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Driving Towards Communist Consumerism

AvtoVAZ

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- ¹ The early Cold War period, that of the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev leaderships, is the period when changes in technology permitted a rapid acceleration in the mass dissemination of information and increased contact with the West. It is the period when the Soviet population began to demand a level of parity with economically leading nations. Perhaps most importantly, it is the era in which both a finite objective, the creation of communism by 1980, is set for the Party and the state, and a widespread conception of what is the West, is created. The goal of the Soviet government in the 1950s and 1960s was not to emulate the political or economic system of Western capitalist democracies ; it was to overtake them in terms of the provision of wealth ; a wealth that was to be equitably distributed and to which social programmes were implicitly understood to belong. Thus, the Soviet leadership set the terms for the dialogue between the government and society. Calling for multiparty elections was treason -- calling for improved housing conditions, fashion alternatives, access to passenger cars, etc., was not. Positive statements about the economic and technological successes of the West, particularly as they pertained to the Soviet future, were means by which individuals and the state could share a language and have a common ground for discussion while pursuing interests that met and diverged. Thus, consumption served as both a prime motivational factor and a safety valve for releasing the pressure of discontent. Within the USSR, the idea of consumption was consumed more readily than the ever-scarce goods. Failure or perceived failure, in the areas of technology, science and standard of living had the potential to destabilize and delegitimise the regime at home and abroad. Thus, it was of prime importance to the nomenklatura to attempt technical transfer without cultural diffusion. The AvtoVAZ project is representative of the importation of a technical idea from the West and the reality of the West as seen in the cooperation with Fiat.²

- 2 The automobile remained an elite item in the Soviet Union until the 1950s when it became a symbol for, although not a possession of, the masses. It was associated with freedom, power, privacy and technology. Perhaps one of the most important images associated with the car was that of a haven from the society's panoptic eye and the unreliability of public transport. It was also a place where the individual was in control. Soviet media promoted the idea that a car was a combination of international technical culture and national character, and that "it may be ranked with such phenomena of culture as architecture, theatre, and painting".³ The adoption of the car as a major cultural icon was logical because images of modernity, speed, and advancement were integral to the conception of the Soviet self; and it was destabilising because it intrinsically involved "values of individualism and private property."⁴ Viktor Nikolaevich Poliakov, the former first general director of Volzhskii avtomobil'nyi zavod (VAZ), can be quoted reiterating a phrase attributed to Stalin: "the passenger car is a bourgeois notion."⁵

- 3 Discussion of the problems facing the Soviet light automotive industry began under Khrushchev, despite Khrushchev's decision to favour car pools over private passenger vehicles. In his memoirs, Khrushchev was to write "I think it certainly would have been better from an economic standpoint to buy that license [for a Finely Moody bacon factory] rather than one for a Fiat automobile plant."⁶ Research was conducted into the viability of fitting current cars with modern Western components, for example fitting the Volga with tubeless tyres "as is standard in the US and Western Europe"⁷ as well as purchasing new vehicles. Information was gathered on various models from Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Rover, Opel, Mercedes, Ford, Porsche, Peugeot, Citroën, Nash, etc.⁸ In 1962, the Second Italian Industrial Exhibition was held in Moscow. Despite the general nature of the exhibition that presented the Italian way of life, the purity of the sun, the beauty of the landscape, and the Italian culture, a dominant theme was transportation: displays, models, and examples of cars, buses, planes, gas stations, and electric trains. Highlights of the transportation section were the Selena, a joint Fiat-Ford product, and the GIA, an elegant model from Fiat that had been displayed in the previous year but which now had a new steering wheel. The work of Italian car designers and engineers was reported as "astonishingly industrial and artistic."⁹

- 4 In 1965, Aleksei Nikolaevich Kosygin announced that the Soviet Union was manufacturing vehicles that were obsolete in the West and poorly suited to the Soviet economy.¹⁰ Concurrent with Kosygin's announcement was increased coverage of international car shows, and articles on the benefits and modernity of passenger car production and the infeasibility of development without foreign participation. The question was not if private passenger cars were necessary but what type was most suitable for the nation. K. Bakhtov, a member of management at VAZ, recalled that during the 1960s it was widely accepted that the car industry was simply too far behind international standards to catch up independently.¹¹ Evgenii Artemovich Bashindzhagian, a member of the initial negotiating delegation, believed that "from the very beginning the course went that it must be a completely modern European car."¹² Although the Soviet elite did choose to introduce new lines and technology into preexisting car and truck factories by means of foreign cooperation, the preference was to establish new international turnkey factories.¹³ V. N. Poliakov defended the deal with Fiat by stating that the technical levels of Fiat were in accordance with international

standards, and that Fiat often worked with Ford and other respected automotive manufacturers.¹⁴ Less mentioned were the extremely favourable credit conditions.

5 The contract with Fiat was based on the production of 600,000 passenger cars a year and included \$550 million USD worth of machinery plus technical assistance. The output level of VAZ was to be one car every 22 seconds.¹⁵ Fiat was to assist with the start up, and to provide continuing technical and organisational advice. Production was to begin in 1969, with full capacity being reached by 1972. The streamlined factory was to employ between 35,000 and 40,000 workers, 10,000 less than a comparable plant in the West. This was to be achieved through copious amounts of automation.¹⁶ This high level of automation was to contribute to extensive technical ties, quality controls, training, joint technological developments to be maintained over a decade.¹⁷ Thus, the VAZ contract included several clauses that would result in personnel cooperation.¹⁸ AvtoVAZ was to epitomise the commitment to modern management methods that included: significant levels of independence, accountability of managers, the wage system and supplements for professionals. In reality, an average of 96,000 workers were employed.¹⁹ Despite industrial priority and rapid construction, the first cars were not produced until April 1970, when in commemoration of Lenin's 100th birthday the first vehicle was produced with the use of subassemblies brought in from Italy. General production began in August and full capacity was reached in 1974. There were to be three versions of the Zhiguli produced: the standard, the luxury, and the family edition. Thirty percent of production was to be for export. Like most Soviet industries, VAZ was not dependent on exports for the continued survival of the factory, but typically workers received bonuses and/or higher wages for work on exports.²⁰

6 Despite the generally positive response to the building of AvtoVAZ there was some concern, voiced in such public forums as Pravda, that the technology being employed would cause problems for supplying factories. This concern was justified. Many of the initial parts for the Fiat 124/VAZ 2101/Zhiguli/Lada were to be supplied by other plants, some of which were to be newly constructed or modernised. At the time that the contract with Fiat was signed, the Soviet Union did not produce the 92-octane petrol (on the standard 66-octane petrol, there would be no possibility of reaching 140 km/hr),²¹ lubricants, coolants, or the motor oil, upon which the Fiat 124 ran. There were also safety concerns resulting from inadequate materials. For example, the Ministry of Petroleum-refining and Petrochemicals was unable "to supply us [VAZ] with good-quality door seals, packing glands, brake seals and other rubber articles. The safety of people riding in cars depends on these seals. [...] Probably it is unprofitable for the petrochemical plants to bother with 'small stuff' -- after all, their plan is expressed primarily in tons."²² N. I. Letchford recalled a conversation with Poliakov in which they spoke of the difficulties in producing metals of required quality.

