

**A
Sociology
of the
Soviet Union**
Gary Littlejohn



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G.L.

Introduction

This book aims to provide an overview of the Soviet Union, and to evaluate a fairly wide range of material with a view to making a theoretical contribution to the sociology of the Soviet Union. It is hoped to throw new light on the empirical evidence discussed, but it cannot claim to be a definitive analysis. The large number of lengthy works on quite specific aspects of Soviet history and social structure should make it clear that it is beyond the capacity of any one person to provide a definitive account of such a vast, complex and controversial society. Consequently, while covering quite a broad range of issues, I have tried to do so in a spirit of contributing to a continuing debate, rather than of settling those issues.

The topics examined were chosen to help analyse the extent and forms of class relations in the Soviet Union. Yet the factors influencing the class structure stem from the major institutional features of the Soviet Union: the economy; politics and the state; the welfare system and forms of consumption; and the occupational structure with its associated wage differentials and consequent effects on the distribution of income. Hence any discussion of the Soviet class structure has to take these features seriously. These features are of considerable interest in their own right, quite apart from their relevance to the class structure, and it is hoped the respective chapters can stand on their own to some extent for readers particularly interested in these topics. However, taken together these topics do enable one to address the terms in which the Soviet Union judges itself, and seeks to present itself to the rest of the world: whether class relations are being superseded, whether mass democracy is