

2012

Labor Culture: Labor Morality under Socialism

Vladimir Magun

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/russian_culture



Part of the [Asian History Commons](#), [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), [Labor Economics Commons](#), [Labor Relations Commons](#), [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#), [Political Economy Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Slavic Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Magun, V. (2012). Labor Culture: Labor Morality under Socialism. In Dmitri N. Shalin, 1-22.

Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/russian_culture/12

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Article in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Article has been accepted for inclusion in Russian Culture by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Labor Culture: Labor Morality under Socialism

Vladimir Magun

Soviet leaders had always taken a keen interest in workers' behavior and labor motives and sought to keep labor morality under strict state control. A complex network of values and regulations was developed for this purpose after the October Revolution of 1917. They were best articulated in the "political economy of socialism" which purported to present a scientific picture of the country's economic life. Textbooks on socialist economy were widely circulated in the Soviet Union and appropriate courses included into a core curriculum for all higher education institutions in the country. Basic tenets of socialist political economy were taught in introductory social science classes in high schools. Leading educators helped popularize the subject, while major research centers in the nation continued to perfect the science of socialist economics. A prominent place in socialist political economy was given to work ethics, labor motives, employment opportunities, reward structure and other characteristics which formed socialist labor culture. In this chapter, I shall examine socialist labor morality, the relationship between the official Soviet blueprints and unofficial realities, the changes that socialist labor culture underwent in recent years, and the emerging trends in labor morality and work ethics in post-Soviet society.

Work and Employment in the Socialist Ideology

To begin with, all things connected with labor had a special significance in the state ideology that evolved in Russia after the communists came to power. The revolution itself was justified by the need to put an end to the exploitation of labor, to eliminate capitalists who misappropriated the "surplus value" produced by the proletariat, and to level social and economic differences separating various classes in society. These tasks were to be accomplished by rooting out private property, socializing the means of production, eliminating the class of private entrepreneurs, and radically restructuring the institution of labor.

The political slogans which propelled the bolsheviks to power sidestepped the production and labor process proper and focused instead on the distribution and redistribution of the wealth produced in the pre-revolutionary Russia. However, as the new social order began to stabilize, the communist leaders' attention shifted to production and the need to motivate workers in their daily labors. Gradually, the Soviet Union

transformed itself into what Hannah Arendt called " "work society" where "work and labour activity are not only a natural precondition for human existence, but where work also has a central cultural value and where work institutions assume a central role in the entire societal structure."

[1] In effect, Soviet ideology surrounded labor with a sacred halo and pronounced hard work on behalf of the state to be each citizen's sacred duty. This ideology was inspired by orthodox Marxism, and specifically by its emphasis on activity, labor-created value, toiling proletariat as an embodiment of social progress, and the central role that tool-aided behavior was supposed to have played in the human evolution. [2]

Every able-bodied individual, according to Soviet ideology, had to be inducted into the labor force: dodging employment and living on unearned income were condemned. The Soviet constitution faithfully reflected this precept. Thus the last version of the constitution adopted by the former Soviet Union read: "It is the duty, as well as the honor, for every able-bodied citizen in the USSR to work conscientiously in his chosen, socially useful activity, and strictly to observe labor discipline. Evading socially useful work is incompatible with the principles of socialist society."

[3] Based on this principle, several legal acts were passed by the Supreme Soviet that criminalized so-called "social parasites" or job shirkers. Among the more sensational cases stemming from these laws was the conviction of the poet Joseph Brodsky for parasitism. Brodsky, who would later be awarded Nobel Prize in literature, was exiled to the northern Arkhangelsk Region where he was to submit to "forced employment." As the basis for his ruling, the judge cited the May 4, 1961 , resolution passed by the Presidium of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet that called for additional measures against those evading public labor. Labor-centrism came to the fore during the official campaign against "unearned incomes," triggered by the special decree on "Combatting Unearned Incomes" that was issued by the Supreme Soviet in 1986. This decree put a criminal spin on even those limited forms of independent economic activity that were hitherto available to Soviet citizens, such as selling produce from the puny plots owned by the members of collective farms. The decree also cast a shadow over the inheritance practices, lottery winnings, gifts from relatives, and other earnings unrelated to a person's work. [4]

Another economic tenet that circumscribed the labor process in Soviet society concerned the ownership over the production means: land, raw materials, machinery, labor tools, etc. The socialist political economy sanctioned two basic forms of ownership: national and cooperative/collective. In both cases, workers were cast as co-owners with equal stakes in the production means and work products. As to the private

ownership over the production means and the private entrepreneurship it engendered, these were pronounced alien to socialism. Engaging in private enterprise became a criminal activity. As a result, both evading work (failure to be gainfully employed in an official enterprise) and the most active form of employment (engaging in a private enterprise) appeared to be outlawed. The only recognized form of employment was hired labor for the state, which stood behind every industrial and service enterprise in the nation, or for the collective farm in agriculture, which legally constituted a separate form of ownership but in practice did not differ much from the state owned enterprises.

