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ZINOVYEV ON THE SOCIAL AND AXIOLOGICAL
TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOVIET ADMINISTERIAL ELITE

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Abstract

This article deals with the views of the famous Russian sociologist and philosopher, A.A. Zinovyev (1922–2006) on the Soviet administerial elite and the stages of its evolution. We analyze his perceptions of the ideological bases of this elite's formation, the degree of its association with the society, and the alignment with the people's interests. We studied the Basic social types of administrators typical of the early and the late USSR as described by A.A. Zinovyev. We show that according to him the first, Lenin's stage of administrative elite activities, inspired by the spirit of communism, was headed by convinced communists who relied on the idea of involving the general public in the administration. Their activities were aimed at creating new forms of social life that would ensure social rights and benefits for the working people. According to A.A. Zinovyev, Stalin's administrators retained faith in the communist cause. In this period, the popular rule went together with the party-state and state bureaucracy. The expansion of bureaucracy was controlled and mitigated. We identify Zinovyev's understanding of the purpose, the effects, and the form of Khrushchev's destalinization. We make a lot of destructive social factors and processes that caused the spiritual rebirth, as identified by the sociologist. We note that the methodology of A.A. Zinovyev's study of Soviet reality is related to the ideas of Max Weber and the establishment of the Neo-Kantian approach to the explanation of social evolution as dominated by values.

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1. Introduction

The fate of any country is not created from scratch but rather tends to continue based on the preceding historical periods and administration styles. Thus, the analysis of the Soviet administrative elite by a significant Russian philosopher and sociologist A.A. Zinovyev (1922–2006) is still relevant. Even though he did not have a specific work on the analysis of the Soviet elite, some of his later works, including the *Death of Russian Communism* (2001), *Russian Tragedy* (2002), *On Horseback, Tank, and Armored Car: the Memoirs of a Warrior Philosopher* (2018), etc., he managed to identify the periods of its evolution from the emergence to the disappearance in a deep and original manner. He could demonstrate the development of the Soviet elite in the context of social life as a factor shaping the state and directing its history.

The review of the literature on the topic shows that the social and philosophical aspect of the processes taking place in Soviet society, selected for the analysis in this research, is left out by some authors. Apart from objective studies, some contemporary works feature a simplified understanding of the Soviet administrative elite as completely detached from the people and hostile to them. Some authors study the elite as a purely historical and practical phenomenon with a focus on specific day-to-day problems. There are also works that rely on lop-sided Sovietological traditions and disclose the material opulence and corruption of the Soviet administration, etc. The most significant works in the study of the Soviet elite include those by Mawdsley and White (2011), Matthews (2011), Zolotov (2006), Zubok (2009), Rutland (2009) and others.

2. Problem Statement

This article relies on the late social and philosophical works of A.A. Zinovyev to reconstruct his perception of the Soviet administrative elite, as well as how and why it transformed socially and axiologically (from 1917 to the late 1980s), which resulted in the collapse of the socialist society.

3. Research Questions

This problem stipulates a number of research questions: What was the ideological basis of the formation of the Soviet administrative elite, according to A.A. Zinovyev? What evolutionary periods of the Soviet administrative elite did he identify? To what degree and at which historical stages, according to him, did the Soviet administration use popular rule? When did bureaucracy suppress the popular rule origins of administration? What social types of administrators existed and did they change over the course of the Soviet period? What advantages and disadvantages were associated with the administrative elite over the course of its evolution and why did it not cope with the crisis of the late 1980s? Finally, what methodology did the philosopher rely on when reflecting upon these questions?

4. Purpose of the Study

This research aims to identify the originality of A.A. Zinovyev's social and philosophical interpretation of the Soviet administrative elite in its development. This goal is linked to identifying the role of the social and axiological component in the researcher's concept.

5. Research Methods

1. Our research is based on the social and philosophical understanding of society as an evolving whole whose spiritual life is a key and active development factor.

2. Our research is also based on the general historicism principle stipulating the academic and realistic approach.

6. Findings

Zinovyev (2018) identified the following periods of Soviet communism and Soviet administrative elite evolution: The first one – Lenin's – spans from the October revolution of 1917 up to the death of V.I. Lenin in 1924. The second one – Stalin's – from the death of V.I. Lenin up to the death of I.V. Stalin in 1953. The third one – Khrushchev and Brezhnev's – the period of maturity (1950s to mid-1980s), when the country reached the peak in its growth and development. Finally, the fourth period – Gorbachev and Yeltsin's – begins when M.S. Gorbachev took over in 1985 and ends with the coup led by B.N. Yeltsin.

Speaking of the youth of the new society, Zinovyev (2018) notes that the communist regime in Russia did not emerge by accident. It was a natural result of famine, war, and devastation. The communist cause of the revolutionaries was accepted by the people due to their historical traditions and the international situation. The "spirit of communism" became the crucial driver for the public to build a socialist society. The new state administration based its ideological propaganda on the communist cause, which focused on the future and turned out to be the key factor in the spiritual life of the country.