-- Viktor Nikolaevich, I am not getting any results. All the regimes, all the variants that I have tried -- crap.

-- What do you want from me ?

-- I need Italian metal.

-- Think again. It won't happen.

-- Look, I need to understand, as a metallurgist, what to do, I need a sample.

-- OK. But only as an exception.²³

7 The plastics industry was simply unable to meet contemporary demand for automotive parts: the Volga had no basic plastic parts; and the Moskvich had forty-nine parts weighing in at 3.36 kg. The international average at the time was one hundred and thirty

details at 8 kg.²⁴ Eventually, the Fiat 124 was modified for a lower plastic usage. It was also modified for Soviet road and weather conditions. In the end, Soviet engineers altered 65 % of the parts.²⁵ It is therefore not surprising that the press was able to run interviews with Italian workers in which one read : “I come from Turin, I am familiar with Fiat and thought that in Togliatti I would see a copy of the Italian establishment, but nothing was duplicated.”²⁶

- 8 In response to the increased production of passenger cars, the Ministry of Transportation called for the creation of new lorries in order to ship this new abundance of cars.²⁷ Press commentaries agreed that the production problems lay not solely with VAZ but with its suppliers. Poliakov estimated that the VAZ production required the introduction of up to one thousand new components and materials and that this was an excellent opportunity to bring Soviet industry as a whole up to a new level of modernity.²⁸ Subsequent research support the idea that VAZ made a substantial contribution to bringing both car manufacturing and the national economy to a new qualitative level.²⁹ As Soviet designers, engineers, planners, and workers were presented with the challenge of creating new materials and components to “international standards,” the idea of Western modernism was reinforced. The AvtoVAZ with its plethora of new parts and materials was significant in this domino effect. In the official press release commemorating the 50th anniversary of the USSR the heroic advances of the socialist economy through the work of those at VAZ was hailed.³⁰

The necessity of foreign presence ?

- 9 The Soviet Union was not bereft of technological advances under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Its military capabilities had made it one of two superpowers, and its space programme was the best in the world. However, when VAZ workers interviewed and surveyed in 2002³¹ by the researcher were asked if the Soviet Union could have developed and mass-produced an economy car without foreign cooperation, 92.3 % (See Appendix A) said that foreign cooperation was necessary. Former VAZ translator Elvira Simonovna stated that she felt that Fiat was as necessary to VAZ, as Ford was to Gorky, if not more so. She expanded on this by noting that foreign participation, “more than just Italian”, was necessary as it brought with it a new town, new technology and a better life for Soviet workers.³² Question five of the survey asked why the factory was established at Togliatti as opposed to modernising pre-existing factories. The majority (37 of 40) responded that it was primarily due to the abundance of natural resources in the area, gas, hydro-electricity from the Volga, and proximity to a main transportation artery. A supplementary explanation given was the need to create something new : “we in the Soviet Union had never had a normal automobile and we were far behind the West.”³³ This need for the new was a by-product of the stunning political, social and economic changes of the Khrushchev era. Question six of the survey asked : “If Fiat was necessary, why ?” Answers focused on the fact that Fiat offered a modern, affordable product, an economical means of achieving a goal, and access to new technology. “At that time in Russia we didn’t produce an automobile of that class,”³⁴ it offered “advanced technology to the standard that existed in other countries,”³⁵ a “more or less fast means of mass production,”³⁶ “for the USSR it was necessary to have experience in the European field of automobiles,”³⁷ “our level of automotive industry was low. At that time, the level of Fiat was at the level of the world,”³⁸ and “I think that the partnership could have been with

another European automotive firm but in the competition for the project Fiat won.”³⁹ That the idea of the necessity of producing new passenger cars with foreign participation is omnipresent is perhaps an indication of effective propaganda intersecting with a welcoming public.

- 10 Western technology did not remain an abstraction. VAZ engineer O. Rozenkov wrote that his 50 % automated Fiat line was more economical in terms of materials and that the machine did not need as highly qualified workers as the lines with which he had previously worked.⁴⁰ N. M. Golovko recalled how he and his fellow workers “saw, learnt, and became acquainted with the Fiat factory -- it was absolutely of another standard. More progressive rigs, instruments, effective control means, organised use of technology, and better economic and control standards.”⁴¹ Head engineer S. P. Polikarpov recalled the excitement and priority given to VAZ during the planning phases. He was always flown to Moscow, where he was put up in the best hotels, served at the best restaurants, and chauffeured in the best cars, “all because we were to build the best automobile.”⁴² Polikarpov recalled the gradual dwindling of optimism that followed quickly because “when we finished VAZ, in the West it was already practically obsolete. [...] By that time, they had already gone farther.”⁴³
- 11 The myth versus the reality of Soviet modernity, quality and organisation were to be sorely tested by VAZ. In 1968, A. Tsygankov, a chemistry specialist who had worked at the automotive repair factory Gruziiia went to work in Togliatti along with his “enthusiastic friends”, although they were aware that were currently needed construction workers, cement and steel specialists, etc. He remembered that there were so many new people that the majority of fellow workers were unknown and the working conditions were “half chaos.” When asked what for him was the beginning of VAZ, A. I. Grechukhin, who went to VAZ as an inexperienced graduate, answered : “an article by Marietta Shaginian in *Izvestiia* about VAZ, Fiat, the city. It was a well-written article. And I thought : it wouldn’t be a bad place to work in this factory... It was only a thought. I decided then to go.”⁴⁴ The result of the propaganda and hiring practices was a massive gender imbalance (more men than women), groups of men waiting to begin their work, and newly moved families without the usual support networks. The chaos was not entirely due to the flood of new workers, as in the spring of 1969, when the main building was not yet finished, the bulldozers were doing double duty trying to finish work on the building and to clear away the snow, and the Italian specialists were to arrive in late spring with the main conveyor/assembly line. The subjective impact of the disorganisation was magnified by the push to achieve a high level of completion before the foreigners arrived and to produce the first car (April 22nd, 1970) in time for the 100th anniversary of Lenin’s birth. Due to the impossibility of doing both, the building, as well as many of the smaller production units, was left unfinished.⁴⁵ K. Bakhtov recalled a conversation with the head Italian engineer Mr Bono. Bono : “Listen, you are trying to do everything quicker and quicker, and for what ? We don’t understand. We were at the factory together and saw how much work was left. It is not possible to complete it in a year and you want us to try to have it finished in half a year at the latest.”⁴⁶ Former motor master Vladimir Isakov remembers the oft-asked phrase in Italian : “why isn’t this work finished yet ?”⁴⁷ Another rush to prepare the factory was in response to Henry Ford Jr’s decision in 1970 to act upon an invitation to view the factory and to make recommendations.⁴⁸

