http://www.uni-koeln.de/extern/biost>

ISSN 0435-7183



## Inhalt

	Seite
Kurzfassung.....	3
Background .....	7
Sources for the Study .....	8
1. The Foundations for Morality in Russia.....	8
2. Family Values and Sexual Morality .....	9
3. Work Ethics .....	14
4. Social Issues.....	22
5. The Influence of Russian Orthodoxy on Morality.....	26
5.1 How Religious Are Russians? .....	27
5.2 The Effects of Religious Belief on Ethics .....	30
5.3 Religion and the Foundations for Morality .....	31
5.4 Family Values, Sexual Morality and Religion .....	33
5.5 Work Ethics and Religion.....	36
5.6 Social Issues and Religion.....	37
6. Lifeworld Versus Systems .....	38
Summary .....	41

1. Juni 1997

Der Verfasser ist Privatdozent an der Universität Helsinki und wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter an der Universität Kuopio.

Redaktion: Gerhard Simon/Melanie Newton



**Kimmo Kääriäinen****Krise der Moral oder unmoralische Gesellschaft?**

## Russische Werte nach dem Kollaps des Kommunismus

Bericht des BIOst Nr. 26/1997

**Kurzfassung***Vorbemerkung*

Häufig ist die Rede von der "Krise der Moral" oder dem "Wertevakuum" in Rußland. Gemeint sind damit das Fehlen allgemein akzeptierter Werte und Moralprinzipien nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus und alle negativen Phänomene in der russischen Gesellschaft, wie beispielsweise die zunehmende Kriminalität. In der russischen Gesellschaft ist eine Krise der Moral evident – es gibt keine allgemein akzeptierten Werte, die die frühere kommunistische Moral ersetzen könnten. Auf der Ebene des Individuums bestehen hingegen hohe Moralprinzipien, die zu einem großen Teil denen in den meisten europäischen Ländern ähneln. In dieser Hinsicht ist es übertrieben, von einer "Krise der Moral" unter den Durchschnittsrussen zu sprechen.

Die heutige russische Gesellschaft kann kaum mit dem Begriff "Wertevakuum" charakterisiert werden. Im Gegenteil: Der Begriff "Wertedschungel" ist geeigneter, die postkommunistische russische Gesellschaft zu beschreiben. In dieser Hinsicht unterscheidet sich Rußland nicht so sehr von anderen europäischen Ländern, in denen es verschiedene ideologische und religiöse Richtungen gibt, die ihre eigenen Wertesysteme haben. Aber in Rußland ist der ideologische Hintergrund ein anderer: Die Russen sind nicht gewohnt, zwischen verschiedenen ideologischen Richtungen zu wählen. Deshalb ist besonders die jüngere Generation im "Wertedschungel" "verloren" und kann kein einheitliches Weltbild mit einem bestimmten Wertesystem entwickeln. Trotz allem haben die meisten Russen klare Moralprinzipien in bezug auf die verschiedensten Lebensbereiche.

Wichtigstes Quellenmaterial zu dieser Studie bilden drei Umfragen in Rußland aufgrund der *World Values surveys*. Die erste gesamtrußländische Umfrage fand im Januar 1991 statt (noch zu Zeiten des kommunistischen Systems), die zweite im August 1993 und die dritte im März-April 1996. In jedem Jahr wurden 1.500-2.000 Russen in ganz Rußland befragt. Dieses empirische Material ist Teil eines gemeinsamen Forschungsprojekts der Finnischen Akademie und der Rußländischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Es wird in dieser Studie erstmals veröffentlicht.

*Ergebnisse*

1. Die frühere offizielle Ideologie, der Marxismus-Leninismus, hat keine Gültigkeit mehr. Auch die alten kommunistischen Ideale und Moralprinzipien in der Bildung haben ihre Gültigkeit verloren. In dieser Hinsicht gibt es eine Krise, eine Krise der theoretischen Moralauffassung in Rußland. Jedoch auf der individuellen Ebene haben die kommunistischen Prinzipien schon lange vor dem Zusammenbruch des kommunistischen Systems viel an Bedeutung verloren. Gegen Ende des kommunistischen Regimes dachten die meisten, daß es keine klar umrissenen Kriterien für "Gut" und "Böse" gibt. Diese Einstellung hat sich nicht wesentlich geändert. Besonders für die jüngere Generation ist es schwer, Moralprinzipien als Leitbilder für ihr Leben zu finden.
2. Die Russen betrachten die Familie als wichtigsten Lebensbereich: für praktisch alle (94%) ist die Familie wichtig. Familienwerte und Sexualmoral werden von mehreren Faktoren beeinflußt. Das traditionelle russische Erbe, das stark familienorientiert ist, läßt sich in der Haltung der Menschen erkennen. Westlicher Einfluß mit zunehmender Betonung des Individualismus hat diese Tradition nicht verdrängen können. Die anderen Ausgangspunkte sind das kommunistische Erbe und die Realität in der sowjetischen Gesellschaft. Sie erklären einige Aspekte der Sexualmoral, in denen sich die russischen Werte von denen in anderen europäischen Ländern stark unterscheiden.
3. Ein Gebiet der Ethik, auf dem sich viele Veränderungen in Rußland vollzogen haben, ist die Arbeitsethik. Die ältere Generation hat eine verantwortungsbewußte Einstellung zur Arbeit, und die meisten sind immer gewillt, ihr Bestes unabhängig vom Gehalt zu leisten. Im Gegensatz dazu betrachtet die jüngere Generation die Arbeit als Job nach dem Prinzip: Je mehr gezahlt wird, desto mehr wird geleistet. Die meisten Russen haben eine positive Einstellung zum Wettbewerb; doch ist eine abnehmende Tendenz in dieser Einstellung feststellbar. Im Gegensatz zu früher glauben heute mehr Menschen, daß nicht schwere Arbeit, sondern Beziehungen zu einem besseren Leben führen. Besonders unter der jüngeren Generation hat sich diese Einstellung wesentlich geändert. Obwohl viele Russen glauben, daß das Einkommen von der Leistung abhängen sollte, bestehen sie auf mehr Gleichheit der Einkommen. In dieser Hinsicht haben sich die Meinungen zwischen 1991 und 1996 wesentlich geändert. Die größten Veränderungen können bei denen festgestellt werden, die während der wirtschaftlichen Transformation besonders gelitten haben, d.h. die ältere Generation und Menschen mit einem niedrigen Bildungsniveau.
4. In bezug auf die Meinungen über die wesentlichsten Aufgaben des Staates sind für die Russen die praktischen Dinge (wie stabile Wirtschaft, Aufrechterhaltung der Ordnung im Land und Kampf gegen das Verbrechen) wichtiger als die mehr abstrakten und humanen Ziele der Gesellschaft. Hinsichtlich des gegenseitigen Vertrauens der Menschen können im Zeitraum 1991-1996 beunruhigende Tendenzen festgestellt werden: Eine große Mehrheit hat kein Vertrauen zu anderen Menschen. Ein anderer bedenklicher Trend ist das Fehlen von Moralprinzipien unter der jüngeren Generation in bezug auf verschiedene praktische gesellschaftliche Probleme.

5. Die russische Orthodoxie vertritt "hohe" moralische Prinzipien, doch unter den Durchschnittsmenschen finden die Lehren wenig Akzeptanz. Nur ein Drittel der Russen betrachten sich als Gläubige, und wenn wir versuchen, eine Gruppe zu ermitteln, die zumindest in einem bestimmten Grad die "wahre Orthodoxie" vertritt, so können nur fünf Prozent der Russen als Vertreter dieser Gruppe gelten. Außerdem sind "wahre orthodoxe Gläubige" eine Minderheit, die hauptsächlich aus älteren Frauen mit niedrigem Bildungsniveau besteht. Darüber hinaus äußerten sie nur bei einigen Fragen der Moral eine "höhere" Moral als die Respondenten mit ähnlichem demographischen Hintergrund. Im Gegensatz dazu äußerten Atheisten eher hohe Moralwerte, besonders in bezug auf verschiedene soziale Aufgaben und auf Ehrlichkeit. Es gibt keinen Beweis dafür, daß die Orthodoxie die Lösung für die "Krise der Moral" bietet.
6. Die Durchschnittsrussen haben ziemlich hohe Moralprinzipien, die sich nicht wesentlich von denen in den meisten europäischen Ländern unterscheiden. Doch gibt es in der russischen Gesellschaft zahlreiche Charakteristika, die als "unmoralisch" betrachtet werden können, wie weitverbreitete Korruption, zunehmende Kriminalität usw. Deshalb besteht in bezug auf die Moral ein Widerspruch in der jetzigen russischen Gesellschaft: Einerseits gibt es viel "Moralpotential" unter den Durchschnittsrussen, doch ist es andererseits schwer, nach den eigenen Prinzipien zu leben (wie dies auch unter dem kommunistischen Regime der Fall war). In dieser Hinsicht ist die "Krise der Moral" zuerst eine Krise des Systems. Die Zukunft ist nicht rosig, weil es unter der jüngeren Generation auch an Moralprinzipien fehlt. Deshalb kann sich die "Krise der Moral" in der Zukunft ausweiten.





## Background

Currently, there is much talk of a "moral crisis" or loss of values in Russia. These terms refer to the lack of commonly accepted values and moral principles following the collapse of communism and to the emergence of a number of negative phenomena in Russian society, such as increasing criminality.

In Russian society as a whole a "moral crisis" is indeed evident – the moral principles of communism have been abandoned and there is no alternative commonly accepted value system to take their place. By contrast, individual Russians profess to hold moral principles similar to those prevailing in most European countries. It would thus be an exaggeration to speak of a "moral crisis" among ordinary Russians.