A closer look at this form of employment suggests that it did not live up to its official billing. Socialist ideology touted employees as public property co-owners who worked for nobody else but themselves. An appropriate quotation from Lenin was usually invoked to justify this point, which said that "for the first time after centuries of work for others, coercive toil for the exploiters, the possibility of work for oneself has become a reality." [5] In fact, socialist workers did not have any say in important economic decisions -- the functions that normally come with the ownership rights -- and thus could hardly be construed as co-owners. [6]

The co-ownership ruse accomplished an important goal: under the premises of the socialist political economy, the labor force could no longer be seen as a saleable commodity. This, in turn, allowed the communist party ideologists to claim that there was no labor market under socialism. Indeed, how could citizens, who own all property, sell their labor to themselves? References to "selling" and "purchasing" labor, "price of labor" and "wage labor," were discarded as inapplicable to the socialist system. Wherever the words "hire" and "wage labor" would crop up, they usually appeared in quotation marks and were used with reservations. Here is a sample of rationalizations designed by the socialist political economists to buttress this point:

As they together own the means of production, employees cannot sell their labor force to themselves. [7]

Those who own the production means can't purchase their ability to work from themselves. [8]

The working class cannot sell its labor power to itself, since it owns the production means. Consequently, only the outward appearance of hire survives when it comes to the employees' relation to society through

which they implement their right to work. [9]

Normative Motives and Workers' Attitudes

The ideological constructs presented above go to the heart of socialist ideology and define in the broadest terms the place that this ideology accorded to labor in society. In addition to these general principles, the socialist political economy articulated more specific normative guidelines pertaining to the goals and motivations of socialist labor. Two instructive distinctions could be singled out in regard to socialist labor motives and goals. The first one involved the distinction between personal and public interests that motivate labor activity. Personal interests included the worker's own needs, as well as those of his family. Public interests referred to the well-being of the collective and community as a whole. The second relevant distinction juxtaposed two types of the worker's interests: "spiritual" and "material." Spiritual needs were linked to the labor process itself and were defined as the satisfaction that the worker derives from work well done, from finding an outlet for one's creativity, from respect that a hard-working person earns from his co-workers. Material needs had to do with the remuneration for one's contribution to public production, be this in the form of salary or non-monetary benefits. This normative distinction partly coincides with what students of labor call "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" labor motives, [10] or work as a "value in itself" and as an "instrumental" activity. [11]

Up to the late-80's, the official Soviet ideology clearly favored public over private interests and spiritual over material labor motives. The priority given to public motives perfectly fitted the totalitarian mold of Soviet society, which subordinated the individual to the state. The disdain for the worker's personal interests was camouflaged with the notion that public ownership over production means gave everybody the same stake in the production process and assured that personal or private interests were in the end identical with the interests of the community as a whole. After all, does not every socialist worker toil for himself, even if he is technically a state employee? Does not he own the product of his labor, even if he cannot dispose of it personally? And would not he therefore naturally be inclined to value the manager's directives as his own?

Such were the normative expectations that the Soviet ideologists harbored about communist work ethics. The actual labor morality among Soviet workers was another story. Indicative in this respect was the workers' reaction to the late 20s campaign promoting exemplary labor by individual workers and work teams. This officially approved initiative aimed at

lowering general pay rates, raising production quotas, speeding work processes, introducing penalties for substandard performance, etc. The campaign did not sit well with workers who, as researchers would later point out, resisted pressure to intensify the labor process. [12] Clearly, workers were unwilling to sacrifice personal interests to "public good." Even so-called *udarniki* -- exemplary workers routinely overfulfilling their production quotas -- did not surrender their own and their families' interests. But when *udarniki* complained about low pay rates, they risked being branded greedy profiteers or *shkurniki* by trade union bosses who threatened to disband their work teams. Nor were Soviet peasants thrilled by the prospects of being herded into collective farms and working for anybody else but themselves and their families.

Numerous developments attest to the fact that official labor morality and everyday Soviet reality did not coincide. This would become more evident in post-Stalinist Russia, when workers would sometimes be driven to direct actions protesting the official indifference to their basic needs. One of the most dramatic events of this kind happened in 1962 in the city of Novocherkassk, where the authorities called in the troops to stamp out a demonstration by workers protesting the hikes in food prices. [13]

The data from sociological surveys point in the same direction. Thus an important study of workers from 12 industrial enterprises in Leningrad conducted in 1976 by Dr. Vladimir Yadov and his associates revealed that between 63 and 73 percent of those polled listed good earnings as the most valuable quality they are looking for in a job. No more than 6% of respondents mentioned the opportunity to participate in management decisions as an important job specification and only 18% singled out a job's "creative content."

The study of Russian immigrants further corroborate these findings. [14] Among the factors negatively effecting the Soviet economy, Russian immigrants, who were polled in the 1970's, listed low earnings, poor working conditions, the shortage of consumer goods, and bad housing accommodations -- all the factors pertaining to the workers' personal and family well-being. Thus, we can argue that material interests, rather than ideologically inspired spiritual needs, predominated in the Soviet workers' values since at least the middle-1970's. [15]

Realizing the gap between normative expectations and everyday labor morality, Soviet ideologists emphasized the transitional nature of socialist society, which was conceived in Marxism as the initial phase of the communist socio-economic formation. It is only with the onset of

communism -- the ultimate stage of social evolution -- that the spiritual labor motives would fully inform labor morality. This is how Lenin described this historically new type of labor ethics:

Communist labor, in the narrower and stricter sense of the term, is free labor for society's sake; labor done not as duty, not to win the right to certain products, not according to pre-set legalized quotas, but voluntary labor without quotas and without expectations of remuneration; labor as the custom to work for the common good and as a conscious (and habitual) realization of the necessity to labor for the common good; labor as a need of a healthy body. [16]

One could trace this stance taken by Lenin to the well-known passage in Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program," which stated that "at the highest stage of communist society, . . . labor will cease to be solely a means of living and become in itself a primary necessity of life." [17] Lenin's words were, in some cases, even stronger. [18]

But this distinction between the two phases of communism -- socialism as the initial stage of the communist production mode and the ultimate stage of fully developed communism -- gave to socialist ideologists an inferiority complex clearly evident in the apologetic tone with which they described the the motivational dynamics actually observed under socialism.