- 12 Despite a degree of general disillusionment following the construction of VAZ, public opinion of the Zhiguli and of VAZ remained high. In 1967, the book *New Soviet Automobiles* by O. V. Cherkin drew attention to the integral role of the VAZ 2101 in the realisation of the great possibilities of mass Soviet car production.⁴⁹ The magazine *Krokodil* (no. 1, January 1969) was to announce the beginning of production in Togliatti with a front cover cartoon. The cartoon consisted of a picture of a massive crowd surrounding the Zhiguli. There are three quote/caption bubbles in the drawing. Working from top and then clockwise they read : “But do you know if there are any spare parts to purchase ?” “A fine car. Perhaps we could split it na troikh ?” And a baby crying “I want a car” with the mother answering : “Don’t torment the child, buy a Fiat.” This acknowledged problems along with successes : a new car of a foreign standard, but shortages of parts and of the automobile itself. In January 1970, the widely published journal *Za rulem* ran a series on passenger cars that focused favourably on the VAZ 2101 (Fiat 124). The Fiat 124 was generally considered to be the best economy car of the time, a European type car⁵⁰ that offered a cost effective solution to the Soviet passenger car problem. When asked what their opinion of the Zhiguli was in the early 1970s, those surveyed generally praised both the car and the factory. VAZ employee Lidiia Nikolaevna stated that “the automobile was absolutely comfortable and pretty ; the factory was the best in the country, as big as Fiat.”⁵¹ Other surveyed individuals wrote that “there wasn’t a factory like VAZ in all of Russia,”⁵² “the factory was the best in the USSR and one of the best in Europe,”⁵³ “I saw the prospective factory and automobile in 1969 and in response came to this city to build my life.”⁵⁴ “My opinion about the automobile model Zhiguli is that it was a wonderful automobile, and about the factory -- the foremost in technology,”⁵⁵ “the factory and the automobile were of a high quality. 60 % were sold abroad (sic), taken by various countries,”⁵⁶ and “at that time (beginning of the 1970s) I was really amazed by the factory.”⁵⁷ These opinions about the factory and its product were imbued with a sense of comparison with the West. The factory was as good as or better, as big as or bigger, as modern as any in Europe.

Incentives for workers

- 13 Togliatti was to be a new modern city, affording all possible conveniences.⁵⁸ Calls went out to young workers and specialists : a position in Togliatti came with the promise of a single family flat, modern facilities, fertile plots of land/dachas, and the prospect of rapid professional advancement. Residents were to be housed in maximum comfort in one of three grades of flats : “normal” and then two higher categories (including deluxe split level flats). Stores were to be located on every block, no workers’ residence was to be more than fifteen minutes from public transport, and local schools, crèches and medical centres were to be conveniently located both in each block of housing and in the factory. By 1972, 36,000 flats were to be completed, and the local population was set at 150,000.⁵⁹ Streets were designed to be straight and wide, in anticipation of one in four residents having a car. In essence, an advanced city for the workers and specialists of an advanced “European type” factory. Thus, a direct correlation between foreign standards and a new Soviet standard was being established. As incentives to move were concurrent with the presence of foreign cooperation, the aura of new, prosperous, advanced, and to some extent personal wealth and freedom (due to the product being the personal automobile) was subconsciously linked with the West.

- 14 One of the many incentives for moving to Togliatti was the promise of a private flat. One interviewee from Moscow noted that while his family received a two-bedroom apartment within six months (1970), his friend, with whom he had studied and worked, and who had chosen to remain in Moscow, only received a private flat in the 1980s. Irina Mikhailovna, an interviewee originally from Novosibirsk, moved to Togliatti with her husband. The young couple's primary objective was to get a flat, which they did within four months. Irina Mikhailovna noted that while she loved living in Togliatti due to the special theatre, numerous cultural groups, well stocked stores, and general modernity ; and while working at the factory was wondrous (all you needed to do was "to turn a key" and a line worked) she and her family eventually left as benefits of working at VAZ decreased vis-à-vis northern wages.⁶⁰ Another economic incentive was the absence of an old established elite, as this opened up advancement opportunities and corresponding access to increased wages, goods and services. The average age of the workers was 26,⁶¹ and the average age of specialists sent to Turin was 35. The newly created elite had high expectations, one of which was to own an automobile someday. In a then contemporary series of articles about society and cars based on a survey of 700 Soviet citizens, participants were asked when they thought that they would own a car. The response was within five to ten years among respondents under 40.⁶² An unanticipated result of the 2002 survey question "What was your best memory of the Lada and the factory ?" was that 32.5 % of participants felt that purchasing their first car was their best memory. This percentage of ownership was approximately three times the national average. There were several ways of obtaining a car. The official channels were winning the state lottery, as a reward for outstanding labour or social contribution, or through a waiting list. The average waiting list for the purchase of a Zhiguli/Lada⁶³ was six to ten years, which effectively nullified economic pressure for technical improvements.⁶⁴ Galina Valentinovna,⁶⁵ an engineer who worked in design, recalled that she and her husband, a brigade leader, were on the waiting list although they doubted that they would ever have enough money to purchase a car. When they did receive a car in 1980, nine years after starting in Togliatti, and earlier than anticipated due to people before them having been unable to claim their cars, they still had not amassed enough money. Nonetheless, they received the car due to their status as "senior workers."⁶⁶ Aleksei Pavlovich wrote : "I bought my first car, the VAZ 2103, in 1972. This day was, naturally, the best."⁶⁷ Vladimir Gennadyvich wrote : "When I purchased the 2101 in 1974, I was very proud and ecstatic, my dream of having my own car was fulfilled, and more so as it was a Zhiguli."⁶⁸ Another received his Zhiguli from his father who originally purchased it in 1970 and between the two of them they drove the car for 24 years.⁶⁹ "When I sat at the wheel of a Fiat 124 in Italy [I] understood that the future Zhiguli would be klassno!"⁷⁰
- 15 The official means of obtaining a vehicle tended to be rife with cronyism and painstakingly slow. The nonofficial means included using blat or paying black market price.⁷¹ Thus, there was a tension between the state mandate to provide cars for the "average" citizen and the reality of obtaining, and maintaining, a car. This issue was internally generated but externally exacerbated by the use of and contact with foreign technology, personnel and knowledge of rapidly advancing standards in Western Europe and North America. In comparison to the 32.5 % whose fondest memory was obtaining their first car, only 2 of the 40 respondents, or 5 %, mentioned working with foreigners or travelling to Italy as being their favourite memory, this despite 52.5 % having worked with foreigners in Togliatti and 12.5 % having been to Turin. "Working in a new modern

factory was very interesting and informative... The work at VAZ also gave the possibility to visit and to learn first hand about Italy".⁷²

