

# opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

# 22

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNc: 2477-9385  
Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Maracaibo - Venezuela



# Origins and meanings of the Russian Socialism

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## Abstract

The article discusses the causes of socialism collapse in Russia, related to the social history of the Russian proletariat. The study applied the socio-philosophical approach and the method of specific historical analysis. As the result, they showed that the social content of socialism demise process in Russia is paradoxically related to the total process of population proletarianization. In conclusion, two versions of the proletarianization process were created in the history of the socialist development of Russia. The explication of this phenomenon is significant to understand current social processes not only in Russia, but also in the modern world.

**Keywords:** Socialism, Capitalism, Proletariat, Proletarization, Class.

## Orígenes y significados del socialismo ruso

### Resumen

El artículo analiza las causas del colapso del socialismo en Rusia, relacionadas con la historia social del proletariado ruso. El estudio aplicó el enfoque socio-filosófico y el método de análisis histórico específico. Como resultado, demostraron que el contenido social del proceso de desaparición del socialismo en Rusia está paradójicamente relacionado con el proceso total de proletarización de la población. En conclusión, se crearon dos versiones del proceso de proletarización en la historia del desarrollo socialista de Rusia. La explicación de este fenómeno es importante para comprender los procesos sociales actuales no solo en Rusia, sino también en el mundo moderno.

**Palabras clave:** socialismo, capitalismo, proletariado, proletarización, clase.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The last thirty years of Russian history represent, in social terms, the turn towards the capitalist path of development. Once again there is a situation in Russian history when the majority of the population of the country is hired workers. And if earlier the proletariat was traditionally associated with the workers of primarily industrial enterprises, now the category of hired labor applies to many professions. Among the objectives of this study is the clarification of the prospects for such a total proletarianization, when not only intellectuals and peasantry fall into the category of hired workers, but also the representatives of many professions that were previously considered as free ones: TV presenters, journalists, sportsmen and many others (ARAYA-GUZMÁN, CARES-MONSALVES, RAMÍREZ-CORREA, GRANDÓN & ALFARO-PEREZ, 2018: CHANDEL, RHETSO, MALIK & KULSHRESHTHA, 2018).

The complexity of the created situation analysis is also conditioned by the fact that this overgrown proletariat does not seem to have that revolutionism that is well known to us both in Western European and Russian history of the last two centuries. In such a historical context, questions naturally arise about the possible prospects for the development of both Russian society and the world community, and the whole of humanity. Are other prospects possible for the development of human society in this situation? Is there any alternative to capitalist development in the modern world? The answers to these questions are possible, provided that the causes and

circumstances of socialism destruction are clarified not only in Russia, with an objective assessment of the events that took place thirty years ago (ELBAN, 2018).

## **2. METHODS**

In order to analyze the questions posed, we applied the methods of social philosophy (the principle of historicism, the method of unity of historical and logical analysis, the dialectical approach to the study of class relations under socialism), deliberately excluding political and moral aspects from a methodological perspective.

As a research material, we analyzed the social realities of Russian society and their dynamics over the past three decades. These thirty years of Russian history were marked by the restoration of capitalism. However, it is impossible to enter the waters of the same river twice. It was not impossible to return to the former, pre-revolutionary Russian capitalism. It is no coincidence that BULAVKA-BUZGALINA (2016) calls modern Russian capitalism as backfired and reversible. The capitalist formation in Russia not only re-established itself, but also underwent the dismantling of some of the original socio-economic grounds from which the re-assembly of modern capitalist socio-economic forms began.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

To indicate the results of the study, it was necessary to explain the reasons for the restoration of capitalism in Russia. To this end, it was necessary to return to the fate of socialism in the USSR. Let us consider the social structure of the society of so-called mature socialism. The materials of the last congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union traditionally referred to this structure as the unbreakable union of the working class, the collective farm peasantry and the labor intelligentsia. The utopia of this construct is revealed as soon as we notice that the colossal bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet administrative-command system has been excluded from the structure of society, and meanwhile it was 18 million people in the early 1990-ies. Who needed all this huge political superstructure? It was believed that it feeds, forms, and cultivates the people. A natural question arises: why did these people need to be fed? Why people could not feed himself, being a working one (NIKIFOROV, 1974).

The working people of Soviet Russia seemed to be the successors of the proletariat of tsarist Russia. However, it is known that the proletariat does not exist without the bourgeoisie, therefore the existence of the proletarian in a socialist society is a temporary, intermediate and unstable phenomenon. This class has only two ways in history: either to return to capitalist society as an employee of a private entrepreneur or to turn from an employee into a conscious, interested and responsible owner of some part of social production, i.e. in the worker.