The Protestant and Communist Labor Ethics

A comparison between communist work ethics and the Protestant (capitalist) work ethic is clearly in order here. Both the Protestant work ethic as analyzed by Max Weber in his classic study [19] and Soviet models of labor morality are distinguished by their emphasis on labor as a vital sphere of human activity. Both tend to underplay the personal and family consumption motives as a primary basis for labor activity. The elevation of spiritual needs over material ones in the Soviet ideology offers an instructive parallel to the religious motives that propelled early capitalists in their economic undertakings. In the Soviet case, we also have tangible evidence that real personal consumption was kept at a minimum. This can be gleaned from a comparison between the public consumption and industrial accumulation funds in the Soviet era. During the early stages of rapid industrialization in the Soviet Union, the relative weight of consumption funds dwindled while that of accumulation funds grew from 10-15 to 40-45 percent. In later years, capital accumulation funds sometimes accounted for more than 60 percent of the national

income in the Soviet Union. [20]

The early capitalist growth in the West revealed some similar cultural trends, including attempts to curb consumer motivation in Calvinist ideology, which denounced the most conspicuous forms of consumption as a sinful practice. According to this ideology, it was one's success in practical activity that should be displayed, not personal wealth that accrued to the individual as a result of his labor. And whatever resources were left unused in personal consumption, were to be reinvested in production, thereby maximizing the amount of divine grace that devolved on a successful entrepreneur. [21]

Besides these parallels, there were fundamental differences between the labor ethics championed by the socialist and Protestant ideologies. While the former renounced private ownership, the latter appealed to personal initiative firmly rooted in private property. Another point that formally divided the two models concerned the manner in which the individual was to be fully rewarded for his efforts: the socialist ideology promised a state of bliss in this world as soon as the full-blown communism comes into its own, while Protestant teaching saw salvation fully attainable only in the world to come. Given a somewhat uncertain time frame within which full-blown communism was to be expected, the socialist promise tended to recede into an indefinite future and thus was to be redeemed only for the "generations to come."

As we can see, Protestant ethics and socialist labor morality helped motivate labor during the early stages of capital accumulation, with the Protestant model accentuating personal efforts on the basis of private property and the socialist model stressing individual efforts on the basis of state ownership as the surest path towards rapid industrialization in the Soviet Union . However, if the Protestant work ethic gave rise to the "spirit of capitalism" and spurred economic growth in the West, secular socialist ideology failed to generate the "spirit of communism" and to furnish the foundation for sustained economic growth in the socialist East.

BEYOND THE SOCIALIST LABOR MORALITY

The fundamental cultural and economic changes that shook Soviet society in the late 1980's and that continue to unfold at present could not but affect labor morality. Let us now turn to the new developments in Russian labor culture. In addition to the normative and ideological blueprints for labor ethics which preoccupied us in the previous section, we shall also focus on the current trends in everyday labor culture as revealed in recent

sociological inquiries into labor motives and work ethics. We begin with the changing employment patterns.

The Diversification of Normative Employment Patterns

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence that the dogmas of socialist economics have lost their magic power was the legalization of private enterprise. Suppressed and prosecuted for many decades, private entrepreneurial activity was not reinstated overnight. The first movement in this direction was the official blessing that Mikhail Gorbachev bestowed on cooperative enterprises. Private enterprise was further strengthened by the law on "Enterprises and Entrepreneurship" passed by the Russian Parliament, which among other things spelled out the entrepreneurial rights. [22] The Constitution adopted by the Russian Federation during the December '93 national referendum stipulated that "every person has the right to use freely his abilities and property to engage in entrepreneurial and other economic activities unrestricted by law." [23]

As to public opinion, its growing acceptance of entrepreneurship is reflected in the polls, which point to an increasing number of individuals wishing to start their own businesses. The figures are impressive, even if it is clear that some respondents are unprepared to follow through on their expressed wishes. For example, the October 1990 opinion survey probed the Soviet urban population's interest in various kinds of businesses and the production means they would like to obtain. The poll listed common businesses like shops, restaurants, service outlets, etc. The results pointed to a significant number of individuals who wanted to open up their own business, even though no opportunity might exist for this in the present: a third of Russian citizens living in urban areas expressed an interest in starting their own business. And this was before the massive push toward privatization in post-Gorbachev Russia . The numbers were even more impressive in other republics of the former Soviet Union : 43% in the Ukraine , and over 50% in Armenia , Moldova , Georgia and Lithuania. [24] A poll conducted a year later showed that fully 20% of Moscow high school graduates would like to open up a private business. [25]

Entrepreneurial activity was even less threatening and unheard of to the farmers. Since the early 30s, Soviet agriculture entailed two sectors: the public/collective sector which absorbed most of the arable lands in the nation and the private one, comprised by the small plots assigned to farmers and their families for private use. While the private sector included a fraction of the nation's lands used in agriculture, it accounted

for half of all potatoes and one third of eggs and meat sold in the Soviet Union during recent decades. Clearly, we are dealing here with private business based on the labor of farmers and their family members, a rudimentary capitalist sector which, in spite of adverse conditions, existed throughout the Soviet era and continues to flourish today. [26]

