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## **Multiplicity and Discontinuity in the Soviet Welfare History (1940 - 1980)**

The Soviet history corresponds in many respects to the global modernization processes, but it has the unique features of the Soviet society and ideology, that in a special way determined Soviet social policy. It is characterized by the increasing state intervention into private sphere, the official control and family support, as well as the constant extension of incentives, the rising number of welfare recipients and the tendency towards a prevalence of social guarantees.

It should be noted that there is a terminological problem in the discussion about Soviet social policy: as it seems, the term 'social policy' was not used in Soviet historiography (as well as in other social sciences) until the 1960s. On the one hand, it is linked to the precepts of Soviet ideology, specifically reflected in Stalin's work "Economic problems of socialism in the USSR", which actually removed the item of social problems from the agenda since "the satisfaction of constantly growing material and cultural needs" was geared to "the constant growth and perfection of industry".

Thus, the discussion on about social problems was automatically moved to the question of 'single difficulties'. Analyzing their evolution and dynamics as well as the ways of their solution became possible only within the context of criticism of western lifestyle and capitalist state policy. Among the most frequent notions close to the examined discursive field are care (*zabota*), work organization (*organizaciya raboty*), experience in work with delinquents, orphans, women and invalids (*opyt raboty*), state control (*gosudarstvennij kontrol*) and popular control (*narodnij kontrol*). Occasional publications using the term 'social policy' appeared since the end of 1970s, but only from the 1980's on, the level of interest in those issues became extremely high. The term became more and more frequent within the context of description (quite often the laudatory one) and within the official announcements in respect of the improvement of well-being, the rapprochement of villages and towns and development of socialist living.

The research on Soviet welfare 1945 – 1989 leads us, on the one hand to continuities reaching backwards to the prewar period, and to changes in social policy during the periods of Stalinism, 'the thaw' and 'stagnation', on the other hand. At the same time, the analysis highlights not mainly the evidence of horrors, but numerous antagonisms, lacunas and mechanisms that helped people to achieve a kind of inner freedom, to adjust numerous rules and regulations and to gain a certain level of social integration. The research leads us to the drama of Soviet socialism's and its unavoidable auto-collapse.

### War and Late Stalinism 1940 - 1953

By theIn autumn 1945, the human loss caused by war came to one sixth of the whole population, while the amount of real loss in economic potential was more than five times as much as the national income of the USSR in 1940. After the total destruction of national economy it was necessary to come back to peacetime conditions. The high mobility of the population was realized through the renewal of the working class, the influx of women into national economy, and – immediately after the end of war – through the labor turnover at factories. In 1946, some efforts were made to fasten workers to their workplaces resulting by controllingin toughening of control over their transfer from one factory to another. As prior to war, the work force was increased by migrants from rural areas who, however, had rather low qualifications and a bad labor discipline. The Stakhanov movement was reinitiated, although it caused disorganization of production and an uncontrollable raise of output quotas. The living standard of 1928 was reached only by 1954.

The political and economic context of the war and post-war periods defined the direction of social policy; its scale and focuses were strictly orientated on a subsequent economic recovery. The high demand for work force in industry called for an intense labor mobilization. A number of legislative measures were taken that determined the repressive nature of labor conditions for

many years. The threat in the workplaces in order to force more discipline was growing, including criminal liability for truancy being absent without leave.. Minor absence caused criminal prosecution even for a woman, who ran home to nurse her baby. The systematical construction of labor resources began: the youth was drafted into trade schools and technical schools. Child and adolescent labor, but also introduced in industry and farming quite frequently. Children and adolescents were attached to labor in families, schools, children's houses and colonies.