Contemporary Russian society is characterised not so much by a lack of values as by a myriad of competing ideological and religious movements each offering its own value system. In this sense, Russia does not differ all that much from other European countries. What is different is the ideological background: after living for decades under a one-party system Russians are unaccustomed to discriminating between different ideologies. Amid the "jungle" of conflicting viewpoints, young people, in particular, find it difficult to form a coherent view of the world with a defined value system. For all that, most Russians hold clear moral principles concerning various areas of life.

Both Russian politicians and the Russian Orthodox Church have claimed that religion, particularly Orthodoxy, offers a way out of the "moral crisis" in Russia. It has been proposed that Orthodoxy should resume its traditional role as the "moral backbone" of Russian society. One of the first people to appeal to the Church for help in overcoming the "moral crisis" of Soviet society was Mikhail Gorbachev. Since then, Orthodoxy has become more visible and has considerably enhanced its social status. When communism collapsed, the Church offered the only alternative system of values that could have replaced communist morality. At the same time there was a tendency to idealise the role of the Church as a moral authority in pre-revolutionary Russian society and to ignore the problems of Russian society before 1917. While it is natural that Russian politicians should try to find solutions for contemporary problems in the past, this cannot be done without a critical and open discussion of the country's history. Furthermore, it makes no sense simply to adopt structures that existed at the beginning of the century and expect them to function in contemporary Russia.

This study examines moral values in Russia after the collapse of communism, looking particularly at changes that took place between 1991 and 1996. It begins with an examination of opinions regarding the foundations for morality in Russia and then goes on to explore attitudes to sexual morality, work, and social responsibility. Finally it looks at the influence of Orthodoxy on Russian morality. In each section the tendencies and changes during the period in question are examined, first generally and then in terms of various demographic variables, such as age, gender or level of education.

## Sources for the Study

The empirical data used in this study are based on three *World Values* surveys carried out in Russia. The *World Values* project has been under way since the late 1970s. It includes a versatile set of interviews that has been used to study the opinions of tens of thousands of people all over the world. The surveys used in this study were carried out in January 1991 (when the communist system still existed), in August 1993 and in March-April 1996. On each occasion 1,500-2,000 people were interviewed all over Russia. The questionnaire was adapted to make it relevant to Russia. The empirical material thus gathered forms part of a joint research project between the Academy of Finland and the Russian Academy of Sciences. The fieldwork was carried out by Professor Andreenkov's research group.

### 1. The Foundations for Morality in Russia

Ethics and morality in Russia were previously based on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Communist theory defined the moral norms of Soviet society and provided an absolute foundation for morality.<sup>1</sup> Following the collapse of communism no alternative moral theory emerged to replace communist theory as a national doctrine. Neither is there any agreement about what the foundations for morality in post-communist Russia ought to be. The following statistics show how people's opinions about the foundations for morality have changed since early 1991:

#### The Distribution of Opinions Regarding the Foundations for Morality (1991-1996, in %)

(331)<sup>2</sup> Here are two statements which people sometimes make when discussing good and evil. Which one comes closest to your own point of view?

A. There are clear-cut criteria for defining what is good or evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances.

B. Good and evil can never be clearly defined. What is good or evil depends entirely upon the circumstances at the time.

	1991	1993	1996
Good and evil can be clearly defined	28	31	34
Depends on the circumstances	56	56	50
Disagree with both	6	5	6
Don't know	10	8	10

Most Russians think that there are no clear-cut criteria for defining good and evil. This was the case even in early 1991, despite the fact that communist moral doctrine had for decades defined good and evil in absolute terms. However, these teachings were not generally accepted by ordinary people. Soviet reality often made it necessary to distinguish between a

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Osnovy marksistkoi-leninskoi etiki*, Minsk, 1965, pp. 6-8; O. G. Drobnitskii, *Ponyatie morali. Istoriko-kriticheskiĭ ocherk*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 181-184. For more detail about the Soviet background, see Kimmo Kääriäinen, *Die Ethik-Diskussion in Rußland*, Berichte des BIOst, Nr. 56/1995.

<sup>2</sup> The number refers to the number of the relevant question in the survey questionnaire.

"real" and an "expedient" truth, so it was difficult to believe that good and evil could be defined in absolute terms.<sup>3</sup> It would, therefore, be an oversimplification to say that the present moral crisis has been brought about entirely by the collapse of communism and its value system.

At the official level the abandoning of Marxism-Leninism as an ideology brought major problems of orientation. The lack of agreement about an alternative value system poses a problem of how to teach morality in schools, for instance. Among individuals, however, the ideological landmarks had already begun to shift long before the end of the communist regime. People had ceased to pay much attention to ideological or political matters and concerned themselves more with the practical aspects of everyday life--family, friends and work. This "micro-environment" has not changed so drastically in the post-communist era.

With regard to most moral questions, including the foundations for morality, there are notable differences between age-groups. In 1996, only one in four (27%) of the youngest group of respondents (18-28 years) thought good and evil could be defined in absolute terms, whereas 60% held the opposite view. Among the older generation, by contrast, a higher than average percentage of respondents thought good and evil could be universally defined: in the age-group 60-69 years 42% shared this view and among the oldest group of respondents (70 years and over) the figure was half. This distribution is also reflected in the responses to more detailed questions concerning moral issues: while older people tend to adhere to clearly defined moral principles, a kind of moral relativism is typical of the younger generations.

## 2. Family Values and Sexual Morality

Russians regard the family as the most important area of life: 94% of those questioned said they regarded the family as important. Therefore, it is important to examine what kind of moral principles guide their family life and sexual morality. Since these are aspects of ethics that concern the personal sphere, most people are likely to hold clear views on them. The first matter examined is the relationship between parents and children. The following statistics show how Russians view two aspects of this relationship.

### **The Distribution of Opinions Regarding the Relationship Between Parents and Children (1991-1996, in %).**

(451) *With which of these two statements do you tend to agree?*

A. *Regardless of what the qualities and faults of one's parents are, one must always love and respect them.*

*One does not have a duty to respect and love parents who have not earned it by their behaviour and attitudes.*

	1991	1993	1996
Should always love parents	70	70	75
Parents have to earn love and respect	23	26	19

<sup>3</sup> Yurii Levada, *Sovetskii prostoi chelovek*, Moscow, 1993, pp. 42-43.

Don't know 7 4 7

(452) Which of the following statements best describes your views about parents' responsibilities to their children?

A. Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being.

B. Parents have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children.

	1991	1993	1996
Parents should do their best for their children	48	52	49
Parents have their own life	33	31	29
Disagree with both	13	13	16
Don't know	6	4	6

Three out of four Russians (75%) think that one should always love one's parents, regardless of what their qualities and faults are. This is a very high percentage in comparison with other European countries and indicates the strong orientation towards the family in Russia. Age does not play any significant role in these attitudes. Furthermore, no significant change in opinions is observable since 1991. Consequently, the predominant attitude in Russia has been and still is the "traditional" one – namely, that children should always love and respect their parents.

The response to the question about parents' responsibilities also indicated an adherence to tradition. Increasing individualism in other areas of life seems to have had no influence on family values. Again, no significant change can be detected following the collapse of communism. Here, however, age does seem to play a role: the oldest respondents most often think that parents should sacrifice their lives for their children.

In each year of the *World Values* survey the respondents were asked about sexual freedom. Here again, no significant changes could be noted after 1991. Therefore the figures given here are for 1996 only.

### The Age Distribution of Opinions Regarding Sexual Freedom (1996, in %)

(423) Would you agree or disagree with the statement that people should be able to have total sexual freedom?

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Tend to agree	31	18	15	8	6	4	16
Tend to disagree	38	48	56	65	58	53	52
Neither/depends	22	23	17	14	11	5	18
Don't know	8	10	12	12	26	37	1

(444) Do you accept the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without having a permanent relationship with a man?

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Accept	41	43	42	34	28	22	38
Don't accept	19	17	20	30	37	36	24
Depends	33	34	35	31	28	29	33

Don't know 7 6 3 3 6 11 5

Only a minority of Russians accept total sexual freedom. In this respect the youngest generation is most liberal: one-third of them (31%) accept total sexual freedom. However, even in this group a greater proportion (38%) does not accept total sexual freedom. Since 1991 no significant changes can be noted in any age-group, although the freedom of the mass media has increased considerably with regard to sexual matters. All kinds of publications encouraging sexual freedom are available but they appear so far not to have had any impact on values.

Russians tend to accept the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without having a permanent relationship with a man: more than one-third (38%) clearly accept it and another third (33%) think that it depends on the situation. Only a quarter (24%) do not accept sexual freedom of this kind. There are clear differences between age-groups. The most liberal are those between the ages of 29 and 39. An obvious reason for this is that the issue is most relevant to this age-group. The oldest group, by contrast, responded most negatively to the question. There is also a significant difference between men and women: only one-third of men (33%) accept the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without being in a permanent relationship, whereas 42% of women accept it. In most cases women have more "traditional" values than men, but in this case, where it is the freedom of women that is at issue, women are more liberal than men.

A very important aspect of sexual morality is the issue of abortion. For some people this is a question that can only be resolved one way or the other: either one accepts abortion or one does not. Normally, however, there are a number of special circumstances that are taken into account when considering the ethics of abortion. The following statistics show how Russians view these abortion indicators.