According to the philosopher, the first Soviet administration was both a result of communist administrator activities and a manifestation of popular rule. The administrative elite relied on the idea of popular self-government and "public creativity". Its leaders tried to involve the majority of the working people in state government and relied on the Soviet form of popular rule that appeared during the first Russian revolution. This period was not about the reorganization of the existing forms but the creation of new forms of social life: new social units, labor teams. Within these forms, new social relationships and new interaction systems emerged. The Lenin's period, as the youth of the new society, according to Zinovyev (2018), was a result of the "grand historical creation of millions of people and not of the implementation of tyrants' evil plots" (p. 23). The administrative activities of the Lenin's stage communists resulted in the birth of a society with a high level of social organization because the majority of the population received social rights and benefits for work, education, healthcare, rest, and pensions, i.e. the satisfaction of basic needs.

When analyzing the features of Stalin's period of administration, Zinovyev (2018) mentioned the existence of a specific duality of power. Stalin's administration used popular rule because people from lower classes could take managerial positions of different levels, yet the party-state and state bureaucratic administration also existed. Its expansion was controlled and mitigated. Bureaucrats were constantly combed out for red-tapism and inertia.

Apart from the administration itself, its structure included something A.A. Zinovyev referred to as "superpower". It was the personal office of I.V. Stalin, a group of affiliated assistants (nomenclature) and state security bodies. Nomenclature as a phenomenon played a crucial role in the Soviet administration. In Stalin's time, it included selected employees that were seen as reliable by the central administration, who controlled large masses of people. The last element of the "superpower", the state security bodies, played an exceptional role. Apart from their duties, they controlled the party-state offices and organized the communication between the leader and the public. Security agencies, like the Soviet administration as a whole, were supported by the people. According to Zinovyev (2020), this period is characterized by the unanimity of administrators and their subordinates. It featured, on the whole, an atmosphere of faith or at least the desire to believe in the communist utopia. The elite of this period was dominated by devoted communists. The establishment of an efficient ideology was an important achievement of Stalin's administration. It promoted the education and control of the multi-million population, as well as their mobilization for the construction of the new society.

Apart from other achievements of Stalin's administrative elite, Zinovyev (2020) mentioned the cultural revolution which was one of the key conditions for the survival of the new society. What tsarist Russia could not do, Soviet Russia did. In education, high standards were established, as well as the value of high culture. Zinovyev believed that the improvement of the education system by the late 1930s helped find people to replace the military servicemen subjected to repressions. He comes to the conclusion that it was Soviet teachers and their graduates that won World War II.

The activities of the public under Stalin's administrative elite resulted in an unprecedented leap in social and cultural development. The previously poor and illiterate country became a global leader. Soviet people were not only spectators but also actors in the quality of life improvement processes. Therefore, presenting this period as "the activities of a group of baddies led by Stalin and their numerous innocent victims is ideological cretinism. In reality, the entire multi-million population was organized into a grand system of power and administration, which relied on popular rule and self-government" (Zinovyev, 2020, p. 61). The downside of the activities of Stalin's elite, according to Zinovyev (2020), was mass repressions as a means of improving society's susceptibility to control. Informing was encouraged by the state. Legalizing the feat of voluntary informing led to the corruption of the public and the approval of treachery, which had very negative results on the inclinations of the Russian elite.

The Khrushchev and Brezhnev period of Soviet administrative elite evolution can be described as destalinization. The parting with Stalin's heritage, according to Zinovyev, took a shameful and treacherous form of kicking the dead lion, which signified that the moral qualities of the elite deteriorated. Zinovyev believed that destalinization was initiated by grassroots party organizations and it was beneficial for a large number of administrators of various levels who wanted to be safe from regular repressions and stabilize their positions. Destalinization architects could not overcome the bureaucratism

and inertia of the existing system of administration. At the time, the state machinery started to gradually refuse the popular rule typical of the preceding stages. Nomenclature members formed a special stratum and enjoyed various privileges. The gap between the incomes of the upper and lower 10% of the USSR citizens was four to one.

By the 1960s, the country became a global leader and people's lives improved together with the entire country. The success of the socialist administration was so great that it scared the West, "which fought against Russian communism since its first days" (Zinovyev, 2020, p. 46). Nevertheless, it was in the post-war period that Soviet administrators first saw the limits of socialist power and social organization of the public. It turned out that the regime that could mobilize the masses to solve extremely complicated problems could not compete with capitalism in economical terms and could not raise the quality of life higher than in the western countries. The Soviet economy itself became more complicated and required new organization methods. The higher administration of the Khrushchev era tried to achieve improvements through "self-financing" and "self-sufficiency" of companies. It decentralized economic management and created the council for the national economy but these actions failed to yield significant shifts in the economy. The Soviet regime started to become increasingly bureaucratic and red-tapist.

