

Endless Patience: Explaining Soviet and Post-Soviet Social Stability

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Since the Revolution Russian people became very patient. They could work in totally extreme conditions: months without salaries, lack of food and supplies. However, they continued working. The biggest things they could do, were sabotage actions like alcoholism or stealing. So, why did this happen?

In Soviet state was a system of enterprises and people were dependent on it. The workers were connected by trade unions. 98% of working class was in some trade unions but these unions did not represent interests of workers. Instead of this, they were loyal guides of the Party politics.

So called “social contract” between the worker and the State existed. Officially it meant that the worker can have the same benefits as his colleagues. It should have made Russian “incorporation stronger”. However, in the reality it was different.

“Atomization” was another side of the Soviet regime. People could not join together because they were separated. They did not have the real political power and, if some organization gathered, the “ubiquitous and brutal secret police” crashed it very quickly. Also, the workers were dependent on their enterprises because of product deficiency. There were products that could not be bought with money. So, some workers became the favorites of the management and managers gave them more benefits than to the others. In Russian it was called “*blat*”. That is why atomization of the Soviet people was so crucial.

However, the Soviet workers believed in the collective. Collectivism started to cultivate by Lenin and after this notion grew only stronger.

“If you spit in a collective, it will dry off. If a collective spits in you, you will drown”, - Soviet proverb which still is used by people.

After Bolsheviks and religion’s rejection, Party replaced god. Soviet people needed a strong leader. They thought that their leader can help them with their needs, both political and material. It influenced to the period of Transition too. While this period, the workers also did not oppose the system. They started to help each other: give food or borrow money. They hoped for leader and, unfortunately, since that time they still have not become self-organized.

I think this patience came from Stalin’s era when people were completely atomized and separated from each other. Even though before, in Lenin’s time, collectivism became important. These two directions created Russian people in Soviet times. In provinces even now people live like they lived long before.

For example, my grandmother lives in Kuzbass (Ashwin wrote about their strike) and now situation is the same as it was when she wrote her research. People both are incorporated and atomized. They believe they do not have political power to change something and they try to

achieve *blat* to have a better place. Slowly the situation is changing but people still need time to change this program.