### **The Age Distribution of Opinions Regarding Indicators for Abortion (1996, %)**

*(465) Would you accept an abortion in the following situations?*

*A. When pregnancy could threaten the woman's health*

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Accept	78	80	80	76	67	61	76
Don't accept	13	13	12	16	19	25	15
Don't know	9	6	9	8	14	14	9

*B. When it is very probable that the child will be born with physical disabilities*

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Accept	84	87	82	84	71	59	81
Don't accept	6	5	7	11	15	27	9
Don't know.	9	8	10	6	14	14	10



*C. When the woman is not married*

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Accept	40	41	39	36	32	24	37
Don't accept	37	33	34	40	40	46	37
Don't know	24	25	28	24	27	28	26

*D. When the parents do not want to have any more children*

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Accept	61	63	60	61	41	39	57
Don't accept	20	20	23	27	35	43	25
Don't know	19	17	17	12	24	17	18

Abortion is widely accepted in a situation when it is very probable that the child will be born with physical disabilities. This percentage is even higher (81%) than when pregnancy could threaten the woman's health (76%). These are the two most commonly accepted reasons for abortion in most European countries; however, normally they are listed in the opposite order. This difference may be explained by the way handicapped children (and adults) were treated in the former Soviet Union. They were generally shut up in mental hospitals or other institutions and isolated from society. In this respect little has changed since the collapse of communism. Furthermore, it takes time to change attitudes.

A clear majority of Russians accepts abortion in a situation when the parents do not want to have any more children. This percentage is notably higher than in other countries. This attitude may be explained by the fact that for decades abortion was one of the most widely used means of contraception in the Soviet Union. There were hardly any other means of contraception available and those that were available were of very poor quality. Although there are now other methods available, Russians have become used to regarding abortion as a "normal" means of contraception. The number of abortions has decreased somewhat in recent years: in 1994 there were 3 million abortions, but in 1995 "only" 2.7 million. This figure is still extremely high, especially in comparison with the number of births, which was 1.3 million--i. e., half the number of abortions.<sup>4</sup>

Here there are differences between age-groups. As with other aspects of sexual morality, older people hold stricter moral principles. However, in the case of abortion these differences are not as significant as they are on other issues. The older generations have after all lived for many years in a society where abortion was widely used and accepted. In all cases mentioned women accepted abortion slightly more often than men.

---

<sup>4</sup> Just how high the abortion rate is in Russia becomes evident when a comparison is made with another country with similar abortion legislation. Finland is an example of a country with rather liberal abortion legislation. However, in 1995 there were fewer than 10,000 abortions and 63,200 children were born. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21.12.1996.



On several matters of sexual morality respondents were asked to place their opinions on a ten-point scale, ranging from "never justified" to "always justified". The following statistics show the percentage of respondents who expressed clearly negative opinions concerning several matters of sexual morality.

***(565) The Age Distribution of Respondents Who Think the Practices Listed Are Never Justified (1996, in %)***

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-	total
Married persons having an affair	22	28	35	43	52	63	36
Homosexuality	61	67	75	80	82	80	72
Prostitution	43	52	66	78	80	82	63
Divorce	6	7	7	11	10	9	8

The issue that received the most negative response was homosexuality, with almost three out of four respondents (72%) rejecting it. This percentage is much higher than in other European countries where the discussion goes on at a totally different level, e.g. whether homosexuals should have the right to marry or even to have a church wedding. One explanation for the very high percentage of people who think homosexuality is "never justified" may be that in the former Soviet Union homosexuality was censured and was considered a criminal offence because it did not fit in with the concept of the "new Soviet man". The youngest generation (18-28 years) is somewhat more tolerant than the others, but even among this age-group a clear majority thinks that homosexuality is never justified.

There is a great difference in opinion between age-groups regarding extra-marital affairs. Three times as many people in the oldest group said they thought this was never justified as in the youngest group. Prostitution is generally regarded as never justified: almost two out of three people (63%) hold this opinion. Here again, there is a great difference between the oldest and the youngest age-groups: twice as many people in the oldest group thought that prostitution was never justified as in the youngest group. Divorce, on the contrary, is rarely regarded as never justified. Less than one-tenth (8%) of respondents held this opinion and age did not play any significant role. Divorce has been and still is such a common phenomenon in Russia that people do not regard it in a very negative light.

Russian family values and attitudes to sexual morality have been shaped by a number of influences. First of all, the Russian tradition is very strongly family-orientated and has remained so despite the influence of the West, with its increasing emphasis on individualism. At the same time, Russian attitudes to certain aspects of sexual morality clearly bear the mark of communist ideology and of Soviet reality. In these areas Russians hold rather different views to their European counterparts.

### **3. Work Ethics**

In attitudes towards work many changes have taken place in Russia. As the transition to a market economy got under way, people became sceptical about the desirability of the changes that it entailed. They realised that a market economy would not automatically ensure them a

high standard of living and their views of the West became more realistic. Nonetheless, most people have a positive attitude to competition and they recognize the importance of hard work. As the following statistics show, almost all Russians (90%) believe that a person's salary should depend on his performance.

***Opinions About Linking Salary to Performance (1996, in %)***

*(277) Imagine two secretaries of the same age, doing practically the same job. One finds out that the other earns 100,000 roubles more than she does. The better- paid secretary, however, is quicker, more efficient and more reliable. Do you think is it fair that one secretary is paid more than the other?*

Fair	90
Not fair	5
Don't know	5

A good salary is regarded as the most important factor in connection with work (90% of respondents regarded it as important). After that come an interesting job (65%), pleasant colleagues (64%) and job security (62%). Aspects of work that are regarded as not so important are a responsible job (only 18% regarded it as important), not much pressure (19%), meeting people (21%) and chances for promotion (22%). These results differ somewhat from those of most European countries, especially as far as the importance of a good salary is concerned. The definition of what constitutes a good salary is, however, rather different in Russia to elsewhere. In a country where a large proportion of the population lives in poverty and the average salary of 200 USD is scarcely enough to live on (especially in big cities), a "good salary" simply means enough money to cover essentials.

In order to examine attitudes to work in more detail, respondents were asked to choose between a number of possible motives for working.

***The Age Distribution of Attitudes to Work (1996, in %)***

(270) Here are some statements about what makes people work. No matter whether you have a job or not, which of the following statements comes closest to your own viewpoint?

	18-28	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70	male	female	total
Work is a commodity:									
the more I earn the the harder I work	31	31	26	18	14	8	34	16	24
I always do my best									
independent of the salary	21	25	37	41	50	52	31	38	35
Work is a necessity									
I would not work if I did not have to	21	26	19	18	19	16	16	24	20
I like to work, but I do not let work interfere with my life	15	10	9	8	6	2	9	10	9
I love my job - it is the most important thing in my life	3	4	6	12	8	9	7	6	6
I have never had a job	5	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1
Don't know	3	4	3	3	4	12	3	5	4

There are significant differences between age-groups regarding motives for working. One-third of the youngest group regard work as a commodity: the more they earn the harder they are prepared to work. This attitude is not typical of the older groups. A responsible attitude towards work is found most often among older people. Half of the respondents of 60 years or more said that they always did their best independent of the salary, whereas only one-fifth of the youngest group (18-28) said this. Men regard work as a commodity twice as often as women. Accordingly, women say more often than men that they always do their best independent of the salary. Quite a high percentage of respondents (20%) said they would not work if they did not have to. This attitude is found more frequently among women than among men, which probably reflects the fact that most Russian women bear the double burden of taking care of the housework and children as well as going out to work.

Another aspect of work ethics examined was attitudes to authority. Respondents were asked to say under what circumstances one should follow the instructions of one's superior. The following statistics show how attitudes changed between 1991 and 1996.

***The Distribution of Opinions with Regard to Following Instructions at Work (1991-1996, in %)***

*(279) People have different ideas about following instructions at work. Some people think one should follow the instructions of one's superior even if one does not fully agree with him. Others think one should follow instructions only if one is convinced that they are right. With which of these two opinions do you agree?*

	1991	1993	1996
Should follow instructions	18	22	31
Must be convinced first	54	43	33
Depends	25	31	30
Don't know	3	4	5

On this question attitudes changed considerably between 1991 and 1996. In 1991 fewer than one in five respondents (18%) thought one should always follow instructions, whereas in 1996 one-third of the respondents (31%) shared this view. In 1991 more than half (54%) of the respondents thought one should only follow instructions one agreed with, whereas in 1996 only one-third held this opinion. Given the authoritarian nature of the communist regime, it might have been expected that people would have been more inclined to follow the instructions of superiors under communism than under market conditions. The tendency has, however, been the opposite. One obvious reason for this is that market conditions have brought much greater job insecurity.

After the collapse of communism incomes became much more unequal. The following statistics show how people's attitudes to equality of incomes have changed. Respondents were asked to place their views on a ten-point scale at one end of which was the statement "incomes should be made more equal" and at the other end "we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort".

*Opinions About the Equality of Incomes (1991-1996, in %)*

	1991	1993	1996
Incomes should be made more equal			
1	4	9	15
2	2	4	8
3	4	8	11
4	4	8	9
5	12	21	18
6	8	8	6
7	13	12	9
8	15	12	7
9	6	4	4
10	22	10	9
Don't know	11	4	4
There should be larger income differences			

The two extreme ends of the scale (1 and 10) show clearly that there has been a big change in attitudes towards equality of incomes. The percentage of Russians who think that incomes should be made more equal has increased from 4% to 15% and the percentage of those who think that there should be larger income differences as incentives for individual effort has decreased from 22% to 9%. In 1991 26% placed themselves in the first five categories – i.e., they favoured greater equality of incomes over greater discrepancies. In 1993 this figure was half and in 1996, 61%.