- 16 The increased possibility to travel and contact with foreigners were non economic incentives associated with VAZ. Two and a half thousand Soviet specialists worked in Italy over a five-year period. The first delegation was sent to Turin in February 1966 and stayed until the 4th of May 1966. The length of each stay was variable : 3 weeks to 18 months. Soviet officials facilitated travels whenever possible. For example, A. A. Butko, from the department of automotive imports, recalled that in fact there was never an issue of the usual three-to-four-week waiting period for a visa, he and other specialists could arrange to meet with any European firm within twenty-four hours. Poliakov noted that during the initial phases of VAZ he and his team of specialists were able to get into the "work plane (and fly to) Moscow, Turin, wherever they liked, [...] that was the type of freedom the specialists had."⁷³ Travel was facilitated by VAZ having been allotted a plane and pilots. Contact with Togliatti was also facilitated in Turin because there was a direct line with Moscow and Togliatti. These privileges of being exempt from some of the bureaucratic drudgery and of having industrial priority were non economic incentives that were to be associated, if only subconsciously, with Western industry.
- 17 The opportunity to work abroad provided new professional and personal experiences. Prior to 1968, engineer O. G. Oblovatskii had worked at the Yaroslavl tractor factory. Upon agreeing to work at VAZ, he was to spend a year abroad in Turin. Recalling this time : "We [Oblovatskii and colleagues] became acquainted with how to build an industry in the West, what capitalism was and how it worked."⁷⁴ N. Ustinov, head of the Department of Important Technology for VAZ, remembered having great respect for the Italian specialists and his pleasure at being able to work with them in Italy. He discussed how the team of Soviet specialists and workers worked to assimilate knowledge down to the smallest piece. "Everything was unknown to us, new. We had many questions."⁷⁵ V. Shuliatiev, who spent almost a year in Turin, confirmed this in an interview for a local Soviet paper saying that his initial group sought to absorb everything as "everything was unknown and new."⁷⁶
- 18 A degree of envy and resentment was expressed against those Soviet citizens who benefited personally from their time abroad. Upon leaving an interview conducted with a factory employee who often went abroad and a medical doctor from the factory polyclinic, the doctor asked if this researcher had noticed the unusually high quality of goods in the home. The doctor noted that the interviewee had gone abroad often and always came back with clothes, appliances and other sought after goods, noting that the employee's children were always better dressed and her house was always finer than those of people who were not able to go abroad.⁷⁷ Residents of Togliatti had not good, but better, possibilities of travelling to Italy as tourists. Their travels normally included a visit to Turin, Venice, Florence, and Bologna.⁷⁸ Not all the experiences in Italy were favourable. V. Ia. Aitukov described his stay in Turin : "We felt ourselves to be like participants in an anecdote, who had just fallen abroad. One saw in their [Italian] stores at least twenty types of sausage, thirty types of cheese, and felt faint."⁷⁹
- 19 Individuals who were sent to Turin returned with new ideas, experiences and perceptions. Their new knowledge was transmitted to others in several ways. Professionally, they sought to quickly implement new norms, methods and practices, often straining the Soviet industrial system in their attempts to do so. They communicated their personal experiences to colleagues, friends and family. To some extent, the national press told and

retold the stories of those individuals who, by working in Turin, were making a valuable contribution to the Soviet Union's great leap forward. The exposure was extensive but not remarkable, for this was a period in Soviet history when discussing what the West had to offer was fashionable.

- 20 While the majority of foreigners were Italian, the result of Fiat subcontracting large portions of the work to other firms resulted in a strong presence of other foreigners. Visiting delegations were often covered in the local and national press, in the former usually on the first page.⁸⁰ For example, in June 1970, Soviet press announced the arrival of four international companies represented by their specialists in Togliatti, one American (Landis Tool), two Italian, and one German (SAKK).⁸¹ According to a US congressional report there were on average 850 foreigners present : 600 workers from Italy, and 200 other Westerners (Germans, Britons, Frenchmen and Americans).⁸² Translator Liudmilla Petrovna noted that there was a demand for English that could not be fully met.⁸³ The government sought to rectify this through a course at the University of Leningrad for future VAZ employees that was a combination of English as a second language and a study of foreign car enterprises.
- 21 P. M. Katsura has recalled how the working methods of the Italians were of interest to Soviet workers. Italian workers were "ready to complete any type of work. What interested them most of all was their wages. For our workers what was important was to see the end of the line, that today they finished their work.... Never more nor less is permitted. It is necessary to have the even amount that is needed."⁸⁴ The brigade formations were also different. The Italian teams worked more as a loose group of individuals with each doing what one could. In the article "Together with Us" the press was pleased to report that 30 specialists representing companies from Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Denmark, and Bulgaria contributed to the success of the 6th working day of the week.⁸⁵ O. G. Oblovatskii, who worked both with the specialists from the German company Schuler as well as with Fiat specialists, remembered the impact of the Italians : "For hundreds and hundreds of Italians the city of the Zhiguli was not just a work address [...] because here they not only worked but lived, and worked closely with Russia and its people, even fell in love, started families."⁸⁶ He also recalled that there were many arguments between Italians and Russians. The redesigning of the parts proved extremely problematic as it resulted in the need to rebuild many of the presses. Many Italian assemblers refused to do anything other than erect the presses to Fiat specifications, leaving to Soviet brigades to refit the machines. Vladimir Isakov, a motor master who began working at VAZ in 1969, recalled his conversation with an Italian engineer from the Mirafiori factory in which the Italian was against the proposed changes but concluded by saying that it was a matter to be resolved by the Russian engineers and that they were in charge. Isakov responded with "thank you" and "don't worry."⁸⁷ Soviet planners often refused to use the firms recommended by the Italians, choosing instead their own supplier or manufacturer. For example, the planners decided to employ the West German equipment producer Liebherr instead of Pfauter, because they felt that the former's new methods were better. Basically, Fiat refused to approve changes and thus to guarantee the part. However, some changes were mutual decisions. After the building of the first prototypes in the Krasnodar region it was discovered that the vehicles could not handle Soviet road conditions : "the roads were not very good [...] and the car drove, but did not drive more than nine thousand kilometres."⁸⁸ The Fiat also needed to be adapted in order to function

in winter conditions. The second test car drove a total of thirty thousand kilometres before needing major repairs.