Among the reasons for the fast industrial development in 1950 was the employment of multi-million Gulag convicts and prisoners of war. The scale of coercive labor in the USSR and the meaning of this system for various aspects of life can not be overestimated: In the beginning of the 1950s, the population of the camps came to five million people, and whole industries (like industrial lumbering) developed on the basis of Gulag Corporation. Many categories of people (from 'alien class elements' to representatives of politically dangerous ethnicities) contributed to the development of the labor-markets - and thousands of people were engaged in it's proper functioning and reproduction: In the formation of work load standards, motivation, payment, evolution of methods in labor protection, housing, and the supply of popular consumption goods and culture. As, however, the attention was mainly focused on the reconstruction of heavy industry the restoration of housing as well as the development provision of food and the development of light industry came got ahead very slowly

#### Social Protection in the Post-War Period

At that time the costs for social protection were considerable, because there was an extension of material aid for war victims, of war disabled, widows and orphans. After the war also the system of general elementary education was restored and a general compulsory seven-year education was introduced. The salaries to of factory and office workers were gradually raised, while the prices for consumer goods were regularly constantly lowered. There was the restoration of leaves, the introduction of an eight-hour working day, and the improvement of sanitary and medical service.

New systems of material and symbolical stimulation of birth rate (aimed at solution solving theof demographic problems) were created - the relief for mothers of large families and the title of 'Mother-Heroine' were introduced. The particularly severe life conditions of single-mother families were recognized and fixed for the first time in the 'Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 8.7.1944' on direct material assistance for mothers of large families and single mothers. As the result of wars the war and the repressions after 1945 the rise in numberincrease of single mothers became especially apparent. The government responded to that by offering special benefits for them, for example certain advantages at work. Though it was difficult for women to prove fatherhood and therefore to force fathers to support their children, the monoparental households were under protection of the collectivist welfare system, - typical of planned economy, owing to which the primary goods and services were cheap and the employment opportunities were relatively broad.

The government provided a system of social incentives, social guarantees (though the minimal ones), which included free medical service, education, provision of pensions, and preferential sanitary and health resort treatment. But the support of monoparental households and other poor citizens was still insufficient. The system of social guarantees preserved the dependence of provision on the workplace and the resources of factories where people worked: it was actually the factory or kolkhoz which was mainly responsible for the welfare of its workers and their families. The ordinary people that fell out of industrial employment were out of well-being: for example, crippled war veterans, who filled the streets of big cities, were massively deported banished to remote districts or to forced labor camps for political prisoners.

Life conditions in the USSR sharply differed from western countries, which quickly improved living standards and ,providing democratic rights and freedoms. In spite of the 'iron curtain' between two political systems, there was a growing discontent among the people that

pushed the government to measures, typical of universalistic social policy - measures in welfare, public health service and education.

The period of 'High Stalinism' was a time of economic, domestic and literary 'storms' and 'fronts'. The party called itself 'the fighting organization' and its members were the 'soldiers of party' - corresponding to these glorifying habits the cult of conspiracy and artificially propagated images of 'enemies' contaminated the public temper.

The Thaw: 1953 - 1964

The large scale of Khrushchev's reforms (1956 - 1964) targeted in its rhetoric and, partially, in its practice at dismantling of Stalin's dictatorship and recovering of Lenin's principle of 'democratic centralism' concerning special forms of management. The new economic situation demanded a diversification of production for consumers, more freedom for factories and higher productivity of labor. Some industries, producing goods of popular daily consumption, were indulged in experiments. Profit became one of the major criteria of effectiveness in execution of fulfilling the plan, benefits for workers were distributed by since it allowed raising salaries. The rapid growth in the production of consumer goods production and the liberalization of rural economy were the results of a policy that promoted more balance between economic development and individual life chances.

But these achievements coincided with a hasty policy in the area of economic reforms ('the corn rush', 'the meat campaign in Ryazan', 'the dairy records'), accompanied by a heavy strain on the whole administrative system at the end of the 1950s. The unreasonable and contradictory reforms produced an ecological and economic crisis in 1962 and 1963. Another campaign searching for enemies, embezzlers and speculators made both shady dealers and small craftsmen to victims of repression. Within two years death penalty for economic felonies mowed down the lives of 160 defendants, thousands were victimized and deported, stigmatized and deprived of property. The constant broadening of the category 'the parasites of society' turned into the a real witch-hunt.