Age plays a significant role in attitudes to equality of incomes. In each year of study the older groups said more frequently than the others that they favoured equal incomes. In 1996 one third (34%) of respondents aged 70 years or over placed themselves at the lowest end of the scale and only 2% at the other end. Three out of four of them favoured equal incomes to at least some degree i.e., they placed themselves between 1 and 5 on the scale. Among younger people, by contrast, the opposite view was more strongly represented; however, even among these age-groups the proportion of respondents who came out firmly in favour of greater income differences (10 on the scale) fell by half between 1991 (25%) and 1996 (13%).

To some extent the figures for 1991 can be explained by the fact that at that time differences in incomes were not very great. The majority of people did not accept this situation. However, as a consequence of economic reform, income differences have become enormous and a great deal of the population lives in poverty, a situation which the majority of the population finds

unacceptable. The greatest change in opinions may be noted among Russians who have suffered most from the social and economic transformation, i. e. older people.<sup>5</sup>

An indicator of how strained the situation is are attitudes towards newly rich Russians. According to a survey by the Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems carried out in 1995, nearly half of the Russian population favours the confiscation by violent means of the wealth that the newly rich Russians have amassed dishonestly.<sup>6</sup>

Another aspect of the market economy is competition. Respondents were asked to place themselves on a ten-point scale at one end of which was the statement: "Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas." At the other end was the statement: "Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people."

***Attitudes to Competition (1991-1996, in %)***

	1991	1993	1996
Competition is good			
1	32	22	20
2	11	11	9
3	14	14	14
4	7	11	11
5	11	18	20
6	3	4	5
7	4	3	4
8	3	3	4
9	1	2	2
10	3	4	3
Don't know	11	7	9

Competition is harmful

In 1991 one-third of respondents (32%) were entirely convinced of the virtues of competition. This percentage had decreased to 22% by 1993, but after that remained relatively stable (20% in 1996). If we look at positive attitudes towards competition overall (1-5 on the scale) no no-

---

<sup>5</sup> The question about the equality of incomes was put in another way in a survey by the Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems. The respective counterparts were *equal opportunities* and *equal incomes*. This survey showed a clear preference for equal opportunities over equal incomes. An individualistic model of a society of equal opportunities had on average three times as many supporters as a society with equal incomes. *Mass Consciousness of the Russians during the Period of Social Transformation: Reality versus Myths*, Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems, Moscow, 1996, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

table changes have occurred: in each year three out of four respondents (75%) had a positive attitude towards competition. Here, too, age plays a significant role. Among the youngest group (18-28 years) the percentage of respondents who thought competition was definitely good (1 on the scale) was the highest of any group in each year of the study; nevertheless, even in this group enthusiasm for competition has waned: in 1991 it was 41%; in 1993, 31%; and in 1996, only 23%. Among the oldest group, by contrast, the corresponding percentage was always the lowest of any group and fell from 23% in 1991 to 13% in 1993, and by 1996 was only 8%.

Attitudes to hard work were also examined using a ten-point scale. The interviewees were asked to say to what extent they agreed with the following statements: "In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life" and "Hard work does not generally bring success – it is more a matter of luck and connections." The following statistics show the changes that took place between 1991 and 1996.

***Attitudes to Hard Work (1991-1996, %)***

	1991	1993	1996
In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life			
1	25	18	16
2	10	8	8
3	12	12	12
4	8	11	10
5	13	18	17
6	5	6	6
7	5	8	8
8	6	8	7
9	2	4	4
10	7	6	7
Don't know	6	2	4

Success is a matter of luck and connections

In Russia connections have always been important for economic success and promotion. This was the case in Russia before the Revolution and remained so under the communist regime. In the early 1990s, as a consequence of the transition to a market economy, a large proportion of Russians began to think that hard work usually brings a better life. In the course of the 1990s, however, people have become increasingly sceptical about the truth of this statement. In 1991 one-quarter clearly shared this opinion (1 on the scale), whereas the corresponding percentages were 18% in 1993 and 16% in 1996. However, in each year a clear majority,

approximately two-thirds, had a positive attitude towards hard work (1-5 on the scale). At the same time the most negative opinions (10 on the scale) did not increase. In all age-groups the proportion of Russians who definitely think that hard work brings a better life has decreased. However, two age-groups, the oldest and the youngest, clearly differ from the average population. In the oldest group, the proportion of respondents who think that hard work brings a better life, was highest in each year. In 1991 one-third (34%) shared this view; in 1993, one-quarter (24%); and in 1996, 22%. Among the youngest respondents the corresponding percentage was the same as the average in 1991 (24%), but after that lower: in 1993, 16% and in 1996, only 12%. This tendency is alarming, for it means that the new generation does not widely believe in the importance of hard work.

Another question related to the previous ones concerned wealth. Again two opposing statements were presented and respondents were asked to place their view on a ten-point scale. One statement was "People can only get rich at the expense of others" and the other was "Wealth can grow so there is enough for everyone." The following statistics show the changes that took place between 1991 and 1996.

***Opinions About Wealth (1991-1996, in %)***

	1991	1993	1996
People can only get rich at the expense of others			
1	7	7	10
2	4	6	7
3	5	8	11
4	5	7	6
5	13	20	19
6	7	10	8
7	11	10	7
8	12	10	7
9	5	4	4
10	16	10	8
Don't know	15	9	12
Wealth can grow so there is enough for everyone			

The distribution of opinions at the two extreme ends of the scale shows an increase in negative attitudes towards wealth. The proportion of respondents who definitely think that one can get rich only at the expense of others has slightly increased, whereas the proportion of those who share the opposite view has decreased. If we consider a larger group, i. e., those who tend to think that one can get rich only at the expense of others (1-5 on the scale) this



negative tendency becomes more evident. In 1991 a clear minority (34%) shared this view, but in 1993 almost half of the respondents did (48%) and in 1996, a slight majority (53%).

Age played only a minor role with regard to opinions about wealth. All age-groups had almost the same percentages as the average. More significant was the respondents' level of education. In each year twice as many respondents with the lowest level of education (7 grades or less) said they thought one could only get rich at the expense of others as respondents with the highest level of education.

#### 4. Social Issues

The World Values surveys also included several questions about social issues. Issues having a bearing on everyday life were always regarded as most important in the former Soviet Union and continue to be, as the following statistics show:

##### *Matters Regarded as Most Important in Russian Society (1991-1996, in %)*

(532) *If you had to choose, which one of these things would you say is most important?*

	1991	1993	1996
Maintaining order in the nation	57	61	64
Giving people more opportunities to influence important government decisions	23	13	15
Fighting rising prices	14	23	18
Protecting freedom of speech	2	1	2
Don't know	3	2	1

(534) *Here is another list. In your opinion, which one of these is most important?*

	1991	1993	1996
A stable economy	63	65	67
Progress towards a less impersonal and more humane society	9	8	6
Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money	5	3	4
Fighting crime	20	22	21
Don't know	2	2	2

In the first list "maintaining order in the nation" consistently holds first place and is assigned increasing importance in each year that the survey was carried out. Russians regard as impor-

tant those matters that have an impact on their everyday lives. In 1996, for instance, fighting rising prices was not regarded as important as it was in 1993 when people were reeling from the shock of freeing prices, enormous inflation and other aspects of economic transformation. Although protecting freedom of speech was named least often as a matter of priority, this does not mean that it is not regarded as important – it was simply considered less important than the other matters the respondents were asked to choose from. Furthermore, Russians may already have come to take freedom of speech for granted.<sup>7</sup> On most matters age did not seem to play a significant role. The only exception was "maintaining order in the nation", which was assigned particular importance by the youngest (18-28 years) and the oldest (60 years or more) respondents. In 1996, 70% of respondents in both these age-groups regarded it as the country's most important task.

In the second list, too, it was evident that practical matters, such as a stable economy or fighting crime, were regarded as much more important than more abstract goals. Only slight changes occurred between 1991 and 1996. There were, however, differences between age-groups: in 1996, a stable economy was regarded as the most important goal by three out of four people (73%) in the age-group 30-49 years, whereas only half (53%) of the oldest group questioned regarded it as most important. The oldest generation placed more emphasis on fighting crime: one-third (35%) of them regarded it as most important.

One social question about which there is much debate is the issue of freedom versus equality. Respondents were asked the following question:

***Opinions About Freedom Versus Equality (1991-1996, in %)***

*(477) Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view?*

*A. I think that both freedom and equality are important. But if I have to choose one of them, I think that personal freedom is more important; then everybody could live freely without restrictions on their personal development.*

*B. Of course both freedom and equality are important. But if I have to choose one of them, I think that equality is more important; then nobody would be in a privileged position and social differences would not be so large.*

	1991	1993	1996
Freedom is more important	40	45	43
Equality is more important	42	36	33
Disagree with both	6	8	10
Don't know	15	10	14

<sup>7</sup> According to a survey of the Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems, in 1995, almost three out of four Russians (74%) supported freedom of expression but favoured a ban on the propagation of such things as violence and pornography. Only 13% believed that the freedom of the mass media should be restricted by the state and that they should follow a certain political line. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

As can be seen from the table, slight changes in attitudes occurred between 1991 and 1996. The percentage of Russians who think that freedom is more important has remained approximately at the same level, whereas the proportion of those who regard equality as more important has decreased. Thus, the communist emphasis on equality seems to be losing its influence. However, neither of these statements has the majority's support and the percentage of respondents who accept neither freedom nor equality has increased.

