

RESTRICTED

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose.--The purpose of this report is to summarize the experience of the Harvard Refugee Interview Project¹, indicating procedures of value for interviewing Russians under voluntary conditions.

This report is essentially a consensus of impressions, suggestions, and information gathered:

(1) from discussions with the interviewing staff of the Harvard Project and with several persons who in other capacities have interviewed Russians; and

(2) from an analysis of the interview records of the project.

The information from these sources was astonishingly consistent in spite of the diverse professional training represented.

2. Definitions.--The term "Russians" has been used throughout the report to describe the people interviewed by the Harvard Project. This has been done in part to avoid more correct but cumbersome phrases such as "former Soviet citizens." In addition, the majority of the respondents were actually Great Russians, and 93 percent of all respondents were Slavic (Great Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians). Although some of the differences among the Slavic groups are discussed later, the generalizations about Russians are essentially applicable, at least for interviewing purposes, to the other Slavic nationalities living in the USSR. In the discussion on national differences within the Soviet Union, the term "Russians" denotes "Great Russians" in contradistinction to the national minorities in the USSR.

The term "refugees" has been used to describe all types of former Soviet citizens

partly to avoid the repetition of "displaced persons" and "defectors." The term "defector" should be avoided in any event. Although "defector" is the most accurate description for persons who deliberately chose to leave the USSR, it carries a distinctly negative connotation, suggesting disloyalty and desertion not only of a political system but also of one's country. Since the generalizations describing displaced persons apply almost equally to defectors, it is desirable to eliminate the concept "defector" from the interviewer's vocabulary because of its potentially bad effect on the respondent, and to a limited extent because of the interviewer's own reaction to the term.

3. Scope and limitations.--The people interviewed by members of the staff of the Harvard Project were either wartime displaced persons or members of the Soviet occupation forces who had left the Soviet sectors of Germany and Austria after World War II.² The majority of these respondents were currently living in camps for displaced persons or were living independently within the German economy. These respondents were paid for their time as an inducement to volunteer to be interviewed. In addition to this group, a few persons living in military custody were interviewed.

¹ Various known as "The Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System," "An Analysis of the Soviet Social System," and "A Working Model of the Soviet Social System," this research project was begun in June 1950, by the Russian Research Center at Harvard University under Air Force Contract No. 33(038)-12909 with the Human Resources Research Institute. In the data collection phase of the project, the RRC staff obtained 844 oral interviews and 11,806 written questionnaires from 3261 Soviet escapees and displaced persons in Munich and New York in 1950 and 1951. A description of this project and its reports has been published as HRRI Research Preview No. 1. It may be obtained from the Human Resources Research Institute, Air Research and Development Command, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

² The refugees interviewed by members of the Harvard Project staff left the Soviet Union or sectors occupied by Soviet forces during the following periods:

Date of leaving	Percent of total cases
Before June 1941	2 %
Between June 1941 and June 1945	82 %
After June 1945	12 %
Unrevealed	4 %