The proletariat and the worker are not the same phenomena. These are actually the classes of different societies: the first is for the bourgeois, the second is for a socialist society. And the transformation of the first into the second coincides per se with the whole long and difficult process of socialism development. This process does not take place automatically. It is possible only with the constant conscious and self-organized participation of the working people themselves, with the increasing role of the subjective factor in history. The participation of the subjective factor becomes an objective necessity in this process (DERRIDA, 2006).

A large class of proletarians, inherited by Soviet Russia from Tsarist Russia, was a very paradoxical social phenomenon. In the early years of Soviet power, 90% of the proletarians who participated in the revolution and civil war died. The best, most honest people died, who passed the school of collective labor discipline and revolutionary activities. The proletariat was re-recruited from non-proletarian population segments. In contrast to the classical type of the proletariat development, reproduced on its own basis - capital, the traditional type of proletarianization implies that the source of the proletariat development is always external (from other population classes and strata. In this situation, the main source of the proletariat recruitment was the peasantry, the petty shopkeepers, and the urban plebs. These people had no tradition of collective disciplined activity, and were not capable of conscious joint actions. They were the products of return to the unnatural simplicity of the poor, rude man without needs who did not rise above or to the level of private property (YURINOV, 2009).

The reason for his poverty (including spiritual, cultural, poverty of the spirit) and the lack of interest was that a worker in the conditions of crude communism in Russia was exploited by the state, which turned into an aggregate capitalist, almost by the same way as a private entrepreneur exploits workers in classical capitalism. However, the political power in the country continued to remain the state of the proletarian dictatorship and therefore it had to reproduce this class constantly (SHATUNOVA, 1999).

The barely emerging working class was washed out of the large industrial centers of the country (workers were moved to the countryside to raise agriculture, to develop virgin lands, the most advanced workers were killed during the Civil and Great Patriotic War, etc.). Thus, by the time of the onset of the so-called developed socialism, the main population of the country was still the same economically unproductive class (in the 1980-ies, hard physical, unskilled and low-skilled labor in the country made 80%). Due to the economic unproductiveness of this class, it had to be subsidized with guaranteed, but not earned wages as during the first years of Soviet power. So an amazing marginal social phenomenon develops in the history of Russian society: the working class, which constitutes the majority of the country population, becomes the exploiter: by consuming the unproduced, this class had to exploit someone. A natural question arises: who was the object of exploitation?

The Soviet power always looked for a source of subsidies for the proletariat: at first expropriation of the expropriators was carried



out, and capital was spent on subsidies to the proletariat. Then expropriation and collectivization were carried out, i.e. the funds of the Russian peasantry were spent. Then the Gulag was created with its cheap, highly skilled workforce. However, the moment came when this source was exhausted. There was the issue about a new source of subsidies. The command and administrative system has found a brilliant and simple solution: to turn part of the proletariat into the working class. It used the objective law of socialism development.

The working class was created and formed locally, in enclaves and under the strict supervision of the system. In agriculture, there were no-order link forms of labor organization and remuneration created by I.N. Khudenko. The enterprises in Shchekino experiment style VILCHEK (2004) appeared in the industry when a large chemical plant was transferred to the ownership of the labor collective. Socialism stubbornly sought new forms of consistency, the forms of real socialization of property. Labor productivity grew rapidly; the mood of real collectivism was developed in the created oases of sociality/socialism. The galaxy of highly skilled intellectual workers appeared.

Under these conditions, the main class relation of developed socialism has developed. The proletariat remained the bulk of the population, so the state continued to exist in the form of the proletarian dictatorship. The second social force that shaped the structure of Soviet society was represented by a young, developing working class. The relationship between them, which actually constituted not even classes,

but two sides (wings, two versions according to LIFSHITS (1986) of the same class, was mediated by the administrative-command system. The system was busy the redistribution of funds in favor of the proletariat, pumping them from the working class through its own administrative bodies.

Naturally, part of the funds was concentrated in the bureaucratic apparatus of the system, which constantly raised the proletariat as its own social base. The proletariat, in its turn, needed a command-administrative superstructure, which made it possible not to develop, not to earn the value of its labor power, but to receive state-guaranteed subsidies. A completely peaceful relationship has developed between the state system and the proletariat, whereas there was the relationship of real hidden exploitation between the proletariat and the working class.

Thus, the basic class attitude of developed socialism was presented on the surface of phenomena as the interrelation of the working class, the collective-farm peasantry and the people intelligentsia. In fact, this representation was nothing more than a huge part of the Soviet performance society. It should be noted that the social attitude proletariat – the working class was almost universal. The Soviet intelligentsia, by virtue of the hired nature of its relations with the state, was only a kind of proletariat in the socio-economic sense - the proletarians of mental labor. The Russian peasantry was also built into this universal attitude: the guaranteed wages of

collective farmers, which appeared in 1980, completely turned the peasants into an agricultural proletariat.