Big differences in opinion on this issue become more apparent when the responses are analysed according to age. In each year more than half of the youngest respondents (18-28 years) regarded freedom as more important than equality. In 1996, 58% of them advocated freedom, whereas only one-quarter (24%) came out in favour of equality. The older generations generally have the opposite view. In 1996, nearly half of them (47%) supported equality and fewer than one in five (18%) thought freedom was more important. With regard to education, most respondents with the lowest level of education put equality first, whereas the majority of respondents with the highest level of education gave priority to freedom. In other words, freedom is supported by those able to take advantage of it, whereas the "weaker" sectors of the population believe they are better off under a system with more equality.

Increasing freedom in Russian society, which is often understood differently in Russia than in the West – i.e., as the opportunity to do anything without limitations (*volya*) and *therefore often has connotations of lawlessness or anarchy*, has had a serious impact on the level of trust in society.<sup>8</sup> This tendency is evident in the following statistics.

#### ***Opinions About Trusting Other People (1991-1996, in %)***

*Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you have to be very careful in dealing with people?*

	1991	1993	1996
Most people can be trusted	35	29	19
Have to be very careful	58	66	73
Don't know	7	5	7

The table shows a steady "negative" trend – i. e., increasing suspicion between people. This tendency to mistrust other people partly explains why friends are uniquely important for Russians, much more so than in other European countries. Neither age nor educational level seemed to make any notable difference to opinions concerning the issue of trust.

People's attitudes to various practical moral questions were examined using a ten-point scale which indicated whether respondents thought that something was always justified, never justified, or somewhere in between. If the responses of those who chose number 1 on the scale (never justified) is analysed according to age, major differences emerge:

---

<sup>8</sup> For more detail, see Tatjana Mazonaschwili, "Unsere Paradoxe: Die Rezeption allgemeinemenschlicher Werte in Rußland," Berichte des BIOst, Nr. 48, 1994, pp. 6-8.

*(565) The Age Distribution of Respondents Who Regard the Practices Listed as Never Justified (1996)*

	18-29	29-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	total
Avoiding fare on public transport	12	18	26	26	29	41	23
Tax evasion	18	19	34	45	43	52	31
Buying stolen goods	40	53	58	60	74	74	57
Taking drugs	70	84	87	92	90	90	84
Keeping money you have found	18	28	33	45	49	56	34
Lying in your own interest	18	25	27	46	49	51	32
Accepting a bribe	47	59	68	77	80	82	66
Resisting the police	23	25	27	36	44	44	31

As the table shows, there is a significant correlation between age and strict moral principles. A kind of moral relativism is most prevalent among the youngest group of respondents, who also tend to regard good and bad as relative concepts. The "higher" morality displayed by the older generations can at least partly be explained by the general tendency of people to become more principled as they get older. Another explanation may be the continuing influence of communist moral education, which, for all its contradictions, embraced a number of moral principles that did not stem solely from communist ideology.<sup>9</sup>

There are several matters in the list above in which Russian values notably differ from those in other European countries. One of these is tax evasion, which fewer than one-third of respondents (31%) think is never justified. For many people in Russia this is a new moral issue, because ordinary people were previously not responsible for deducting tax from their salaries. Secondly, in contemporary Russia, taxation legislation is extremely complicated and in many cases contradictory. This is one of the reasons why many companies try to find ways to evade taxes. The practice has become so widespread that it deprives the government of considerable revenues. In response the government has established a special tax police and

---

<sup>9</sup> There is also a strong correlation between educational level and strict moral principles. The respondents with the lowest level of education most often expressed the opinion that certain matters were never justified. However, this tendency can also be explained by age, since elderly people predominate in the group with the lowest level of education (7 grades or less).

started a campaign against tax evasion in the mass media.<sup>10</sup> This campaign has little credibility in the eyes of the population, which regards the authorities themselves as the biggest tax evaders. The issue of tax evasion is a good example of how difficult it is for Russians to reconcile their principles with the way things work in practice. By paying taxes citizens fulfil their obligations towards the state. However, if the state is not considered to be fulfilling its obligations to the population, then the motivation to pay taxes is not very great.

Another issue on which Russians greatly differ from other Europeans is in their attitude towards the police. Fewer than one third of respondents (31%) hold the opinion that it is never justified to resist the police. What this means in practice is that Russians do not trust the police. Even in the former Soviet Union it was possible to pay off the police in order to avoid prosecution and in the post-communist era corruption among the police has become much worse. It is not uncommon for the police threaten innocent people with arrest in order to extort money from them. In view of this it is not very surprising that most Russians think that resisting the police is justified, even though they also have a strong desire for law and order. It is in such paradoxes that the moral crisis of society is evident: only a small minority of the population trusts the state but a great majority wants a "strong state".

## **5. The Influence of Russian Orthodoxy on Morality**

Russia is often said to be experiencing a "religious renaissance". One consequence of this is that both politicians and the Russian Orthodox Church have claimed that religion, especially Russian Orthodoxy, can solve the "moral crisis" in Russia. Is there any ground for these assertions?

On the face of it, a "religious renaissance" is indeed taking place in Russia. Thousands of churches have been opened (or re-opened) and thousands of parishes established. The rebuilding of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral (which Stalin had blown up in 1934) in Moscow has become a symbol of this "religious renaissance". Furthermore, it has become a common sight for politicians (most of whom were formerly atheists) to stand in front of icons with candles in their hands, especially when the media are present. Patriarch Alexii II accompanies President Yeltsin to various public occasions. However, none of this says anything about religious belief among ordinary Russians.

It would be simplistic to imagine that the Russian Orthodox Church is in a position to lead Russia out of its current "moral crisis". While it is true that Orthodox doctrine embraces humanist principles and provides moral guidelines for individuals, these principles are not commonly accepted. Furthermore, there is little Orthodox literature available on ethics that is up to date. Most works in that field were written in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and have recently been re-published. Orthodox moral teachings, which are closely connected with theology and liturgy, are difficult to apply to the highly secularised Russia of

---

<sup>10</sup> There are, however, quite practical reasons for this campaign: the International Monetary Fund has refused to grant Russia a loan of billions of dollars on the grounds that its taxation system is too inefficient.

today. Russian Orthodoxy does not accept the idea of *natural law*, but states that the human good is intimately bound up with the divine objective good because humanity is not only created in the image of God but also destined to become "like God", thereby achieving and realising true and full humanity, i. e. *Theosis*.<sup>11</sup> Neither does Russian Orthodoxy have any social ethics. Furthermore, in a country that has a huge Islamic population and numerous other religious minorities, Orthodoxy can scarcely be considered as *the* solution to the "moral crisis". Finally, most Russians have no religious faith.

The belief that Orthodoxy can save Russia from its current "moral crisis" attests to two aspects of the Russian mentality: nostalgia for pre-revolutionary Russia and the Russian habit of waiting for a miracle to happen rather than tackling the problem at hand. The nostalgic view of Russia before 1917 idealises it as a highly moral state guided by the principles of Russian Orthodoxy but disregards all the negative aspects of the tsarist regime and the dominance of one confession. Furthermore it ignores the question of whether pre-revolutionary Russia has any relevance for Russian society today?

### ***5.1 How Religious Are Russians?***

According to various surveys there are signs of increasing religiosity in Russia, but it would be an exaggeration to speak of a "religious renaissance". Although the percentage of Russians who believe in God increased after the end of the communist regime--in 1991 one-third of respondents said they believed in God, whereas in 1993 the figure was 46%--the trend later levelled off, with an increase of only 1% between 1993 and 1996.<sup>12</sup>

"Belief in God" is the most vague expression of religiousness and refers to any kind of belief in any god. Religious belief may also be conceptualised in terms of *degrees of belief*. One way of looking at religion is in terms of the individual's concern with discovering the purpose and meaning of life and of the beliefs he adopts to resolve that concern. According to Glock and Stark believers would then be defined as all those who have experienced this concern and have resolved it. Those who have this concern but who have not resolved it may be thought of as seekers. *Non-believers* would be those for whom the concern does not even exist.<sup>13</sup> The term *atheist*, on the other hand, has a special meaning in Russia. An atheist was traditionally someone who was not only convinced that God does not exist but who adopted a consciously negative attitude towards religion. Thus, whereas a non-believer simply did not believe in God, an atheist was actively opposed to religion.

The following statistics show how Russians' religious belief changed between 1991 and 1996:

---

<sup>11</sup> N. O. Losskii, *Bog i mirovoe zlo*, Moscow, 1994, pp. 256-262.

<sup>12</sup> Most Russian surveys give a similar impression: in the early 1990s there was a rapid increase in religiousness, but this stagnated after a couple of years. See, for example, S. B. Filatov and D. E. Furman, "Religiya i politika v massovom soznanii", in *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 7, 1992, pp. 3-4; V. Borzenko, "Religiya v postkommunisticheskoi Rossii," in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny*, No. 8, 1993, p. 5; and M. P. Mchedlov et al., "Religiozniy faktor v sotsial'no-politicheskoi zhizni Rossii," in *Obnovlenie Rossii: trudnyi poisk reshenii*, Moscow, 1994, pp. 149-151.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Glock – Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, Chicago, 1969, p. 27.

*Degrees of Religious Belief (1991-1996, in %)**(340) Independently of whether you attend divine services or not, would you say you are...*

	1991	1993	1996
A believer	23	32	34
A seeker	28	28	30
A non-believer	7	30	24
An atheist	35	5	6
Don't know	7	4	6

The proportion of believers has increased since 1991, although this increase levelled off between 1993 and 1996. The most notable change was that between 1991 and 1993 the percentage of atheists fell sharply, whereas there was an explosion in the percentage of non-believers. This may be explained by the fact that atheism was closely bound up with communist ideology, which was still the official ideology in the Soviet Union in January 1991. When communism collapsed, atheism was discarded along with it; former atheists, however, did not become believers, they became non-believers.