- 22 Contact with foreigners was not restricted to the elite nor to work. Question seven of the survey is about work with foreigners : 12.5 % of the respondents (60 % of which male) had worked abroad ; and 52.5 % of the total respondents had worked with foreigners in Togliatti (33 % of which women). From those who elaborated about working with foreigners came such comments as : “I worked with the Italian specialists, they were good specialists,”⁸⁹ “yes, we worked in Togliatti [with the foreigners], it was a fantastic work experience,”⁹⁰ and “I didn’t have contact with them, but I worked alongside them.”⁹¹ The tone of the newspaper articles discussing the participation of foreign workers is similar to that used by interviewees : there tends to be a generally positive discussion without any sense of exceptionality. Fiat and its employees were bringing modern technology that was impressive but which only through Soviet tempo, aggrandizement, and modification would become extraordinary.
- 23 The degree of outside help, and calls to do things “as it is done in the factory of Fiat,”⁹² do not seem to have affected the attitude of local citizens and employees of the factory, the overwhelming majority of whom said that it was “theirs.” Indeed, management was under constant pressure to ensure that every aspect of the production and end product would “be not worse than that in Fiat.”⁹³ Issues of ownership became apparent with three events. The first was the dispute over the colouring of the first cars. It is commonly believed (the veracity of this belief was confirmed by a senior member of the paint department) that the Italians thought that the first three cars should be coloured red, green and white for the Italian flag.⁹⁴ Soviet officials objected and stated that the first colours should be that of the flag of the Russian Republic. In the end, the first several hundred cars were white. The second was the fulfilment of the initial contract in 1975. When a representative of the factory who had worked there from the beginning referred to the leaving of Italian workers in 1975, she made it clear that she felt that they had abandoned the Soviet project. Their contract expired and they simply left, regardless of what work remained to be completed. ⁹⁵ By autumn 1975, the press referred to the Zhiguli as a “Soviet” car with increasingly fewer references to the Fiat 124.⁹⁶ The third event was the development of Niva, which was Soviet-designed and produced.
- 24 During the stay of Italian workers and specialists, various activities were organised that promoted contact with locals. Many of these activities were organised by VAZ’s international friendship club. They tended to either be cultural, or sports. One example of a cultural event occurred on the 15th of September 1967 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. Workers and engineers employed in Togliatti were joined in celebration by Italian workers who were preparing the technical documents for VAZ. The Day of the Fast Wheel was a cycling competition between employees of VAZ and of Fiat. Newspaper articles covering the events were peppered with Italian words and expressions, buona sera, finito, si si, ciao, etc. Football matches, which eventually evolved into a tournament held in the local stadium were also a regular source of friendly national competition.⁹⁷ In 1972, the success of the Italian-Soviet venture was immortalised on film. The Mosfilm studios, working together with the Italian film industry, produced a colour documentary about the Avtozavod on the Volga. The film *Factory : Big And At Once* was the story “not only about the birth of VAZ, but about the life of the Italian colony”⁹⁸ and was produced for Soviet and Italian audiences.

Conclusion

- 25 Soviet leaders were not in a position to create an antithetical self-image to the West, as there were sectors of the West that they sought to emulate. The result was an unconvincing combination of vilification and praise that permitted the rejection and condemnation of Western practices such as discrimination, poverty, and war mongering, while accepting innovation, technology, and economic prowess. "Soviet citizens were told that they were at the forefront in every sphere, they led the world, and yet disorienting glimpses on TV, and above all foreigners themselves, seemed like evidence that this might not be so."⁹⁹ The international nature of the construction of the AvtoVAZ factory was much heralded by the Soviet press and leadership. For the Soviet regime it highlighted its ability to provide Western quality consumer goods to its citizens; that it was serious about meeting the material demands of the people; that there were impressive technological advances occurring within the Soviet Union, be this in terms of sputniks or automobiles; and that the Soviet Union was indeed catching up with and would overtake the West. A then contemporary assessment of the relationship between VAZ and the Soviet regime was that the "rapid expansion of production of private passenger cars at VAZ was an integral part of the new leadership's effort to provide quality consumer goods as incentives for Soviet citizens".¹⁰⁰ At the XXIV Party Congress, G. K. Mironenko declared not only that the VAZ car was "guaranteed for life" but also that it was a "symbol of state quality".¹⁰¹ It was also an endorsement of the policy of coexistence.
- 26 The major ideological battle, if not war, between communism and capitalism was to be won by the system best able to provide the most appealing standard of living. The importance of standard of living as interpreted in part as consumption is not revisionist. Looking back on the social transformation that resulted from World War II, Ludmilla Alexeyeva wrote that "a 'collective' of faceless people could not have won the war, [...] they acted as citizens."¹⁰² Elena Zubkova came to a similar conclusion: through the war there was a creation or intensification of civic spirit, responsibility and self worth.¹⁰³ One of the most influential Western undertakings to gather the opinions of Soviet citizens during the Khrushchev era was the Harvard Interview Project under Inkeles and Bauer. The findings are illustrative of the preexisting discontent with the Soviet capacity to provide amenities and commodities. Two of the top three grievances were economic in nature.¹⁰⁴ Without terror to pacify the hostile population and with economic issues being of paramount importance, the Communist government had little alternative but to attempt to rectify the issue. This is particularly relevant when the increased sense of worth and entitlement on the part of the average citizen is taken into consideration. The perception that the general standard of living was failing to rise is askew with the general economic trend as seen in both Soviet and American statistical information, initially showing significant increases that were to taper off. "For all the Soviet Union's comparative economic failure, there was in absolute terms a great deal of 'material progress', as the Victorians called it, over a large part of Soviet history. This occurred primarily but not solely on Khrushchev's watch."¹⁰⁵
- 27 In Togliatti there was the newest, best and technologically most advanced equipment. In Togliatti one could more quickly obtain those material goods to which the majority of Soviet citizens of the period aspired: a flat, a dacha, easier access to nursery schools, a

car, and professional advancement. The AvtoVAZ factory was a testimony to the hard work of the Soviet worker. The Zhiguli/Lada was a Soviet car made in a Soviet factory, but both official sources and survey respondents maintained that it could not have been done without the technological and managerial assistance of Fiat and other outsourced companies.

- 28 How does one trace the dissemination of an image into Soviet society ? The entry point, an exhibition, the construction of a factory, international travel, a film festival, literature, newspaper articles, etc., can be documented. This initial impact in terms of individuals exposed is often gaugeable, for example in the case of an exhibition, film festival, or factory. It is the ensuing ripples that become unclear : who then read or heard about events ? With whom did the factory worker talk ? How far and fast was information transmitted from formal or informal direct sources to informal ones ? To further complicate the clarity of events, it was not a case of a single event with its impact on society with the reverberations settling before another event. Khrushchev and early Brezhnev eras were ones of scattered and numerous international events. However, by analysing the entry points, the diffusion of information as far as can be measured and the evident final social impact (analogous to the ripples around the entry point), an understanding of the general economic image of the West as it was assimilated into Soviet culture can be ascertained. The propaganda about the West in its entirety was by nature similar to the Soviet system. It was complex, inconsistent, and often contradictory.
- 29 The AvtoVAZ is but one example of how the Soviet government facilitated the creation of a positive economic image of the West. Taken on its own it represents an intense episode of “positive” economic exposure both industrially and personally. Placed within the context of its time, surrounded by numerous other examples of the propagation of this image, it illustrates the widespread phenomena that eventually resulted in Soviet citizens being provided with an “other” that was seemingly better suited for the attainment of their material objectives. Images are a combination of concrete ideas and the shadows that surround them. What was not conveyed in the positive image of the West, the shadow as it were of the economic image, was how it could be achieved without adopting the evils of capitalism. The society was provided with an objective, and an allusion to the system that was currently leading in the attainment of this objective. From the launching of sputnik to the first man on the moon, the consistent valuing of Western technology and implicitly the standard of living, coupled with the consistent vilification of the means of creating and achieving this, resulted in the creation of an image of the West in which the means were unfair, unjust and unacceptable but in which the results were lauded and sought.
- 30 The derisive image of the West and Westerners as intellectually shallow, materialistically driven and morally corrupt was not coupled initially with a dismissal of the inherent desirability of modernisation or consumerism. Under Khrushchev there was some faith that consumerism and communism could successfully coexist. However, consumption could not be allowed to replace ideology nor could it be effectively used as a replacement for terror.¹⁰⁶ By the end of the Brezhnev era it was generally accepted that the Soviet Union was unable to fill in the technological and scientific gap with the West. This loss of faith can be cited as a major contributing factor to the rise of anti-Americanism. If the launching of sputnik represents the zenith of Soviet optimism in the future and a correlating positive image of the West, then the landing of the first man on

the moon by the Americans in 1969 marked the beginning of its decline. The economic image of the West defined the gravitational centre that served as the abstract definition of one of the most highly valued parts of Soviet future. The central challenge for the regime was how to thaw without melting away.