Private enterprise needs both an entrepreneur and hired labor. During the early perestroika years, Socialist ideologists sneered at free enterprise because it would restore the "exploitation" of hired labor allegedly absent under socialism, a system supposedly incompatible with work for hire. Contrary to such sentiments, the urban majority in Russia and other Soviet republics supported hired labor. By the end of 1990, the opportunity to work for a private owner was endorsed by most people in the Soviet Union, except for respondents in Turkmenia, Kirghizia, and Kazakhstan. The three Baltic republics, along with Armenia and Ukraine, registered the biggest majorities favoring this type of employment. [27] Moreover, as recent studies show, employment at a private enterprise is now a more attractive option than work at a state-owned outlet. [28]

All these changes in the legal environment and public opinion led to the rapid growth of new employment patterns. The statistical data shows that by early 1993, sixteen million people in the Russian Federation were employed in new enterprises, almost all of these privately owned. [29] Judged by self-reports, 30 percent of those employed claim that they are engaged in profit-oriented activities, including 8 percent who consider themselves enterprise co-owners with a voice in the decision making process and 3 percent -- sole enterprise owners. [30] Taken together, these findings clearly suggest that public opinion in Russia has endorsed employment at non-state enterprises.

Another interesting feature pertaining to the employment situation in Russia is the proliferation of secondary employment that allows the individual to supplement income from a primary job. As we saw above, this phenomenon was widely spread in the rural areas, where work on one's private plot constituted secondary employment. Now the multiple employment pattern, once denounced by the Soviet authorities, is beginning to spread in the cities, especially the big ones. In November of 1993, 40 percent of the adult male population in big cities had two or more jobs. [31] To be sure, many people are forced to seek secondary employment to supplement their meager incomes eaten up by relentless inflation. At the same time, a person is more independent from any single employer when he holds several jobs and for the first time feels that he

indeed owns his labor power, skills, and abilities. Thus a genuine mobilization of labor resources is taking place in Russia , and this is not just by drawing new workers into the economic process but through the more intensive involvement of the seasoned and most active part of the labor force.

We have examined some of the new employment opportunities sanctioned by the Russian state and generally endorsed by public opinion. Alongside these changes came the official recognition of unemployment, which for a long time was decried as incompatible with socialism. The Employment Act adopted by the Russian Parliament on April 19, 1991 , explicitly defined the status of the unemployed, spelled out the procedures covering unemployment registration, and outlined benefits that the unemployed could receive from the state. [32]

Naturally, most Russian citizens are not thrilled at the prospect of losing their and would like to see full employment guaranteed by the state. However, if we are to judge from the polls, a substantial part of the Russian population is growing accustomed to the grim reality of joblessness and is beginning to adapt to such a possibility. [33] Several million Russian workers have already had first-hand experience of being unemployed.

Just a decade ago, such a situation would have seemed preposterous, as the experts unanimously predicted labor shortage. This judgment, based on the extrapolation of the past socio-economic trends into the future, runs afoul of the radical changes that swept the country in the last few years. [34]

These employment trends had their impact on labor discipline. A survey of personnel managers at several large Moscow enterprises conducted in the Summer of 1992 revealed that workers were reportedly growing more disciplined and responsible -- a shift that personnel managers greeted with approval and that could be attributed largely to the uncertain labor market and increased likelihood of layoffs. [35] We can expect the transition to a market economy and the sobering effect that unemployment exerts on labor discipline to have a continuous impact on labor ethics.

In addition to involuntary unemployment, we should mention an important cultural change in public attitudes towards individuals who do not wish to be involved in the labor process. Before perestroika, every able-bodied Soviet citizen of working age was obligated to seek public employment.

But the Russian Federation Employment Act, adopted on April 19, 1991, stipulates that "citizens possess the exclusive right to dispose of their capacity for productive and creative labor. Coercive employment is inadmissible with the exception of cases expressly stipulated by the law. Non-employment should not give grounds for administrative or any other liability." [36] This change is duly reflected in the current Russian Constitution which no longer mentions employment as a duty, even though it still stipulates the right to dispose freely of one's labor power, to choose one's occupation, to obtain the remuneration for one's work without any discrimination, and to be protected from unemployment.

One can hardly overestimate the importance of all these transformations in the Russian labor law and labor morality. Labor is losing its halo of sacredness with which it appears in a socialist society. It is no longer seen as an obligation rooted in the individual's responsibility to the state and is increasingly conceived as a matter of personal choice. At the same time, the new labor morality enriched employment patterns in the country and encouraged entrepreneurial initiative. We can see this in the fact that individuals began to feel themselves as real owners of their labor force. They act less as state employees and more like sellers of their work force. But this newly acquired taste for freedom confronted the Russian work force with fresh problems and serious responsibilities that the market economy brought in its wake.

The Current Trends in Labor Attitudes and Values

As we noticed above, Soviet society could never overcome the gap between the official labor ethics that touted public good along with job content as normative labor motives and the real motivation that propelled Soviet workers, most of whom saw their labor as a means of furthering their personal and family well-being. The breakdown of totalitarianism effectively eliminates this contradiction. In the late 80s and early 90s, the fundamental cultural shift took place, which legitimized personal interests and private life. Fully rehabilitated were also material, bodily needs which used to be denigrated as secondary and base compared to the higher spiritual needs. The "base" bodily functions grow in importance and become culturally at least as legitimate as the "lofty" spiritual ones. [37] In the same perspective we should judge the parallel cultural rehabilitation of personal wealth and private property, as well as the vastly expanded access to real goods now legally available to individuals and families.