Since the possibility of the dynamics of socialism from capitalism was not implemented in advance, and the balance in relation to the proletariat-working class was very fragile, the restoration of capitalism became inevitable in the country. The inevitability of such a course of history was conditioned by the fact that the hired proletariat was not interested in the socially significant results of its labor and therefore acted as an agent of steadily narrowing production. When this narrowing reaches the critical point of no return, socialism comes to an end, and this happened in Russia. The administrative-command system agreed better to the restoration of capitalism than to self-destruction under the sign of the working class development as the conscious owner of social production.

The working class, which developed in the incubators of the system, was not strong enough to take the objective law of socialism development into its own hands. It was not the working class that won, the proletariat won. Naturally, sooner or later this class, which does not exist without the bourgeoisie and which acts as a necessary and reproducible generation, raised the corresponding proletarian bourgeoisie for itself - the notorious new Russians. It should be noted that nowadays the proletarian bourgeoisie has shown its bright side to some extent: like the working class, some Russian entrepreneurs are able to work. Partly reproduced famous Weberian character, an entrepreneur who plans his life and work (which he considers to be his

vocation), who knows how to risk and calculate his risks, time and money (DEBORD, 2019).

The reproduction of the intelligentsia in the country is carried out also in its proletarian version mainly: these are mainly people who are professionally engaged in mental work, but either intimidated or corrupted by their proletarian position. Proletarian political elites, proletarian artists, proletarian TV hosts and pop stars are represented in the country. Proletarian not only because they are engaged, in hired labor for life according to F. Engels, but also because they do not have the modern level of culture in general, and spiritual in particular. The thin layer of intellectual workers who formed the backbone of the working class in the situation of developed socialism has disappeared. We cannot speak of a conscious collective owner of social production in terms of total private property. A hired proletarian with the traits of spiritual poverty clearly prevails. But, naturally, they do not allow him to be an exploiter any longer.

At the same time, the abstract possibility of turning the proletariat into the subject of historically significant action exists objectively. The gap between labor and capital continues to grow in the country, which means that the ghosts of MARX (2015) will return without end. In the meantime, the Russian proletariat is pure potency in its constituent parts, right up to the proletarian intelligentsia. Nowadays, the direct, simple cooperation of workers at large industrial enterprises is becoming the thing of the past. They need a search for new forms of real socialization of labor, the forms of consistency and

competition. Socialist Russia was, and modern Russia remains the space for the search for forms, which are the most important source of social or mass productive power, the source of production, society and man development.

Russian socialism launched socialization processes on a worldwide scale. Soviet science did not accidentally study the experience of the USSR: the need for the death of proletarianism and the formation of a new type of worker was recognized, for example, by the creators of the Fordism system both in America ZIZEK (2001) and in Russia. Among the ongoing socialization processes in the world, let us call the constant search for the forms of ownership in which the interests of product development and the interests of the working person development do not contradict each other. The economic condition for such exploitation is super-profits, provided by the highest level of labor productivity in high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries. For example, in some Japanese corporations, it is enough for an employee to work from 15 to 45 minutes a day to produce the value of his labor.

There are the councils of labor collectives, various forms of initiative and innovation encouragement offered by employees, and the growth and development of mass production initiatives. The forms of social activity and cooperation of workers are developing, which grew in the USSR like mushrooms after rain. Modern capital is capable of self-reproduction, exploiting only social productive force, and the payment of an individual worker is made according to work, so post-

capitalism is permeated by socialization processes and it is the socialist movement in its socio-economic essence.

Modern Russia appears to the researcher as the famous Borges garden, the garden of diverging paths. Its social dynamics has the tendencies of capitalism development, which is not entirely primitive nowadays, but naturally reproduces mercenary, exploitation and proletarianization. Proletarianization processes are constantly and dangerously intensified. In the world arrangement of class forces, Russia occupies an intermediate place in the space between the World Capital (America, Japan) and the World Proletariat (China, Korea). There are almost no elements of post-capitalism in the country. However, the processes of socialization, launched by the October Revolution, are carried out throughout the world today.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Thus, it becomes obvious that two versions of the proletarianization process were created in the history of the socialist development of Russia: one of them is the version of the permanent reproduction of equalization, mercenaryness, rudeness, and poverty (including the spiritual one). The second version is the version of a conscious aggregate (joint, collective) agent development of modern social production, capable of becoming everything from nothing. The explication of this phenomenon is significant to understand current

social processes not only in Russia, but also in the modern world as a whole.

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 35, Especial No. 22 (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

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