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APPENDIX A

Profile of questionnaire respondents

	Gender M=Male F=Female	Occupation B=Worker O=Office worker	Member of the Communist Party	Contract with Fiat necessary ?	Worked with Foreigners in Togliatti	Worked abroad
1	M	B		No answer	✓	
2	F	O		✓	✓	✓
3	M	B		✓	✓	
4	F	O		✓	✓	
5	M	B		No answer	No answer	
6	M	B		✓	✓	
7	F	O		✓	✓	✓
8	F	O		✓	✓	
9	M	B	✓	✓	✓	
10	F	O		✓	✓	
11	F	O	✓	✓	✓	
12	M	B		✓	✓	
13	M	B	✓	✓	✓	
14	M	B		✓	✓	
15	F	B		✓	✓	
16	M	B		✓	✓	✓
17	F	O		✓	✓	
18	F	O		✓	✓	
19	M	B		✓	✓	
20	F	B		✓	✓	
21	M	O		✓	✓	
22	M	B		✓	✓	
23	F	B		✓	✓	
24	M	B		✓	✓	
25	F	O		✓	✓	
26	F	O		✓	✓	
27	M	B		✓	✓	
28	M	B	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	M	B	✓	✓	✓	
30	M	B		✓	✓	
31	M	O		✓	✓	
32	F	O		✓	✓	
33	F	O		✓	No answer	
34	M	B	✓	✓	✓	
35	M	B		✓	✓	
36	M	B		✓	✓	
37	M	O		✓	✓	
38	M	O		✓	✓	
39	M	B	✓	✓	✓	
40	M	O		✓	✓	✓
Percentages	M- 62.5% F- 37.5%	B- 60% W- 40%	17.5% were Party members	92.5% felt that Fiat was necessary	52.5% worked with foreigners	12.5% worked in Italy

APPENDIX B -- Song

33 Turinskoe nebo pokryto tumanom, I kazhetsia nebo ogromnym karmanom. Karmanom, v ktorom chut'-chut' porabotav, Popriatalis' zvezdy -- svetit' neokhota. Popriatalis' zvezdy -- svetit' neokhota. A v Tol'iatti vetra. Mnogo raznykh zabot. Ot utra do utra liudi stroiat zavod. A v Tol'iatti vetra. Mnogo raznykh zabot. Ot utra do utra liudi stroiat zavod. Po Tripoli c shumom nesutsia mashiny. S asfal'tom tseluias', skvoz' noch' voiut shiny. Pod sumrachnym nebom molchit Gamalero. Zabyv pro Turin, krepko spiat inzheneri. Zabyv pro Turin, krepko spiat inzheneri. A v Tol'iatti vetra. Mnogo raznykh zabot. Ot utra do utra liudi stroiat zavod. A v Tol'iatti vetra. Mnogo raznykh zabot. Ot utra do utra liudi stroiat zavod. Kogda-nibud' my soberemsia v Tol'iatti, I vospomnim San-Karlo, potrogav sediny. Poka zhe razlukoiu s sem'iami platim. Za to, chtob v Tol'iatti my delali mashiny. Za to, chtob v Tol'iatti my delali mashiny.

34 *First published in 1967, written by Lev Vainshtein*

NOTES

2. The primary source material for this work reflect the primary objective of examining the economic image of the West through the VAZ experience. Thus, figures have been taken as representing what was being said and not wherein reality lay. This delineation also means that extremely rich archival material has not been included.
3. Iuliia Smarnova, *Avtovaz : segodnia i zavtra* (M.: Interbook, 1991), 7.
4. Michael Bull, "Soundscapes of the Car: a Critical Ethnography of Automobile Habitation," in David Miller, ed., *Materializing Culture : Car Cultures* (Oxford : Berg, 2001), 186.
5. See for example V. N. Poliakov, "Molodezh' dolzhna reshat' na VAZe glavnye zadachi," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (27.04.2000): 2.
6. N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers : The Last Testament*, transl. by Strobe Talbott (London : Little, Brown and Co. 1974), 142.
7. Rossiiskii gosudartstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE), Po voprosu podgotovki proizvodstva legkovogo avtomobilia m-402 f. 9480, op. 2, d. 3. l. 115-125, 116.
8. RGAE, l. 115-125, 121-123.
9. A. Radkin, "Na ital'ianskoi promyshlennoi vystavke," *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, no. 8 (1962): 43-44.
10. A. N. Kosygin, "Povyshenie nauchnoi obosnovannosti planov -- vazhneishaia zadacha planovykh organov," *Planovoe khoziaistvo*, (April 1965): 6, 9-10.
11. Interview with K. Bakhtov, in A. Shavrin, *VAZ: 30-letie volzhskoi avtomobil'noi istorii* (Finland : Benecap, 1997), 129.
12. Interview with E. A. Bashindzhagian, in A. Shavrin, *VAZ*, 63.
13. For details of this discussion, see the December 1969 Party Plenum and the XXIV Party Congress in March-April 1971.
14. V. N. Poliakov, "Vaz dlia menia -- eto vse," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (01.02.2000): 2-3.
15. M. Sbornik, *Avtovaz -- sovremennoe proizvodstvennoe ob''edinenie*. (Znanie, 1977), 5.
16. "Iz doklada pervogo sekretaria obkoma KPSS V. P. Orlova na VII plenumе obkoma KPSS o zadachakh oblastnoi partorganizatsii v sviazi so stroitel'stvom zavoda po proizvodstvu legkovykh avtomobilei," 27.05.67, 27-31 as printed in *VAZ: istoriia v dokumentakh : 1966-1983gg* (1985), 28.
17. Sergio Riccio, "Italian Contradictions," *International Affairs*, no. 8 (August 1966): 39-43: 43.
18. In a press interview, the president of Fiat Giovanni Agnelli stated that "construction of such scope ensured a great demand for our technical specialists." As quoted in L. Yugov, "Soviet-Italian Contacts Expand," *International Affairs*, no. 7 (July 1966): 33-39, 3.
19. Sbornik, *Avtovaz ...*, 5.
20. Interview with Nikolai Naumov in which he discusses his work in Moscow, in David Mandel, *Interviews with Workers in the Former Soviet Union : Perestroika and After : viewed from below* (New York : Monthly Review Press, 1994), 66.