Hence, it should come as no surprise that today, like in the 70s, private,

material interests workers' job motivation. Two surveys, one conducted in 1989 and the other in 1990, polled factory workers about jobs they would have liked to perform. [38] The respondents were asked to choose any number of required job characteristics from among seventeen possible job features presented by the researchers. The responses indicate that the majority of the individuals polled marked the items directly bearing on their personal interests and their family's well-being. The opportunity for good earnings topped the list, while the possibility to improve housing conditions with the employer's help, to operate in a comfortable working environment, to use reliable and safe industrial equipment, and to deal with agreeable and likable co-workers closely followed. "Good earnings" were singled out as important by 70% of all respondents, compared to 43-44% of those polled who gave high rating to an "interesting job." This list of leading personal motives combines the desire to maximize job "rewards" and reduce to a minimum personal "costs" associated with poor working conditions, faulty tools, and tension in the work place. This finding is remarkably consistent with the world-wide trends detected by R. Inglehart and his associates in the World Values Survey of more than twenty countries, including Russia . The Russian survey conducted in the beginning of 1991[39] showed that 80% of respondents marked "good earnings" as an important job characteristic. If we compare these results to the 1976 study, we can see that the Russian workers' values have remained stable for at least two decades. The desire to earn more -- not to labor for work's sake as a primary human need -- had motivated Russian workers during this entire period. Very tangible are the changes in the range and quality of goods and services that workers aspire to purchase with their money. With the barrier to the free flow of information coming down, the Russian population has developed consumption expectations that are not dissimilar in principle from those commonly found in the West. This increase in consumption (and consequently in salary) expectations could be gleaned from the comparison between expectations of the high school graduates' in 1985 and the early 90s: The findings of this study, [40] which used such indicators as the desire to own a car, private summer cottage, etc. Noteworthy is also the fact that the growth in salary and consumption aspirations goes hand in hand with the diminished willingness on the part of employees to expend a given amount of their labor power in order to satisfy their aspirations. Thus the above mentioned comparative study of adolescents revealed that in the last few years, there was a noticeable drop in the willingness of young people to face labor hardships (such as to work in cold climates, apart from their families, in especially labor-intensive and monotonous job settings, etc.).

Yuri Levada reports similar results. The two surveys, one conducted in 1988 and the other in 1992, asked Russian citizens the same question: "What do you think is important to be successful in life?" During the four years that elapsed between the first and second poll, the proportion of the respondents who answered that the requirement for success was "hard and deliberate work" dropped from 45 to 32 percent. [41] In light of these findings, it is easier to understand why the desire to increase personal earnings shares the top billing with the desire to minimize personal cost in the hierarchy of job values of the contemporary Russian worker.

It is common to interpret the revolution of consumptive expectations and the decline in the willingness to face work hardships as a sign of the breakdown in moral values. But I think it would be more appropriate to criticize past labor ethics which demanded hard work in exchange for few tangible goods or for a mere reprieve from punishment. It is to mask the absurdity of such a demand that the socialist labor morality goaded the employees to enjoy the labor process itself and derive satisfaction from the fact that they participate in the great adventure of building a communist society. Given this history of labor morality in the Soviet Union, the current aversion to hard work and sacrifices could be seen as an understandable reaction to the traditional Soviet labor culture.

However, the unwillingness to expend personal effort should not be overinterpreted. It should be judged against the backdrop of growing multiple or secondary employment, which shows that Russian workers want not so much to curtail their gross labor efforts and expenditures as to decrease the relative weight of their personal labor efforts needed to produce one item of output for a unit of pay. The current trends might be described as the shift from the lower to higher cost-benefit ratio of the individual's rewards to his/her costs. Hardly justified, therefore, are those commentators who believe that "it is hard to lure a nation like Russia into a chase for more money -- a more sublime goal is needed to get it going." [42] Personal and family prosperity is rapidly turning into a sublime goal that beckons the Russian labor force toward a better future.

Labor-Management Relations

As the official lies about the employees owning the production means have been exposed, the hard-edged truths about wage labor for the state grew more and more evident to the Russian workers. These truths might be painful, but they also have a positive effect on labor, which takes stock of its shared interests and sets out to defend them through their own labor organizations -- independent trade unions, strike committees, workers'

councils, etc. [43] The turning point was the mass strikes by Soviet miners in 1989. These strikes exploded the communist myths about labor as a spiritual need and about the natural harmony prevailing in the labor-management relations under socialism. After decades of submission, Russian state employees moved to assert their group interests. [44]

The dynamics of attitudes toward ownership and industrial management yield ample evidence that the labor force in Russia is not only conscious of its group interests but also willing to act on them. We have mentioned earlier the research on values which demonstrated the salaried workers' central concern with good earnings and personal/family well-being. The same study attempted to gauge the wage-earners' interest in co-managing their enterprises. The respondents were presented with several options, ranging from the readiness to cede to the outside owners all operational control over a given enterprise to the arrangement where the employees own their enterprise and elect their own managers. More than half of Russian respondents preferred an option where they could own their enterprise collectively and appoint their managers. Among the countries which participated in this international survey, this was by far the highest figure. [45]

A closer analysis yields some further insight into the wage-earners' preference for the participation in enterprise management. Among the countries involved in this survey, the ex-socialist entities (Poland , Russia , Belarus , Latvia) are the most committed to the scheme which involves employees in the property ownership and management at their enterprises. As we can see, even the cardinal change in the outlook on ownership and property relations that has occurred in Russia in recent years did not alter the salaried workers' preference for collective forms of privatizing the nation's means of production.