Obviously, there was no real change in conviction among the millions of people who "converted" from atheism to non-belief in two years. In post-communist Russia atheism was no longer politically relevant; indeed it was associated with numerous violations of human rights. For this reason, respondents who had previously classified themselves as atheists purely for political reasons now became non-believers.<sup>14</sup>

The sudden rejection of atheism was typical of the tendency in Russia in the early 1990s to throw overboard all the values and symbols of the previous social order. Not infrequently norms and symbols were discarded before new social structures or regulating bodies could emerge to take their place. The reverse side of this sudden change was the idealisation of phenomena that had been presented negatively by the communist regime. A very rosy picture of pre-revolutionary Russia was painted. To quote Mitrokhin: "On the ruins of one mythology another one, no less illusory, was hastily built up".<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Mitrokhin describes this process in the following manner: "As soon as the external ideological pressing came to weaken, the innermost feelings of protest and public wrath started shooting up, burying the amateur projects of perestroika superintendents. A result of this was the radical 'change of landmarks'. Atheism was now regarded as a synonym of immorality and inhumanity, and religion as a stronghold of morality and a single factor capable of holding the society back from the violence of spiritual vandalism. Step by step the ideological activity of State and Party structures which oversaw the ideological purity of the people died away and on-the-staff atheists likewise grew silent; without instruction 'from above' they were not accustomed to quarrel with God and, sadly enough these ceased to come." Lev Mitrokhin, "Post Communist Russia: Spiritual Renaissance and Religion," in *Russian Culture at the Threshold of the Third Millennium of Christianity*, Moscow, 1993, pp. 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

An examination of various demographic groups reveals that age played a significant role in each year of the study for all degrees of belief. In 1991 the proportion of believers was lower than the average (14-17%) in all groups between the ages of 18 and 49. The highest proportion of believers was found among the older groups, reaching 55% among respondents aged 70 years or more. In 1993 the proportion of believers increased in all age-groups and continued to do so slightly in 1996.

In discussing religion Russians tend to use the terms "believe in God" and "believer" synonymously, and sometimes "believer" is assumed to mean "Orthodox believer". This, of course, suits the Russian Orthodox Church since it makes the Church look as if it has more members than is actually the case. In fact the term "believer" is very vague and does not say anything about the form of belief (such as adherence to important religious doctrines) or about other dimensions of religion such as religious practice (frequency of attendance at divine services, frequency of prayer, etc.). In order to distinguish a group of Russians who can be regarded as religious, various dimensions of religion must be taken into account:

1. Belief
2. Knowledge or experience of religion – i.e., a person thinks that there is a God with whom one may have a personal relationship
3. Follower of the Russian Orthodox Church (the institutional dimension)
4. Regular attendance (at least once a month) at Church services (public religious practice)
5. Frequent private prayer (private religious practice).

A person is classified as a "true Orthodox believer" if the criteria 1-3 and 4 or 5 are fulfilled. In other words a "true Orthodox believer" expresses religiosity in the belief, experience, institutional and practice dimensions of religion. "Follower of the Russian Orthodox Church" has been chosen as a criterion because Orthodoxy is the dominant confession in Russia and because almost all respondents who regard themselves as adherents of a particular religious denomination regard themselves as Orthodox. The practice dimension is divided into public and private religious practice. Since some people may be unable to attend church services regularly for practical reasons (distance to the church or health problems, for instance) it suffices if a respondent either regularly attends divine services or prays often.<sup>16</sup>

The criteria listed above do not, in fact, define a "true Orthodox believer" in the strict sense.<sup>17</sup> However, even these rather loose criteria were fulfilled by only 5% of respondents in 1996. If the "true Orthodox believers" are analysed according to demographic criteria it emerges that eight out of ten of them are women and two-thirds are over the age of fifty. While "true Or-

---

<sup>16</sup> This sum-variable was tested by examining the correlations between these criteria and positive correlations were significant.

<sup>17</sup> The criterion "God is regarded as very important" was left out, for instance; furthermore, belief in various non-Christian matters was accepted – belief in astrology is very prevalent among "true Orthodox believers". If more strict criteria were applied, the group would not be statistically significant.



thodox believers" are represented at all educational levels, half of them fall into the lowest category (7 grades or less).

Most "true Orthodox believers" have had contact with religion at home. Eight out of ten of them say their mother and/or grandmother is/was a believer and more than half (62%) say their father is/was. In this respect they greatly differ from all other categories of respondents (only 2% of atheists say their father is/was a believer).

More widespread than Orthodox belief in Russia is non-Christian belief and superstition of various kinds. More than one-third (37%) of respondents believe in astrology and 20% in re-incarnation. Although these beliefs are not directly connected with any religion (even if the doctrine of re-incarnation exists in various religions), such people are still regarded as representatives of the "new religiousness" in Russia.

Russians expressing some degree of religiousness thus fall into the following categories:

1. The largest group (50-60%) consists of those who believe in God and/or have a positive attitude towards religion (believer or seeker). This group embraces all demographic categories. (In many Russian surveys these people are all classified as believers.)
2. The second category consists of people who regard themselves as believers and who consider religion either very important or rather important (30-35%). In this group women, elderly people and people with a lower level of education predominate.
3. "True Orthodox believers" (5%) who express religiosity in various ways. These are believers who regard themselves as Orthodox and also practice religion either publicly or privately. The majority of "true Orthodox believers" are women aged 50 or more with a low level of education. "True Orthodox believers" have a strong religious background at home.
4. Representatives of the "new religiousness" (12%) believe in astrology and re-incarnation. This is a vague form of religiousness which can be classified only as belief in the most general sense. The representatives of "new religiousness" are mostly young people with a religious background at home.

## ***5.2 The Effects of Religious Belief on Ethics***

The effects of religion on ethics can be examined in terms of a concept known as the "consequence dimension". The "consequence dimension" covers all religious prescriptions that specify how people should behave and the attitudes they ought to hold as a consequence of their religion. The notion of *works*, in the theological sense of the term, is connoted here. In the language of Christian belief, the "consequence dimension" deals with man's relation to man rather than with man's relation to God. The study of the consequences of varying degrees of commitment to religion follows the pattern of comparing various groups with regard to

their values in order to clarify whether religion does, in fact, have an effect on people's values.<sup>18</sup>

The implications of religion for practical conduct are stated very explicitly in some religions and in some Christian traditions, though they may be very abstract in others. Various sects and other religious minorities often define clear religious imperatives for their members. In the more highly institutionalised religions and Christian denominations religiously inspired imperatives are less likely to inform the conduct of daily life in explicit ways. The religion sets general standards, which the individual is left to interpret for himself when he confronts the decisions of daily life in concrete circumstances. Despite these differences there is agreement among religions that consequences follow, or should follow, from religious commitment. Expectations of what a person should do as a result of being religious include both avoiding certain kinds of conduct and actively engaging in others.<sup>19</sup> Even though Russian Orthodoxy does not emphasise ethical teachings as much as most Catholic and Protestant traditions it does, however, delineate certain moral principles which the adherents of that religion should follow.

In order to examine the actual consequences of religious belief, respondents were divided into various groups according to the definitions of religiosity described earlier. Special attention is paid to "true Orthodox believers" who express religiosity in all the relevant dimensions of religion. However, in order to test whether it is religion that is responsible for their moral stance, "true Orthodox believers" were compared with the average population and with respondents with a weaker degree of religious commitment (believers, seekers, non-believers and atheists). The views of the "new religious" on some moral issues were also examined.<sup>20</sup>

### ***5.3 Religion and the Foundations for Morality***

The influence of religiousness on how people view the foundations for morality becomes evident in the following statistics:

---

<sup>18</sup> Glock-Stark, pp. 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>20</sup> It should be stressed, however, that *World Values* surveys examine only attitudes and moral principles, not behaviour. They can, therefore, only show the influence of religiosity on values and moral principles, but not on whether these principles are put into practice.

***The Distribution of Opinions Regarding the Foundations for Morality According to Religious Belief (1996, in %)***

(331) Here are two statements which people sometimes make when discussing good and evil. Which one comes closest to your own point of view?

A. There are clear-cut criteria for defining what is good or evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances.

B. Good and evil can never be clearly defined. What is good or evil depends entirely upon the circumstances at the time.

	True Orth. Believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- Believer	Atheist	New religious.	Total
Clear-cut criteria	50	39	30	32	34	30	34
Depends on circumstances	28	44	56	49	53	61	50
Disagree with both							
Don't know	11	10	9	11	3	4	10

As the table shows, religiousness plays a role in opinions concerning the foundations for morality. The percentage of believers who think that there are clear criteria for defining good and evil is considerably higher than the average. Conversely, the proportion of respondents in this group who think that "what is good and evil depends on the circumstances" is lower than the average. Half of the "true Orthodox believers" think that good and evil can be absolutely defined. In other words, half of the "true Orthodox believers" follow the teachings of the Church on this matter, according to which moral relativism is unacceptable. According to Russian Orthodoxy, the criteria for defining good and evil are not based on *ratio* but are given by God and therefore absolute.

If the influence of religiousness and age on people's views about the foundations for morality are compared, then it emerges that the proportion of "true Orthodox believers" who think that there are absolute criteria for defining good and evil is the same as among the oldest group of respondents. Therefore, it is not only religiousness but also age that influences opinions about the foundations for morality. The representatives of the "new religiousness" and other respondents who have not clearly defined their world-view (seekers and non-believers) are most liberal in their opinions about the foundations for morality.