21. Zhitkov said that the petrol was available in Moscow, but that it was difficult to find. A. A. Zhitkov, *Vershinoi zhizni stal VAZ* (Togliatti, 1997), 32.
22. "More Difficulties of the Auto Age," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 27,1, 6-7: 7. For more complaints specific to the Zhiguli, see *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 26, 51: 27-28.
23. N. I. Letchford, in *VAZ: Stranitsy istorii, vospominaniia i fakty* (Finland : Benecap, 1997), 116.
24. S. Mateev, "Perspektivy razvitiia avtomobil'noi promyshlennosti v novom piatiletii," *Planovnoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow), no. 7. (July 1966): 21.
25. For a detailed description of the technical details for the VAZ-2103/Zhiguli, see "Avtomobil' VAZ 2103 Zhiguli," *Avtomobil'nyi transport*, no. 6 (June 1973): 41-47, 47.
26. "U vas est' chemu pouchit'sia," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (25.05.1974): 2. The non-transliterated spelling of Togliatti is being used as the city was named in honour of the Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964). Togliatti had a long and close association with the Soviet Union, having spent most of an 18 years' exile in Stalinist Russia. Togliatti maintained ties with Khrushchev, despite his written but never presented Yalta Memorandum in which he ascribed to the need for the autonomous development of socialism in various countries. He was in Yalta to meet with Khrushchev when he passed away in 1964. Two common transliterated spellings for the city are Toliatti and Tol'iatti.
27. See A. Zbar, L. Piriatskii, and V. Iurchenko, "Avtopoezd dlia perevozki avtomobilei VAZ 2101," *Avtomobil'nyi transport*, no. 6. (June 1973): 45-47; or M. Sidorov, "Avtopoezd dlia perevozki avtomobilei VAZ," *Avtomobil'nyi transport*, no. 3 (March 1973): 44-46.
28. In an interview with Poliakov, "Molodezh' dolzhna reshat' na VAZe glavnye zadachi," *Volzhskii Avtostroitel'*, (27.04.2000): 2.
29. Smarnova, *Avtovaz : Segodnia...*, 19.
30. As reprinted in *VAZ: Istoriia v dokumentakh : 1966-1983gg* (1985), 65.
31. The criteria for the representative sample were individuals present from either the beginning of the construction of the city/factory, or from the beginning of production. Of the 40 respondents 25 were male and 15 female. In total, 7 were members of the Communist Party. Those who responded to the questionnaires represent a broad selection of workers at the factory from individuals who worked (work) on the assembly line, in the presses, in maintenance as well as in design, translation, engineering, and other sectors run by, but not technically part of, the production of the factory, i.e. doctors who worked in the AvtoVAZ polyclinic. In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted either as a supplement to, or instead of, the written questionnaires.
32. From an interview with Elvira Simonovna, 17.03.2002.
33. Questionnaire no. 6.
34. Questionnaire no. 39.
35. Questionnaire no. 36.
36. Questionnaire no. 31.
37. Questionnaire no. 26.
38. Questionnaire no. 3.

39. Questionnaire no. 7.
40. O. Rozenkov, "Svarka... namorazhivaniem," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (06.03.1973): 3.
41. Interview with Nikolai Maksimovich Golovko, in *VAZ: stranitsy istorii...*, 208.
42. Interview with Stanislav Petrovich Polikarpov, in A. Shavrin, *VAZ*, 42-43.
43. *Ibid.*, 47.
44. A. I. Grechukhin, in *VAZ: stranitsy istorii...*, kniga vtoraia, 29.
45. A. Tsygankov, "Kak molody my byli, kak iskrenne liubili," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (01.07.1997): 4.
46. See R. Bannikov, "Na kubok druzhby" and I. Litovchenko, "Den' bystrykh koles," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (02.09.1970): 4.
47. Vladimir Isakov, "Zdravstvui, VAZ," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (12.04.2000): 2.
48. Iurii Bezdetnyi, "Kak rozhdalsia avtogigant," *Tol'iatti segodnia*, (19.06.1996): 6.
49. O. V. Chirkin, *Novye sovetskie avtomobili (Znanie, 1967)*, or see the review in *Avtomobil'nyi transport*, no. 7 (1967): 1.
50. The term "European type" had only positive connotations and was used in regular speech as well as by the press. See V. Koftelev, "Na volne pamiati," *Tol'iatti segodnia*, (19.04.1997): 15.
51. Questionnaire no. 4.
52. Questionnaire no. 36.
53. Questionnaire no. 2.
54. Questionnaire no. 19.
55. Questionnaire no. 20.
56. Questionnaire no. 38.
57. Questionnaire no. 26.
58. Reporter A. Nikitin wrote of the city surrounding the Kama factory : "The city will be representative of the communist tomorrow, a city experiment [...] built with the same skill and vision as the city of Togliatti." "Budet na Kame Avtozavod," *Trud*, (11.10.1969): 4.
59. V. Pravosud, "Ja znaiu gorod budet," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (06.11.69): 3. It is important to note that the figures given on the number of flats were published by the Soviet government and may be more inspirational than factual in detail. The propagandistic nature of figures used in the Soviet press is problematic only when used as facts. Here they are intended to convey the promises and the Soviet reality as presented by the Soviet government to Soviet citizens and not necessarily reality itself.
60. In an interview with Irina Mikhailovna, conducted in spring 2002.
61. A young master who transferred from Gorky to VAZ in 1970 commented that although the factory was huge and produced many cars, it was more compact than Gorky and that his working group was in principle small, 17 workers, all of whom were young. O. Salbiev, "Vernyi orientir," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, 6 (05.08.1972): 2.
62. See for example N. F. Rokatushin, "Kakoi verkh avtomobilia vy predpochetaete?" *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, no. 25 (01.11.69): 4., or V. Ashkin, "Bagazhnik nuzhen, no kakoi?" *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, no. 22 (22.10.69): 4.