Another sign that hired labor regards its own interests first and foremost can be gleaned from the answer to the following question: "Some say that one should follow instructions of one's superior even when one does not fully agree with them. Others say that one should follow one's superior's instructions only when one is convinced that they are right. With which of these two options do you agree?" The answers included the following options:

"Should follow instructions" (one point)

"First see if they are correct" (three points)

"[It] Depends" (two points)

The "insubordination index" compiled on the basis of these answers shows that the Russian population scored the highest on their readiness to second-guess and defy the managers' decisions. [46] Other ex-socialist countries took the second place in their labor force's readiness to interfere with the management decisions.

The high score that Russian respondents showed on the insubordination scale supports Stark and Burawoy's studies in which the authors examined the management patterns in socialist countries. According to Stark, who studied Hungarian enterprises, the socialist economy combines centralized planning at the national economic level with the market-style haggling between workers and managers at the shop-floor level. [47] Burawoy, who worked at a Russian factory for several months, was amazed at the extent to which the actual labor process under socialism had diverged from the official prescriptions: "From a capitalist perspective it is difficult to understand how such anarchy in production could lead to an enterprise as successful as Polar Furniture. The secret of the capitalist enterprise lies in the managerial control over production, a control entirely absent at Polar [the Russian factory name]." [48]

After decades of neglect suffered from their communist bosses, members of the ex-socialist labor force want to assert their dignity and human rights. They resent the political and trade union leaders who misrepresented their interests in the past, they are fed up with the situation when they are extolled to work hard for a token remuneration, and they are contemptuous of their incompetent bosses. Given these long-standing grievances, one can understand why workers might be trying to carry out their newly found democratic freedoms into the economic sphere. Yet, like workers in capitalist countries, they may have to learn to live with democratic institutions in the political sphere and the autocratic management practices prevalent in a capitalist economy. [49]

Conclusion: Towards a Post-Soviet Labor Ethic

In this chapter, I have tried to show that socialism created its own labor culture, which included specific labor values and labor morality. This labor morality successfully functioned as a mobilizing device during the period of forced industrialization but gradually lost its legitimacy and yielded to unofficial norms that markedly differed from the orthodox doctrine. These changes laid a motivational groundwork for a market economy, which appeared on the micro level way before the macro-social framework for

market economy was in place. What this means, among other things, is that the transformation of the socialist system into a market economy has deep roots in the consciousness of Russian people and is not something artificially imposed on it from without.

The anti-totalitarian revolution brought in its wake a new labor culture which is based on private property on the production assets and, even more importantly, on the real ownership of the individual over his labor force, including his freedom to dispose of it as he sees fit. At the head of the new labor culture is the consumer interests of the worker and his family. Its other relevant component is the close attention that salaried workers pay to the cost-benefit ratio of their work. This norm, which is now being extended to other economic resources besides labor, is akin to personal thriftiness that played such a central role at the dawn of Western capitalism as an element of the protestant ethic.

The new labor morality requires proper ideology to back it up. Fully legitimized labor norms, in turn, could help mobilize labor in the post-Soviet market place. Whether Russia can pull from its present economic crisis and evolve into a prosperous society depends in large measure on the success of this process.

References

This study was supported in part by grants from the International Research and Exchange Board and George Soros Foundation. The author is very grateful to Professor Dmitri N. Shalin for his encouragement and editorial help with this chapter.

1. A. Kasvio, "Work Society in Crisis? Institutional Changes in Working Life and the New Challenges to the Sociology of Work," Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere. *Working Papers*, no. 9 (Tampere, Finland, 1984), p. 2.

2. See G. S. Batishchev, "Man's Active Essence as a Philosophical Principle." In *Problema Cheloveka v Sovremennoi Filosofii* (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1969); Vs. Vilchek, *Proshchanie s Marksom* (Algoritmy istorii) (Moskva: Progress, 1993).

3. *Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1978), Article 60, p. 20. This article was repeated verbatim in the former Constitution of the RSFSR (Moscow:

Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1979), pp. 19-20.

4. "Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR ob Usilenii Borby s izvlecheniem netrudovykh dokhodov, May 23, 1986" in *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR* (Moscow, May 28, 1986), no. 22.

5. V. I. Lenin. "How Shall We Organize Competition?" In *Sobranie Sochinenii*, 5th edition (Moscow: Politizdat Publishers, 1962), Vol. 35, p. 196.

6. For more details see V. E. Gimpelson and A. K. Nazimova, "'The Master of Production': The Dogma and the Reality." *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, no. 8 (August 1991), pp. 22-31.

7. G. A. Kozlov, ed., *Political Economy. Socialism, The First Stage of the Communist Mode of Production*, 3d edition (Moscow: Mysl' Publishers, 1974), p. 115.

8. M. I. Volkov, ed., *Political Economy. Study Book for Economic Colleges and Departments*, 5th edition, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1982), p. 175.

9. G. A. Kozlov (ed.), *Political Economy*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Mysl', 1977), p. 277.

10. D. E. Berlyne, "Motivational Problems Raised by Exploratory and Epistemic Behavior." In S. Koch. *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, Vol. 5 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963). E. L. Deci, *Intrinsic Motivation* (New York: Plenum, 1975).