The years of the thaw were the years of contradictions, when risky initiatives of the party and new repressions coincided with progressive measures to improve the lives of Soviet citizens: The work conditions were improved, while the mobility of workers was simplified and the prosecution for truancy being was abolished. The taxes on low-income groups were reduced, the salaries were raised, the work schedules were reduced and the length of paid leave was extended. The maternity leave (reduced to 70 days by Stalin) became turned into 112 days long again; the secondary schools became free of charge and gender-combined coeducational.

Traditionally for Soviet history, the positive effects of those measures was primarily felt by city-dwellers, while collective farmers were still deprived: they had neither passports, nor the right of free mobility outside their residence. Until 1964 collective farmers had no state pensions, and the pension age for them their statutory retirement age came five years later than for other compared with other workers.

Nevertheless, restoration of social justice and reduction of social inequality became the political priorities at that period. By 1956 more than 16.000 political prisoners were released, and after the XXth Congress of the CPSU several millions of wrongly falsely convicted people got a long-hoped-for freedom, after special commissions conducted mass rehabilitations in detention camps. The whole

The success was considerable in the sphere of human rights sphere, especially when the term 'enemy of the people' was abolished, the criminal liability age was raised to 16 years and other norms according to a mature legal culture were introduced.

During that period the number of benefits and grant recipients was growing. In 1956 and 1964, the legislation modernized the welfare system, and made it one of the most accessible in the world. The level of benefits was raised, the connection with the employment status became less relevant, and even some guarantees for low-paid workers were introduced.

According to the act 'About state pensions' passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on July 14, 1956, the government committed itself to pay pensions through the fees of factories, institutions and organizations without payroll deductions from wages. Since that time the reform of the pensionary system began, it became free of discriminating features that characterized it during the Stalin period. The pensions were almost doubled and the pensionable age was lowered (to 60 for men and to 55 for women). The act about 'Pensionary Provision of Collective Farmers' (15.7.1964) expanded the welfare system and covered peasantry, reducing - finally - the differences between workers and collective farmers in the social insurance sphere. Besides egalitarian principles, the reasons for the extension of social security on collective farmers were related to the depopulation of rural areas.

But, the tendencies towards the universalization of social policy appeared differently in the special spheres of life. For example, the intelligentsia was very much dissatisfied with the policy of laborization (orabochivanie) in the field of higher education:

- the obligatory scheme of two-year work in factory or at the kolkhoz after finishing eight-year school,
- the restriction of entrance to higher education institutions right after leaving secondary school,
- the introduction of military condition regarding the obligatory record of service as the condition for entering certain categories of higher educational institutions
- and the expansion of the role of preparatory support for workers entering an institute of higher education (rabfaks).

Those measures were introduced in order to gain educated cadres in the industry and to "strengthen the bonds between school and life". They should finally lead to overcome the thing of dislike for manual labor and to spread technical professions spreading among city-dwellers. But the results of the 'labourization process' showed that the 'intelligentsia' mostly found ways to overcome those restrictions, because the institutional measures were insufficient. Nevertheless, since 1959, industrial enterprises got the right to assign their workers to institutes of higher education as a reward for excellent work. It became possible to get full secondary education on the polytechnic basis - at school and at factory.

With hindsight, it is easy to see that Khrushchev's assertion that the Soviet Union was marching towards communism was wrong. It would be, perhaps, a better characterization to say, that in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Soviet Union was already sidling into capitalism - 'parasites' in the vanguard.

#### Stability and Stagnation: 1964 - 1985

With the collapse of Khrushchev's regime of in 1964, the political and economic conditions of social policy changed. The vector of socio-political development, however, directed towards a better access to public goods, was not only preserved, but enhanced: During the first decade there was a rise of living standard and a remarkable increase of personal income. Under the conditions of a gradual economic growth industrial workers were allowed to move between employers more freely. ; fFarm workers got the guaranteed stable minimum wage, social benefits for farm workers were considerably raised and became equal to benefits for the rest of the population.