63. The original name was Zhiguli but the export name was changed to Lada after Soviet officials were told that this sounded too much like “gigolo.”
64. Zsuzsa Kapitany, Janos Kornai and Judit Szabo, “Reproduction of Shortage in the Hungarian Car Market”, in Christopher Davies and Wojciech Charemza, eds., *Models of Disequilibrium and Shortage in Centrally Planned Economies* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1989), 375-404.
65. Interviewees will be referred to using first names and patronymics in order to protect their anonymity. Initials, last names, and anonymity will be used in accordance with the journalistic practices of the time.
66. They did not drive the car but sold it for an older model, using the profits to purchase a garage and to help fund their daughter’s move to Moscow. Field note from a discussion with Galina Valentinovna, 15.03.02
67. Questionnaire no. 19.
68. Questionnaire no. 6.
69. Questionnaires no. 30 and 39.
70. Questionnaire no. 28.
71. For an example of how the illegal means were showing up in society, see the satirical letter “If you like to ride” by R. Zakiev and I. Lukin in *Pravda* as printed in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 27,10: 20.
72. Questionnaire no. 2.
73. Interview with Poliakov, in A. Shavrin, *VAZ*, 34.
74. *Ibid.*, 175.
75. V. Shuliatev, “Odin iz pervykh,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (26.11.69): 3.
76. *Ibid.*, 3.
77. Interview with Elena Aleksandrovna, spring 2002.
78. Reports of these travels were published in the local paper *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*. See F. Nikolaev, “Bol’shoi drug?” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (01.07.1970): 1; N. Korshunov, “Turistskim marshrutom,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (03.08.1971): 4; “Vstrecha s molodymi kommunistami Rima,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (25.05.1974): 2. Interviewees also noted that one of the benefits of working in Togliatti was increased access to travel abroad, specifically to Italy.
79. V. Ia. Aitukov, in *VAZ: stranitsy istorii...*, 131.
80. “Finskaia delegatsiia na VAZe,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (18.07.1974): 1., Untitled article with a picture in *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (14.12.1974): 1.
81. I. Gurin, “Start blizok,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (13.06.1970): 1.
82. US Congress House Committee on Banking and Currency, Subcommittee on International Trade, *The Fiat Soviet Automobile Plant and Soviet Economic Reforms* (Washington Point : March 1967), 3.
83. Interview with Liudmilla Petrovna, spring 2002.
84. P. M. Katsura, in *VAZ: stranitsy istorii...*, 60.
85. A. Gusev, “Vmeste s nami,” *Volzhskii avtostroitel’*, (24.04.1971): 3.
86. O. G. Oblovatskii, in N. Bystrova, *Na volne pamiati : kniga pervaiia* (Finland : Benecap, 2001), 82.

87. Vladimir Isakov, "Zdravstvui, VAZ," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (12.04.2000): 2.
88. Interview with K. Bakhtov, in A. Shavrin, VAZ, 130.
89. Questionnaire no. 22.
90. Questionnaire no. 15
91. Questionnaire no. 13.
92. Visakov, *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (15.09.1971): 3.
93. In an interview with Poliakov, "Molodezh' dolzhna reshat' na VAZe glavnye zadachi," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (27.04.2000): 2.
94. Interview with Galina Valentinovna.
95. Interview with Larissa Ivanova.
96. See for example P. Barashev and N. Mironov, "VAZ: segodnia i zavtra," *Pravda*, (28.08.75): 2.
97. For an example of local coverage, see R. Bannikov, "Pod flagom druzhby," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (16.09.1970): 4 or "Uvlekatel'nyi polufinal," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (09.09.1970): 4.
98. Interview with O. G. Oblovatsk, in Bystrova, *Na volne pamiati : Kniga pervaiia*, 85.
99. Caroline Humphrey, "Creating a culture of disillusionment : consumption in Moscow, a chronicle of changing times," in Daniel Miller, ed., *Worlds Apart : Modernity through the prism of the local* (London : Routledge, 1995), 55.
100. George Holliday, "Western Technology Transfer to the Soviet Union, 1928-1937 and 1966-1975: with a Case Study in the Transfer of Automotive Technology," diss. (George Washington University, 1978), 165.
101. N. Poliakov, "Automobile Vaz 2101 -- the state symbol of quality," *Volzhskii avtostroitel'*, (19.04.1972): 1-2.
102. Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation : Coming of Age in the Post Stalin Era*, (Boston : Little Brown and Company, 1990), 28.
103. Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War : Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (New York : M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 11-19.
104. The main conclusions of the social processes examined can be summarised as :
 1. Stalinism resulted in a hostile relationship between the public and the state, which had the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the Communist regime.
 2. After the terror of Stalinism the next greatest source of discontent and resentment was the low standard of living as attributed to the management of industrialisation and collectivisation.
 3. Russia and Russian society had been dramatically changed from a predominately religious society to an industrialised urban society on the cusp of modernisation. The associated value put on success and security as opposed to continuation or tradition had taken root.
 4. Most respondents were pleased with large sections of Soviet life, for example the equity of some services, the development and accessibility of high culture, and the idea of social mobility.
 5. For most people grievances tended to be highly concrete and specific. The main themes were the 'end of the terror', 'slow up the pace of economic life,' 'improve the standard of living,' and so on. "The execution of the programme, rather than the conception itself, was deemed bad."

6. “Most Soviet citizens seem to have accepted the main outlines of the official image of foreign affairs disseminated by the official media.”

7. “The leaders seem to accept the fact that the people wants a few pleasures and is entitled to a life a little easier.”

Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen : Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1959), 380-382, 396.

105. Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy* (Harlow : Longman, 2003), 49.

106. Jacques Sapir, *Les fluctuations économiques en URSS 1941-1985* (Paris : Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1989).

RÉSUMÉS

Résumé

Sur la voie de la consommation de type communiste : AvtoVAZ

L'automobile, symbole de modernisation, d'occidentalisation et de richesse individuelle tel qu'il fut diffusé par le projet AvtoVAZ mené conjointement avec Fiat, a rapproché les aspirations économiques et politiques du gouvernement soviétique et de la population. L'objectif annoncé était de permettre au citoyen moyen d'acquérir une voiture de qualité européenne. Des dizaines de milliers d'ouvriers et de spécialistes participèrent directement au « projet de la décennie » et peu d'entreprises échappèrent à ses répercussions. Le projet et la participation étrangère furent couverts dans la presse, à la radio, à la télévision et au cinéma. L'article présente le projet AvtoVAZ comme l'illustration des contacts avec l'Occident (ses idées, ses produits, ses citoyens) approuvés officiellement et montre par quels moyens les Soviétiques ont pu se faire une idée de l'Occident. Le régime communiste propageait activement l'image d'un Occident plus avancé en ce qui concerne l'accès des masses au progrès technologique et, de façon plus sélective, aux commodités de la vie (aux biens de consommation plus qu'aux services) afin d'encourager le citoyen soviétique à « rattraper » et à « dépasser » l'Occident, validant par là la supériorité du régime communiste.

Abstract

The image of the automobile as a vehicle of modernisation, westernisation and personal wealth as represented in the AvtoVAZ (VAZ) project in conjunction with Fiat bridged the economic and political aspirations of the Soviet government and Soviet citizens. The publicised objective was to provide the average citizen with access to a car of European quality. Tens of thousands of workers and specialists were involved directly, and few industries remained untouched by the “project of the decade”. Both the project itself and the active foreign involvement in the project were reported in newspapers and journals, on the radio and television and in film. In this article the AvtoVAZ factory is used as an example of officially sanctioned contact with Western ideas, individuals, and products and how this contact is illustrative of the means by which the “average” Soviet citizen was able to form a perception of the West. The concept of the West as more advanced in the mass application of technology, and in the (albeit selective) provision of “all of life's comforts” in terms of goods, if not in services, was actively propagated by the

communist regime. This image was intended to motivate the average citizen to “catch up” with and “overtake” the West, thereby validating the superiority of the communist system.