The oldest groups surveyed have been brought up, at least officially, according to communist principles. In the survey of 1996, for example, the respondents aged between 60 and 69 were born between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s and received their education after Stalin's "second revolution". Therefore, it is possible to claim that communist education has had a "positive" ethical influence by delineating a clear morality. This may be one explanation for the "higher" moral standards found among the older generations. Another, as mentioned earlier, is that people tend to become more principled as they grow older. However, it may

also be possible to attribute the higher moral standards of the older generations to religious upbringing: the older generations have more often than the average received a religious upbringing at home: 34% of those aged between 60 and 69 years and 45% of those over seventy say that they were brought up religiously, whereas the average is only 18%. Among the youngest respondents (18-39 years) only one in ten received a religious upbringing.

#### ***5.4 Family Values, Sexual Morality and Religion***

Religions traditionally define certain moral principles for family life and for sexual morality. Russian Orthodoxy is no exception. In the following pages we examine to what extent religion influences moral principles and values in this field.

Russians' attitudes towards relationships between parents and children were discussed earlier on. With regard to these questions "true Orthodox believers" and believers more often than other groups think that one should always love and respect one's parents; however, the differences are not significant and can be mostly explained by the influence of age, because "true Orthodox believers" answered in a similar manner to other elderly respondents. With regard to the question whether parents have a life of their own or whether they should sacrifice their life for their children, "true Orthodox believers" and believers more often than the average population supported the idea that parents should sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children. The representatives of "new religiousness", on the contrary, most often think that parents have a life of their own. In both cases, however, these attitudes were typical for the age-groups to which the respective categories of believer mainly belonged. Therefore, it may not be religiousness but age that plays the major role.

Orthodoxy proscribes pre- and extra-marital sex. The following statistics show the distribution of opinions concerning sexual freedom:

*(423) Would you agree or disagree with the statement that people should be able to have total sexual freedom?*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious.	Total
Tend to agree	4	12	18	15	18	25	16
Tend to disagree	64	59	49	50	55	49	52
Neither/depends	7	13	19	22	15	15	18
Don't know	26	16	14	13	11	11	14

With regard to sexual freedom the representatives of "new religiousness" are most liberal: one-quarter of them (25%) accept total sexual freedom. Here, too, however, age seems to play a major role, since the youngest generations that predominate this group are also most liberal with regard to sexual freedom. "True Orthodox believers" most often (64%) reject total sexual freedom. This cannot be explained merely by the influence of age; therefore in this case religion seems to play a decisive role.

Another question related to the issue of sexual freedom examined whether Russians accepted the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without having a permanent relationship with a man.

*(444) Do you accept the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without having a permanent relationship with a man?*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious.	Total
Accept	30	34	42	40	40	45	38
Do not accept	39	30	21	22	23	24	24
Depends	27	31	33	34	29	28	33
Don't know	5	5	4	4	8	3	5

Here, there are clear differences between "true Orthodox believers" and the other groups: the percentage of "true Orthodox believers" who do not accept the idea of a woman wanting to have a child without having a permanent relationship with a man is considerably higher (39%) than the average (24%). Nevertheless, one-third of them did accept this idea and one-quarter thought it depended on the situation. Thus, the majority of "true Orthodox believers" accept the idea of voluntary single parenthood to at least some degree.

As for abortion, most religions, Christianity included, embrace the principle that life should always be respected and protected and this principle is usually extended to the unborn child. Russian Orthodoxy, like many other Christian traditions, views abortion as murder. According to Orthodoxy, life is a gift from God, and mankind does not have the right to destroy this gift. In line with this reasoning, no social or economic circumstance can justify abortion. However, some religious traditions that are basically opposed to abortion do accept it on certain medical grounds. The following tables show the distribution of opinions among people holding varying degrees of religious conviction regarding the four different indicators for abortion looked at earlier.

*(465) Would you accept an abortion in the following situations?*

*A. When pregnancy could threaten the woman's health*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious	Total
Accept	62	73	79	80	75	78	76
Don't accept	22	17	15	12	14	13	15
Don't know	15	10	6	8	11	9	9

*B. When it is very probable that the child will be born with physical disabilities*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious.	Total
Accept	61	75	87	86	76	88	81
Don't accept	28	15	5	6	11	4	9
Don't know	10	10	8	8	13	8	9

*C. When the woman is not married*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious	Total
Accept	27	32	43	38	36	37	37
Don't accept	44	42	32	35	41	39	37
Don't know.	29	25	24	26	23	25	26

*D. When the parents do not want to have any more children*

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious.	Total
Accept	39	50	66	56	56	64	57
Don't accept	47	30	20	26	25	18	25
Don't know	14	19	14	18	19	17	18

With regard to their opinions about abortion, "true Orthodox believers" clearly differ from the average population and from the other groups examined. In all the situations mentioned the proportion of "true Orthodox believers" who accept abortion is somewhat lower than the average. However, in situations where there is a medical reason for abortion two-thirds of them accept abortion and only one-quarter does not. "True Orthodox believers" and the average population differ most over the question of whether abortion is justified when the parents do not want to have any more children. Nevertheless, even here fewer than half of the "true Orthodox believers" did not accept abortion. The representatives of "new religiousness" are most liberal with regard to abortion. However, age seems to play a major role among both the "true Orthodox believers" and the representatives of "new religiousness" – both groups answered in a similar way to the age-groups that predominate these categories. Generally speaking, religion does seem to have some influence on opinions about abortion; however, established traditions in Russia also play a significant role.

Religion also had some influence on those aspects of sexual morality that were examined using a ten-point scale. The following table shows how those who expressed the most negative opinions (never justified) concerning certain matters of sexual morality were distributed according to religious belief.

***(565) The Distribution According to Religious Belief of Respondents Who Thought That Various Practices Were Never Justified (1996, %)***

	True Orth. believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New religious	Total
Married persons having an affair	53	42	32	33	41	28	36
Homosexuality	79	75	69	74	83	70	72
Prostitution	76	67	63	61	66	59	63
Divorce	10	10	6	6	6	6	8

Religious people condemn homosexuality only slightly more often than others; interestingly, the percentage of atheists who thought that homosexuality was never justified was higher than in other groups. With regard to the other matters mentioned, "true Orthodox believers" had slightly more strict principles than the other groups. As for the first issue, only half of "true Orthodox believers" (53%) have embraced the teachings of the Church and think that it is never justified for married persons to have an affair. According to Russian Orthodoxy, sexuality is a gift from God that materialises in marriage. Furthermore, according to Orthodoxy marriage is not only a social institution but also a *sacrament*. Prostitution is generally regarded as never justified: more than six out of ten people in each group shared this opinion, with a slightly higher percentage among "true Orthodox believers" than among the others. With regard to divorce "true Orthodox believers" differ only slightly from the other groups. Therefore, they clearly do not regard marriage as a sacrament but as a social institution that may end in divorce for a number of reasons. In looking at the rather high proportions of "true Orthodox believers" and believers who think that the practices listed are never justified, it should be borne in mind that these groups are dominated by elderly people, who generally have stricter moral principles; therefore, it is not only religion but also age that influences attitudes to sexual morality.

### ***5.5 Work Ethics and Religion***

There are two groups that clearly differ from the average with regard to work motivation: "true Orthodox believers" and atheists. In both groups 43% of respondents say that they always do their best independent of the salary. As far as "true Orthodox believers" are concerned this percentage differs only slightly from that of women, who dominate this group. Among atheists, however, this high proportion cannot be explained by gender or age. It would, therefore, appear that a responsible attitude towards work stems from factors other than religion.

At the same time, atheists more often than the average regard work as a commodity: one-third (32%) of them share this view. All in all they have a positive, active attitude towards work: only 13% of atheists say that working is a necessity and that they would not work if they did not have to. "True Orthodox believers", on the contrary, quite seldom regard work as a commodity: only 14% of them share this view, whereas one-quarter (22%) of them regard work as a necessity and say they would not work if they did not have to. Here, too, however, these percentages are similar to those among female respondents; therefore, it is not only religion that influences these attitudes.

### ***5.6 Social Issues and Religion***

Religion did not seem to have any significant influence on most of the social issues examined earlier. Atheists generally expressed more responsible attitudes than other groups. The following statistics show the distribution of opinions according to religious belief regarding the questions that were examined earlier in terms of age.

#### ***(565) The Distribution According to Religious Belief of Respondents Who Thought That Various Practices Were Never Justified (1996, in %)***

	True Orth. Believer	Believer	Seeker	Non- believer	Atheist	New Religious	Total
Avoiding fare on public transport	24	24	21	23	31	15	23
Tax evasion	37	35	27	30	42	22	31
Buying stolen goods	70	62	57	52	61	49	57
Taking drugs	93	89	86	83	85	83	84
Keeping money you have found	47	41	31	30	40	26	34
Lying in your own interest	39	39	27	26	42	29	32
Accepting a bribe	75	69	64	66	68	64	66
Resisting the police	31	33	28	32	29	31	31

"True Orthodox believers" and believers have more strict moral principles than others on most of the issues listed. However, these groups also consist mainly of older people who are generally more principled than younger people. It, therefore, seems to be age, not religion, that influences social moral principles. On almost all issues respondents aged 60 and above held stricter moral principles than "true Orthodox believers". The only exception was the issue of drugs on which "true Orthodox believers" expressed the most negative attitudes. By contrast, "true Orthodox believers" do not differ from the average population regarding the



issue of fare-dodging. Furthermore, they express considerably more lax moral principles than the age-groups to which they mainly belong. The same goes for the issue of lying in your own interest. These moral questions are, naturally, more relevant to the everyday lives of "true Orthodox believers" than the question of taking drugs. Thus, they hold stricter moral principles only with regard to matters which are "theoretical" for them and with which they are not confronted on a daily basis.