The preparatory departments which replaced the 'rabfaks' were requested to admit "workers, collective farmers, and reserve soldiers, citizens having directives from industrial enterprises (...) kolkhozes and military units."

On the other hand, the Brezhnev period produced a certain stagnation, because the society started to live beyond its means and to waste resources in an unprecedented manner by using irrational management methods and distorted price structures.

The low effectiveness of economy was also undermined by expensive armament strategies with military bases in Europe and Asia, by economic and military support of 'progressive'

regimes in developing countries and by a hopeless war in Afghanistan. The commodity shortage of commodities forced , the local governments in almost all regions to control the food distribution and to introduce food cards and consumption rates on a wide range of goods (from matches, tobacco goods and vodka to soap, butter and sugar).

#### The Municipalization of Social Services

In 1977, the new Constitution claimed the advancement of a developed socialist society. This included: guaranteed general secondary education, free education and medical service, the right to work, the right to rest, the right to receive pension benefits and lodgment, democratic rights and freedoms.

In the course of municipalization of social services (preschools, clubs, resort houses, sanatoriums and polyclinics) all 'social objects' went under the control of local administration. But, the economic crisis and insufficiency of local administration led, in many cases, to a severe reduction of social services. The withdrawal of the state and the enterprises out of the domain of social protection meant that the costs and the responsibility for welfare maintenance were increasingly passed on to private households and to kinship support networks. These facts were lowering the living standards of most monoparental families, many-children families and other population groups, including those which previously were considered as rather well supported ones.

Nevertheless, in a number of aspects the Soviet approach encouraged economic equality and independence of women by methods that constituted the so-called "model of weak breadwinner." This implicated that not only the head of the family had to be engaged in paid jobs but all adult members. Therefore, the employment of women came rose to 92% and their educational attainment level was higher than the men's level, although their salary differed in almost one third. The high rates of women's employment were determined by the extension of a supporting infrastructure, by kindergartens and polyclinics in particular, and by a relatively liberal maternity leave combined with childcare benefits.

In spite of all successes in economic and social policy, the living standards of Soviet people in the Brezhnev period were rather low - first of all due to low wages and lack of housing. The demographic trends including the marriages and divorces dynamics as well as the population mobility aggravated the housing problem. If While in the end of the 1950s only 48 % lived in cities, in 1970 60 % were city-dwellers. In comparison with other sectors of social policy, - welfare, health service and education - the housing policies were not corresponding to the needs of population. Despite considerable investments during the whole Soviet period, the problem of normal habitation provision was far from solution.

As the result of the prevalent policy the overall moral climate was, at the end of the 1970s, on the way to total stagnation: the last sprouts of public free-thinking were suppressed (dissidents were exiled, expelled, put into correctional and psychiatric facilities), the process of rehabilitation of repression victims stopped, the cult of personality was no more criticized. The social morality got worse: the motivation to quality work and labor discipline faded, the overall disappointment occurred, the level of alcoholism and criminality came to a peak.

#### The Contradictions of Soviet Social Policy - Conclusion

Summarizing that brief review of the USSR social reforms in the decades between 1940 and 1985, it should be noted that the Soviet system of social protection was considered as an instrument to speed up the economic development and the consolidation of socialism – as inspired by the ideas of Marxist classics and founders of the Soviet political system. Some loyal foreign contemporaries thought that social protection in Soviet Union was the practical expression of class solidarity and humanity: "Visit the lands of socialism. You will see a new kind of human being - shaped in conditions where deep concern for others is basic, where there

is a sense of real togetherness, joined with deep concern for the highest development of individual excellence and initiative.”

As an ideal model, social protection was considered as the essential right of politically loyal workers and their families. However, social guarantees should not be given to those who could support themselves by their income, but to those whose income was insufficient because of employment peculiarities or sickness - ‘according to needs’. In practice, that ideal model was realized in rather different ways in the various periods of socialist state history.