11. V. A. Yadov, "Labor Attitude: the Conceptual Model and the Actual Trends," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, no. 3 (May, 1983).

12. See B. A. Kozlov, G. A. Bordiugov, E. Y. Zubkova, and O. V. Khlevniuk, *Istoricheskii opyt i perestroika. Chelovecheskii faktor v sotsialno ekonomicheskom razvitii SSSR* (Moskva: Mysl', 1989), pp. 83-84.

13. See V. Ponomarev. "Obshchestvennye volnenia v SSSR: ot XX sezda KPSS do smerti Brezhneva, Informatsionno izdatelskie tsenry "Aziia" i "Levyi Povорот" (1990), p. 4-5; V. Konovalov, Iu. Bepalov. "Postavlena tochka v rassledovanii novoherkasskikh sobytii 1962 goda," *Izvestiia* (June 4, 1994).

14. Paul R. Gregory, "Productivity, Slack, and Time Theft in Soviet Economy," In James R. Millar, ed., *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR. A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 255-260, 273-274.

15. This conclusion runs contrary to the findings of the sociological study *Chelovek i ego rabota*, conducted under the leadership of Dr. Vladimir Yadov (A. G. Zdravomyslov, V. P. Rozhin, V. A. Yadov, eds. *Chelovek i ego rabota. Sotsiologicheskoe issledovanie*, Moskva: Mysl, 1967. In English: A. G. Zdravomyslov, V. P. Rozhin, and V. A. Yadov, eds. *Man and His Work: Sociological Study*, translated by S. P. Dunn, New York, 1970). According to this classic study, it was job content and not salary that mattered the most to young workers. One is tempted to attribute this contrast to the difference between the romantic 60s and pragmatic 70s. However, I think this would be a misinterpretation. The results reported by the above mentioned authors can be more plausibly attributed to the methods they used to measure job values. To measure the subjective value that the worker attached to a particular work facet, the authors calculated the coefficient of covariation between the respondent's over-all job satisfaction and his/her satisfaction with a given work facet. Yet in Russian, the very semantics of the word satisfaction suggests more immediate, direct rewards (in contrast to more instrumental, indirect ones), which is why the intrinsic job facets are apt to produce higher coefficients than intrinsic one. For more detail, see V. S. Magun, *Potrebnosti i psikhologiya sotsialnoi deiatelnosti lichnosti* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), pp. 104-137.

16. V. I. Lenin, "From the Destruction of the Age-Old Structures to the Making of the New," *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 40 (1963, p. 315).

17. K. Marx. "Critique of the Gotha Program," In K. Marx and F. Engels. *Sobranie Sochinenii*, 2nd edition, Vol. 19 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1961), p. 20.

18. V. I. Lenin, "Podgotovitelnye materialy k knige 'Gosudarstvo i revoliutsiia,'" *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 33 (1962, p. 187). The hope to turn labor into a self-propelling activity is akin to a search for a perpetuum mobile. It is characteristic in this respect that communist utopianism included physical utopianism as its vital component.

19. M. Weber. "Protestantskaia Etika i Dukh Kapitalizma." In M. Weber, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia* (Moskva: Progress, 1990).

20. L. A. Gordon and A. K. Nazimova, *Rabochii Klass SSSR: Tendentsii i Perspektivy Sotsialno-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiia* (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1985); L. A. Gordon, "Social Policy in Labor Remuneration," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, no. 4 (July 1987).
21. R. M. Stark. *Sociology* (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1989), pp. 504-505.
22. "Zakon RSFSR 'O predpriatiiakh i predprinimatelskoi deiatelnosti'" in *Vedomosti Sezda Narodnykh Deputatov RSFSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR*, no. 30 (Moskva, 1990).
23. Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Moskva: Iuridicheskaiia Literatura, 1993), p. 14.
24. For further details see D. Slider, V. Magun, and V. Gimpelson, "Public Opinion on Privatization: Republic Differences," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (1991), pp. 256-275.
25. V. S. Magun and A. Z. Litvintseva, *Zhiznennye pritiiazaniia rannei iunosti i strategii ikh realizatsii: 90-e i 80-e gody* (Moscow: Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1993).
26. See Lev Timofeev, "Tekhnologiia chernogo rynka, ili krestianskoe iskusstvo golodat," in Lev Timofeev, *Chernyi rynek kak politicheskaiia sistema. Publitsisticheskoe issledovanie* (Vilnius - Moskva: VIMO, 1993) and "Apparat protiv kapitala. Iskhod etoi bitvy opredelit budushchee derevni" *Izvestiia* (June 16, 1993).
27. Slider, Magun, and Gimpelson, op. cit. This position was endorsed by the democratic press. Such materials as, for instance, the front-page table in the weekly *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 22, (1991), which had a circulation in excess of 20 million, had an impact on the public mentality. This table indicated that in 1989 the leading capitalist countries allotted 55 percent of their GNP to labor remuneration, as against 36 percent in the Soviet Union, whose employees were allegedly working for themselves.
28. Magun and Litvintseva, op. cit., p. 48.
29. *Ekonomika i zhizn* no. 7 (1993).
30. Zerkalo mnenii. *Rezultaty sotsiologicheskogo oprosa naseleniia Rossii za Noiabr 1993g* (Moskva: Institut Sotsiologii Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk,

Tsenter "Sotsioekspress") p. 35.

31. Calculated on the basis of the data gathered by V. A. Mansurov and his associates, "Sotsioekspress" Tsenter, Institut Sotsiologii RAN.