During Brezhnev's period, country administration, according to Zinovyev (2020), trailed behind the events happening in the country. He identified three main features of Brezhnev's administration: 1) the complete disappearance of the popular rule; 2) the domination of administrative bureaucracy; 3) the transformation of the party machine into the base and core of the power and management system. The secret of administration in the USSR, according to Zinovyev (2020), was that the higher party machine, being a "superpower", was fully dependent on the people composing it. This is when the historical drama of Russia was played. By the end of Brezhnev's period, the social, moral, and psychological framework of administrators changed. The generation of devoted communists came to pass: they died during the war or of old age. The administration of the country was taken over by people of a different type. These people lost the socialist vision, they were interested in pursuing their careers and obtaining a bundle of special social benefits. Apart from collectivism and unpretentiousness, these people "tended to be inconsistent, cut corners and bluff, lackey to those in power, be certain in their future, and have a low level of proactivity and preparedness to risk", etc. (Zinovyev, 2020, p. 32). The benefits of being born in a specific social group, as well as shrewdness, and the ability to push one's career without having the necessary qualifications, got increasing importance in the higher strata of the society. The new social type of administrator took its shape by the end of Brezhnev's era. The changes in the elite were conditioned by the increasing complexity of the socialist society of the USSR in the 1980s, which experienced a crisis of growth reflected in economic failures. This crisis, according to Zinovyev (2020), did not signify that socialism was defunct and could have been overcome with the available means. However, the powerless elite could not cope with the new challenges. This was complemented by an unprecedented influence of western propaganda on the attitudes in the country, as well as the ideological fiascos.

Zinovyev believed that M.S. Gorbachev played the key role in the social and spiritual events of the time when he became the party leader. His actions led to further deterioration of recruitment policies that resulted in qualitative changes in the administrative elite (up to 61.5 % in Politburo and the CPSU Central Committee Secretariat alone). This led to the accumulation of people in the higher authorities of the

country, who saw material temptations of the West as their ultimate reward. Even though Zinovyev claimed that there was a struggle between those who tried to preserve socialist principles and those who wanted to break them within Gorbachev's elite, the latter turned out victorious. A portion of higher-level administrators were reborn, and they directed Russia towards a counter-revolutionary coup in the elite, which destroyed the administrative basis of Soviet society, the CPSU. In 1991, the leading role of the CPSU in society was canceled. As a result, the entire administrative system collapsed, as well as ideology, economy, labor teams, and culture.

Zinovyev (2017) criticized the opinion that Soviet communism did not have massive support and that, allegedly, Soviet people themselves hated communism. He believed it was more complicated than that. Despite the problems, Soviet state socialism basically turned the country into the second superpower by the 1980s. This signified dashing progress in all areas of life, rather than the standstill. In this context, counterrevolution was only possible if it was creeping and did not disclose the true nature of the events. Each new anti-Soviet step taken by the party leaders was supported by Marxist oaths and did not look counter-revolutionary, and the aggregate of these steps was not revealed immediately. No one spoke of abandoning communism. It was all about actions to improve society. People were tricked and gradually understood that the counter-revolution already happened. Zinovyev (2017) views the actions of Gorbachev's elite as monumental treachery: "the party nomenclature betrayed the entire system of administration and the party itself, as well as the citizens of the country. The Soviet Union betrayed its allies in the Soviet block and the proportion of humanity counted on its support" (p. 41). To eliminate the Soviet regime, market models designed for third-world countries were introduced. As a result, quite soon "the income gap between the higher and the lower 10% of the population became thirty to one" (Zinovyev, 2020, p. 61).

7. Conclusion

A.A. Zinovyev studied the transformation of the Soviet administrative elite, which he understands as ideological and social rebirth. According to him, the subjective factor became crucial in explaining the events in the country. To interpret them, A.A. Zinovyev uses Neo-Kantian methodology that sees the changes of values and the concepts of the proper as the force shaping social evolution. While Max Weber linked the transition of the European society from traditional to modern with the triumph of "the spirit of capitalism", A.A. Zinovyev saw the crises that took place in Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the results of the collapse of the values that inspired the preceding generations of the Soviet administrative elite. The philosopher explains the first stages of the USSR's life and the cultural, economic, and social development leap of the time as the result of the administration's obsession with the communist cause. He saw the regressive evolution of the country as a consequence of the extinction of the spirit typical of the early stage of the Soviet administrative elite and raised the spiritual life of people to the unattainable heights of historical romanticism. Describing the evolution of the elite, Zinovyev shifts from the simplified interpretation of Lenin's and Stalin's periods as the implementation of plots by a group of baddies. On the contrary, their administrations relied on the popular rule, despite all other circumstances. However, after its brilliant victory, Stalin's elite created the possibility of its quitting from the stage of history as the very implementation of the communist idea of material opulence diminished the horizons of

social development to pragmatic problems. Socialist bourgeoisness caused the collapse of the socialist regime. With Brezhnev's era, the popular-rule nature of administration disappears and the social stratum of administrators dreaming of becoming bourgeois expands. In the late 1980s, the absence of a worthy leader who could unite the USSR to solve critical problems, as well as the futility of administrative elite that gave in to the West, the unprecedented influence of the western propaganda, the paralysis of civic consciousness, and the increase in the bourgeois spirit and defeatism, led the country to disintegration.

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