In its golden age, relating to Khrushchev’s and early Brezhnev’s period, the Soviet government built one of the most advanced systems of social assistance in the world, concerning the access equality as well as the volume and quality of services. In 1960, when social policy was the priority for the Soviet government, the progress in house-building, medical provision, welfare and education made the USSR the world leader concerning the growth rates and the volume of services. But since the end of 1970s, when the USSR entered the toughest stage of the cold war, the main weaknesses of the socialist social policy, its key points and institutional structure became more and more apparent. It was that period, long before perestroika, when negative tendencies in the quality of the Soviet citizen’s life became obvious.

The system’s justification was based on the dogmatic identification of social problems as inherent in ‘alien elements’ and, at the same time, on the rhetoric of struggle and sacrifice ‘for a radiant future’. Since the 1920s, the social taxonomies ‘friend or foe’ were applied to political regimes, practices, social groups and individuals; in the situation of strict selection of the ‘deserving’ that this distinction once again became the foundation for instable, changing self-definition.

The development of the incentives system extended the scope of social groups; it involved welfare, education, transport, housing, public health service and recreation, but the great social promises were not supported by their sufficient fulfillment. The consumers of social services were categorized as worthy and unworthy; the numerous types of transfers presupposed scanty payments and varied non- monetary benefits. The geographic disparity was also significant.

The resources of social policy were concentrated in big cities and capitals. The right and duty for labor determined the access to many social services directly from the workplace, while the segment of a universal welfare regime with typical disposition of domiciliary services available for all district residents extended as well. First of all, the transfer from an industrial towards a territorial principle of medical care was realized in order to open the services not only for working class people but also for civilians not related to the production sphere.

The emphasis on collectivity and communality is a peculiar feature of Soviet social policy. Its first and foremost task was to care for the country, the motherland (Rodina), but friendship and love were also relevant elements of social services. Therefore, the welfare, educational and health care institutions were supplemented by social organizations of enterprises and schools, and by other civil associations. It was the private sphere through which social assistance and social control became the basic structure of Soviet society.

This kind of ‘social work’ was integrally connected to the governmental efforts in constructing on of anomalies and deviations, which were intensified in the 1950 and 1960s. , and toThe mass hunt for stiliagi, black marketers and other ‘parasites of society’ dispelled the illusion about the liberalization of Khrushchev’s domestic policy.

As a whole, there were four principles of social policy during the Soviet period, that fit into the reform processes in the late 1980s:

- Firstly, accessibility and equality were prevailing in the system of access to education, accommodation, health care and social protection - and common for the labour market as well.
- Secondly, unification, unity and strict hierarchy of the administration made the system clear, controllable and universal.
- Thirdly, there were stability and predictability in execution of certain guarantees provided by enacted laws and regulations.

- Fourthly, the pursuit to provide large number of clients meant for the access to an according number of services.

The Soviet system, undoubtedly, had the developed system of social services in terms of organizing residential care for the elderly and people with disabilities, and care about the poor, orphans and students. That system was based on the principle of unification, which allowed to distribute the distribution of goods to every citizen according to his/her needs - a notion which formed the basis of welfare ethics in many countries in the world. However, the so called 'developed system' of medical care and welfare meant in practice a standard of social services on a rather low level; and instead of equality there existed an unfair distribution of resources to separate elite centers - for capital dwellers and party nomenclature. In the social stratification of the USSR the monetary hierarchies were replaced by ideological ones.

The character and the mechanisms of social service under state socialism are signified by some contradictions between state responsibility on the one hand, and individual and family responsibility on the other. In the whole course of Soviet history the configuration of 'private' and 'public' was in a state of constant redefinition and ambivalence. Under state socialism the need for social work could not be articulated since it was considered that all social problems could be solved automatically by the system. Therefore, the social, social-psychological, or social-medical services rather belonged to other domains of professional activities.

Consequently, many social problems were not recognized, or they were defined as medical or criminal issues. The recognition of such problems as problems generated by the system - would have meant the offence against the foundations of the dominating ideology.

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