

Propiska

A submission prepared exclusively for the
Home Affairs Committee
in connection with its inquiry into a
Surveillance Society

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It appears to have nothing to do with the UK but the Committee should nevertheless be introduced to the notion of the propiska.

The propiska is a device used all over Eastern Europe as a residence permit, tying each person, native-born or immigrant, to a single address. Propiski were introduced by the Tsars, Lenin banned them, Stalin reintroduced them and the Constitutional Court banned them again in 1991. To no effect in Moscow, at least, where the Mayor announced that he intended to ignore the ban.

Propiski were introduced to allow the state to allocate resources sensibly.

Over 100 years later, you still need a propiska in Moscow today to rent a flat. And to get a job. And to vote and get married and get state healthcare and state education for your children and a pension.

Propiski are a source of revenue for Moscow and the price is set, high, by the Mayor.

They are used as a way to control immigration – Chechens [14] needn't bother to apply.

The police have the right to stop people in the street and demand to see their propiska. That is a security matter, it is said, by the authorities, required to keep the population safe from criminals and terrorists.

But if you don't pay the policeman's bribe, which he needs because he's so badly paid (not a very good excuse), he tears up your propiska and then you've got a problem with the next policeman you encounter.

There is a thriving market in stolen and forged propiski.

The matter of propiski has been debated in the European Parliament [18] and it has attracted the attention of Human Rights Watch [11], both of whom have asked the old Iron Curtain countries to phase them out.

So what? Who cares?

Well, for anyone who hasn't got it yet, according to the Home Office, the UK ID card scheme is going to protect us from criminals and terrorists.

It will be so good that we won't need to have censuses [22, p.8] in future. The government will know all about us, they say, thanks to the ID card scheme, and so they'll be able to plan customised state services for us. John Hutton wants the state to come to us, God forbid, rather than us having to go to the state.

Either way, you won't be entitled to any benefits [22, pp.5, 6, 7 and 8] without an ID card. Or a pension.

And you'll need an ID card when you go for a new job, of course, to prove your right to work [22 pp.4, 5, 9 and 12].

Whenever you move (or die [23]), you must tell the government your new address [24]. Otherwise you'll be fined.

You won't be able to get any non-emergency state healthcare [25] without an ID card and you won't be able to get your children into a state school [26] or a state university.

All of which, in turn, will help to control immigration [22, pp.5, 8, 9 and 12].

And what was Harriet Harman suggesting? Thanks to ID cards, there would be no need for local authorities to maintain the electoral roll. We could use our ID cards to vote [27]. She didn't even bother to mention the secrecy of the ballot.

Meanwhile, the government are considering the appropriateness of using our personal details as a source of income. One of the tasks of the Crosby forum on public/private identity management [22, p.8], due to report to the Chancellor in April, is to see if the private sector would like to buy these details from the Home Office's Identity and Passport Service.

Of course, no-one will be able to forge an ID card [28] – Tony Blair, while he was Prime Minister, said so [29].

And they will identify people accurately because biometrics [30] are 100% reliable [31].

And our officials are incorruptible [32].

You see, it may be that the propiska will soon not be a foreign notion, at all.

Three questions:

1. What is the difference between a propiska and an ID card? (Please see table below.)
2. If the European Parliament is against propiski, why is it advocating ID cards? Which it does, through an organisation called IDABC [33]. While planning to collect all our fingerprints together in one database [34].
3. And what is the UK doing on the same handcart?

What is the difference?		ID card	Propiska
Functions			
	Counter-terrorism	✓	✓
	Crime prevention and detection	✓	✓
	Statistics, censuses, central planning, ...	✓	✓
	Control of immigration	✓	✓
	Revenue source	✓	✓
Entitlements			
	Residence	✓	✓
	Voting	✓	✓
	Work	✓	✓
	State education	✓	✓
	State healthcare	✓	✓
	Other benefits	✓	✓
	Marriage	?	✓

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