On most issues atheists come second after "true Orthodox believers" and believers in terms of holding strict moral principles. However, there are some matters of social responsibility and honesty on which they take the most principled stand. This applies particular to the issues of fare-dodging and tax evasion, where the percentage of respondents who think these practices are never justified is higher among atheists than among any other group. A similar trend is observable regarding the question about lying in your own interest. As mentioned earlier, age does not explain atheists' values, because they are distributed more or less evenly among all age-groups.

This examination of the correlation between religious belief and morality leads one to conclude that Russian Orthodoxy is not the solution to the "moral crisis" in Russia. Only one-third of Russians regard themselves as believers and only 5% fulfil the criteria used by the survey to define "true Orthodoxy". Furthermore, "true Orthodox believers" consist mainly of elderly women with a low level of education. On several issues of morality they expressed "higher" moral principles than other respondents with a similar demographic background. However, on some matters of sexual morality (abortion and divorce, for instance) Soviet traditions seemed to have more influence on "true Orthodox believers" than the doctrines of the Church. Atheists tended to express a high degree of social responsibility and honesty. It is, however, difficult to clarify what an atheist's motivation is for adhering to high moral standards. It may have its roots in communist moral doctrine, but it may equally well be based on humanism.

## 6. Lifeworld Versus Systems

The survey has shown that the Russians (with the exception of the youngest generation) hold relatively "high" moral principles which do not notably differ from those held in most European countries. These, however, stand in contrast to the many "immoral" aspects of Russian society, such as widespread corruption, increasing criminality, etc. It is these negative phenomena and the lack of commonly accepted ethical foundations following the collapse of communism that have lead people to use the expression "moral crisis" to describe contemporary Russian society. Thus, there seems to be a contradiction: while Russians hold "normal" moral principles, these cannot be applied in everyday life. How can this contradiction be explained?

The concepts of *lifeworld* and systems developed by Jürgen Habermas offer a theoretical framework for explaining this contradiction. The concept *lifeworld* refers to people's everyday life (family, friends, etc.) and to all the phenomena related to it. The concept *systems*, on the

other hand, refers to the institutions of society (the political and economic systems, juridical institutions, established patterns of social life, etc.). As has been shown above, most Russians have a very responsible attitude to matters connected with their *lifeworld*. These matters are also regarded as most important. In addition, older people in particular, express a responsible attitude to a number of social issues and to the *systems* of Russian society. However, society functions in such a way that it is often extremely difficult to live according to one's principles. The following examples may be used to illustrate the point:

The first example: most Russians (66%) think that it is never justified to accept bribes. However, giving and accepting small or even large bribes is an established feature of Russian society which was also widespread under the communist regime. This practice began among the *nomenclatura* and was used by ordinary people when they wanted to get something accomplished involving local officials, for example. In this respect little has changed since the end of the communist regime. Although most people think that it is never justified to accept bribes, at the same time they live in a society in which bribes are an established feature of the system, i.e., where the system puts pressure on people to act against their principles. The second example: A Russian businessman would like to be honest, declare all his profits and pay all the taxes required by law. But he faces two major problems: if he pays all his taxes he will have almost nothing left and in declaring his income some mafia group may find out how much profit he is making and try to blackmail him and his family. Even if this businessman would like to live in a morally correct way, the existing system makes it impossible. The third example: A babushka would like to visit her grandchildren in another suburb but she has not received her pension for the last three months and hardly has anything to eat. She plans to use public transport but cannot afford to buy a ticket. In principle she thinks that it is never justified to avoid paying one's fare on public transport, but on this occasion she acts against her principles. Should this babushka be termed immoral, or is it society with its numerous structures that make "normal" life impossible that should be termed immoral?

Churches have traditionally played a mediating role between *lifeworld* and *systems* and on many occasions have opposed the "immoral" structures of society. The Russian Orthodox Church, however, has a long tradition of co-operating with the authorities, and this tradition seems to be continuing. The Russian Orthodox Church is highly respected by the majority of Russians and by the state authorities as well; therefore it could play a significant mediating role between *lifeworld* and *systems* – a challenge that it is currently not meeting.

While there is much "moral potential" among ordinary Russians, in contemporary Russian society it is often difficult to live according to one's principles (as was also the case under the communist regime). In this sense the "moral crisis" exists primarily at the level of systems. Given, however, that adherence to moral principles is least strict among the younger generations the "moral crisis" may well spread to the individual sphere in the future.



**Kimmo Kääriäinen****Moral Crisis or Immoral Society?**

## Russian Values after the Collapse of Communism

Bericht des BIOst Nr. 26/1997

**Summary***Introductory Remarks*

There is currently much talk of a "moral crisis" or a loss of values in Russia. With the collapse of the Soviet regime the commonly accepted values and moral principles of communism were discarded, leaving a kind of moral vacuum. At the same time, Russia saw the emergence of a number of negative social phenomena, in particular a sharp rise in crime. By contrast, a survey of individual Russians reveals an adherence to moral principles comparable with that of people in most other European countries. Thus, while Russian society does indeed seem to be undergoing a moral crisis, the values of individuals have remained relatively intact.

Contemporary Russian society is characterised not so much by a lack of values as by a myriad of competing ideological and religious movements each offering its own value system. In this respect, Russia does not differ all that much from other European countries. What is different is the ideological background: after living for decades under a one-party system Russians are unaccustomed to discriminating between different ideologies. Amid the "jungle" of conflicting viewpoints, young people, in particular, find it difficult to form a coherent view of the world with a defined value system. For all that, most Russians hold clear moral principles concerning various areas of life.

The primary sources for this study are three *World Values* surveys conducted in Russia in January 1991 (when the communist system was still in place), in August 1993 and in March-April 1996. On each occasion 1,500-2,000 people were interviewed all over Russia. The empirical data thus gathered form part of a joint research project between the Academy of Finland and the Russian Academy of Sciences. It is published here for the first time.

*Findings*

1. The former official ideology, Marxism-Leninism, has been discarded and the old ideals and moral principles that formed part of communist education no longer hold common currency. Thus, on the theoretical level there is a crisis of moral outlooks in Russia. In practice, however, people had ceased to pay much attention to communist principles long before the collapse of the communist system. By the time the Soviet regime fell, the

majority of the population believed that there were no clear-cut criteria for defining "good" and "bad". This attitude has not changed much in the post-communist era. Young people, especially, find it difficult to identify moral principles to guide their lives.

2. Russians regard the family as the most important area of life: 94% of those questioned said they regarded it as important. Russian family values and attitudes to sexual morality have been shaped by a number of influences. First of all, the Russian tradition is very strongly family-orientated and has remained so despite the influence of the West, with its increasing emphasis on individualism. At the same time, Russian attitudes to certain aspects of sexual morality clearly bear the mark of communist ideology and of Soviet reality. In these areas Russians hold rather different views from their European counterparts.
3. One area in which there has been a major shift in values is work. While the older generations generally have a responsible attitude to work and the majority of them are always willing to do their best independent of their salary, younger people regard the employment relationship as a contract under which they are prepared to work more if they receive more money. Most Russians have a positive attitude to competition, although their enthusiasm has waned steadily since the early years of economic reform. A similar trend is observable regarding attitudes to hard work. More people than before think that it is not hard work but connections that bring a better life. This applies particularly to the younger generation. Although most Russians still think that the size of a person's salary should depend on his performance, the number of people saying they favoured greater equality of incomes rose considerably between 1991 and 1996. Not surprisingly, this opinion shift was most pronounced among those who had suffered the most under the economic transformation, i. e. among older and less well-educated people.
4. When asked to say what the most essential tasks of the state were, Russians listed practical matters, such as stabilising the economy, maintaining order in the country or fighting crime, ahead of more abstract goals, such as defending freedom of speech. Another section of the survey concerned the issue of mutual trust. Here an alarming increase in the level of mistrust was observable between 1991 and 1996; today a large majority of the Russian population does not trust other people. Another disturbing trend is the lack of moral principles among the younger generation with regard to social responsibility.
5. The Russian Orthodox Church preaches adherence to strict moral principles, but these teachings are not widely accepted. The survey revealed, however, that only one third of Russians regard themselves as believers; moreover, only 5% of Russians met the criteria used by the study to define "true Orthodox believers" and those fitting into this category were mainly elderly women with a low level of education. Furthermore, it was only on some issues that they displayed a stronger adherence to moral principles than non-Orthodox respondents with a similar demographic background. Those declaring themselves atheists, on the other hand, seemed to be rather principled people, especially with regard to issues of social responsibility and honesty. There appears to be no evidence, therefore, for the assertion that Orthodoxy is the solution to the "moral crisis" in Russia.

6. The moral principles espoused by ordinary Russians differ little from those held by people in most other European countries. However, many features of Russian society, such as widespread corruption or rising crime, point to an increasingly "immoral" society. Therefore, while many ordinary Russians hold quite high moral principles it is difficult to live according to these principles under contemporary conditions (as was also the case under the communist regime). In this sense the "moral crisis" is primarily a crisis of the system. At the same time, the lack of moral principles among many young people bodes ill for the future. In other words the "moral crisis" can be expected to worsen.