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21 November 1981

## **Cagey about the comrades**

ASK a question about Soviet citizens entering Hongkong and you'll get a cagey answer.

At least that was the impression the Immigration Department gave this week when answering questions on the numbers of visas granted to Soviet citizens in the past few years.

**Q:** How many Soviet citizens have been granted visas to stay in Hongkong in the past five years (1977 to 1981 so far)? How does this compare with the total number of visas issued to Soviet citizens in the previous five years?

**A:** From January 1, 1979 to October 31, 1981, 15 visas were approved. The comparison figure is not available.

**Q:** Normally, what type of visa do they have?

**A:** It depends on the purpose of entry.

**Q:** Have any Soviet citizens been allowed into Hongkong as tourists in the past five years?

**A:** A very small number of Soviet nationals have been allowed to visit Hongkong on very exceptional circumstances.

**Q:** What length of stay is most often stipulated on their visas?

**A:** It depends on individual circumstances.

**Q:** How many Soviet citizens have been given permission in the past five years to enter Hongkong for the purpose of giving evidence in legal proceedings, for example the present Amos Dawe trial?

**A:** No such breakdown is available.

Could the gaps in these replies be more significant than the answers?

—SM.