32. "Zakon RSFSR o zaniatosti naseleniia v RSFSR," in *Vedomosti S'ezda narodnykh deputatov RSFSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR*, no. 18 (Moskva, 1991), pp. 516-53).

33. V. L. Kosmarsky, "Bezrobotitsa," in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia* no. 2 (Moskva, 1993), pp. 26-29. See also V. Magun, V. Gimpelson, "Russian Workers' Strategies in Adjustment to Unfavorable Changes in Employment," *Economic and Industrial Democracy. An International Journal*, vol. 14 Supplement (November, 1993), pp. 95-117.

34. See for example V. I. Perevedentsev, "Vosproizvodstvo naseleniia i Sem'ia," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* (no. 2, 1982, p. 80-88).

35. V. E. Gimpelson, O. Y. Kiseleva. "The Breath of Unemployment. Why Did Not Catastrophic Forecasts Come True?" *Vek*, no. 10 (March 18, 1993), p. 7.

36. "Zakon RSFSR o zaniatosti naseleniia v RSFSR," in *Vedomosti S'ezda Narodnykh Deputatov RSFSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR*, no. 18 (Moskva, 1991), Paragraph 1, p. 516.

37. The impact of this trend on youth psychology is discussed in M. Zhamkochian and A. Magun, "Put k sebe," *Znanie Sila* (no. 12, 1992, pp. 10-17).

38. This study was undertaken in 1989 by V. S. Magun and V. E. Gimpelson at a state factory in Taganrog (489 respondents), with a follow-up in 1990 at a cooperative factory in Moscow (289 respondents).

39. The Moscow Region portion of this study was conducted by E. I. Bashkirova and V. S. Magun. V. G. Andreenkov supervised the all-Russia segment of the same study. The questionnaire used in the Moscow Region and Belarus was translated from English by E. I. Bashkirova, V. S. Magun, A. P. Vardomatsky, and V. A. Yadov. The World Values Survey was conducted under the general guidance of Dr. Ronald Inglehart.

40. Magun and Litvintseva, op. cit.

41. Y. A. Levada, "Vektory peremen: sotsiokulturnye koordinaty izmenenii," in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia*, no. 3 (Moskva, 1993), pp. 5-9.

42. M. Antonov, "What's Happening to Us?" *Oktiabr*, no. 8, 1987.

43. To be sure, trade unions existed under the old regime as well, but they did not defend workers' interests against the administration and the state. Trade union leaders were appointed by the party and carried out the policies decreed by the administrations. While their names and rhetoric might have changed, the old trade unions have retained their influence and organizational networks. On the new trade unions in Russia, see L. A. Gordon, *Ocherki rabochego dvizheniia v poslesotsialisticheskoi Rossii. Subektivnye nabliudeniia, soedinennye s popytkoj obektivnogo analiza promezhutochnykh rezultatov issledovaniia* (Moscow, 1993).

44. During a series of studies of Soviet industrial enterprises in the 70s and 80s, we examined the relationship between the employer's satisfaction with the worker's performance) and worker's satisfaction with his/her jobs (indicating how much the employee's interests are satisfied). Our data shows that, for the most part, the two go hand in hand. However, in all samples, we discovered a fair number of cases where high labor efficiency coexisted with low job satisfaction on the part of the salaried worker, and vice versa -- which signaled the gap between labor-management interests. For further detail see V. S. Magun, "Dva tipa sootnosheniia mezhdu produktivnostiu truda i udovletvorennosti rabotoi," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, No. 4 (1983); "The Extended Factor Method," *Ibid.*, no. 1, 1985; "Two Types of Correlations between Labor Productivity and Job Satisfaction," *Soviet Sociology*, Vol. 23, no. 4 (1985); "Work Performance and Job Satisfaction: A Coexistence of Positive and Negative Correlations," In *Research in Soviet Social Psychology* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1986); "The Relationships between Job Performance and Work Satisfaction in Soviet and American Organizations," *Sociological Research*. Translations from Russian, no. 3 (May/June, 1993).

45. Here is the distribution of answers to this questionnaire for Russia and the Moscow Region: "The owners should rule their business or appoint the managers" -- 10 and 13% respectively; "The state should be the owner and appoint the managers" -- 11 and 7%; "The owners and the employees should participate in the selection of managers" -- 16 and

22%; "The employees should own the business and should elect the managers" -- 53 and 54%; "Don't know" -- 10 and 4%. The impact that such attitudes have on the privatization process is discussed in P. Sutela. Insider Privatization in Russia: Speculations on Systemic Change." A paper presented at the 25th Annual Meeting of the AAASS, Honolulu (1993), pp. 19-22.

46. The following is the distribution of all answers for Russia and the Moscow Region: "Should follow instructions" -- 18 and 18% respectively; ""Must be convinced first" -- 54 and 53%; "Depends" -- 24 and 28%; "Don't know" -- 3 and 1%.

47. D. Stark, "Insights on Internal Labor Markets," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51, no. 4, 1986.

48. M. Burawoy and P. Krotov, "The Soviet Transition from Socialism to Capitalism: Worker Control and Economic Bargaining in the Wood Industry," *American Sociological Review*, no. 1 (1992), p. 28. See also M. Leontiev and V. Naishul, "Sushchestvuet ogromnyi spros na poriadok," *Segodnia*, no. 75 (November 6, 1993).

49. Robert A. Dahl, *Vvedenie v ekonomicheskuiu demokratiu* (Moscow: Nauka, ICPA joint venture, 1991).
