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About Some Social and Structural Outcomes of Institutional Changes in Ukrainian Society¹

Abstract

This article is devoted to consideration of the forth-social effects, which resulted the market institutionalization in post-Soviet Ukrainian society. The main effects are the change of the forms of social alienation and the formation of a socio economic threshold of exploitation, as against the organizational-bureaucratic exploitation inherent in the Soviet society, the displayed social cleavage on a line of the social alienation and the socio economic exploitation, the active symbolical struggle for legitimization of the specific discourses of the market, and the formation of a class system of the post-Soviet society as a system of the alternative social forces. These effects become the result of an indemnification of those structural — cultural “failures”, which were comprised by a social system of a Soviet type. The author confirms that the post-socialist transformation has been developed as a spontaneous process of “alignment” of social space, before pulled together to one social pole — “nomenclature” class. Thus the “alignment” is a returning of the social space to a complex, emergence, dynamic balance, which is inherent to the complex social phenomenon. The author considers the market institutionalization as a compensator reaction of a Soviet type of industrial society, which exhausted its internal resources and was compelled to rush in search of other necessary resources of development. It is considered in what way the social cleavage is institutionalizing in the forms of a specific class position and practice.

¹ Translated from the Ukrainian text “Pro deiaki sotsiostrukturni naslidky instyutsiinykh zmin v ukrainskomu suspilstvi”, *Sotsiologhiia: teoriia, metody, marketynh*, 2000, ¹ 2, pp. 26–32.

The institutionalization of market elements and formation on this basis of specific social resources and socio-economic positions has become the major result of the transformation process and reform policy in post-soviet societies in the last years. What does this mean for society? Or, what social effects become consequences of these institutional changes? It seems that these questions have the fundamental character of changing social space. And adequate answers to them are impossible without understanding the complex genesis and qualitative features of occurring socio-economic changes. These changes, on the one hand, become the result of an indemnification of those structural and cultural “failures”, which were comprised by a social system of the soviet type, and on this basis the occurrence of new features appear as an alternative to the soviet system. On the other hand, they comprise some features of a society of the soviet type. Such social inversions not simply impose a serious print, but determine a post-soviet society, which is revealed both in structural, and in cultural measurements. It is also possible to consider the institutionalization of elements of market relations to be compensatory reaction of the soviet type of industrial society, which exhausted its internal resources and was compelled to rush in search for other necessary resources of development.

As a major social feature of the soviet type of society, it is possible to consider the deformed character of social structure, which followed naturally the restrained economic and authority relations. The totality of a state pattern of ownership and party-bureaucratic structures of authority became both a factor, and a result of the domination in soviet society of the unique real social class — “nomenclature”. From our point of view, it possessed all attributes of a class as a real social force having specific resources, habitus, and the ability to act rationally and to influence the society. These traits were inherent to the given social formation. There was no real alternative to the nomenclature class, as it dominated the total social mass. This mass was not heterogeneous and was structured more on horizontal, than on vertical connections. The social layers, shown in it, were in a dependent position from state organizations (industrial, distributive, supervising, etc.) as original suzerains and did not have sufficient economic, social and symbolical resources for influence on public processes. At the same time they were in the condition of social alienation because of their inability to influence processes of social changes. The looseness of social situation of the soviet type of society consisted just in such non-alternative domination of the nomenclature class. It was a society alienated from itself, not recognizing itself in prod-

ucts of own functioning and by virtue of this compelled to create a specific mythology justifying “beyond-mirroriness” of its own reality.

Indeed the post-socialist transformation of the society also has been developed as a spontaneous process of “alignment” of social space, before pulled together to one social pole. Thus we understand “alignment” as a returning to a complex, multi-regular, emergence, dynamic balance, which is inherent to the complex social phenomenon. Such a compensatory process has become possible on the basis of the simultaneous process of privatization, the institutionalization of the market elements, and democratic relations. The “market energy” of the society that was earlier latent in a “shadow” and squeezed by powerful layers of soviet institutional barriers receives an active output in these processes. The output of such energy is displayed in an active search of channels, forms of realization of a market-guided, active and cultural potential of society. In the structural context it finds expression in the accumulation of specific social positions and social practices, which are determined by resources, that ensure competitiveness. These processes demonopolized socio-economic positions traditional for the soviet society. The strengthening of the institutional pressure of the “market energy” has caused a partial destruction, including marginalization, the action and cultural positions of an extra-market orientation, and the resistance of their carriers. In this situation some essential social consequences are displayed.

Indeed, the *first*. The change in forms of social alienation and formation of a socio-economic threshold of exploitation, as opposite to the organizational-bureaucratic exploitation inherent to the soviet society, becomes an effect of such development. Thus this is an example of “exploitation”, after J.Roemer [1], that can be understood as an opportunity of getting benefit, which certain groups receive through their access to the superfluous social goods, which they acquire to the detriment of other groups included in joint activity.

The alienation in the soviet society, as a matter of fact carrying a total character, at the same time functions in the symbolical transformed forms. These forms, camouflaged by means of ideology the real contents of these relations, legitimated there and by that did not create social problems of overcoming the alienation. The total social alienation was overcome during the institutionalization of market relations and specific market resources. At the same time, a scale of spreading social alienation remains wide. The absence of access for a significant part of population to the productive resources and resources of influence, a sta-

ble gap between carriers of the authority and all other society are an objective basis. The feelings of social powerlessness, social exclusion, a loss of sense of life and self-dismiss from a society are the subjective expression of alienation [2]. According to the data of the Ukrainian Institute of Sociology (for 1998 — 1999) more than 70% of the population of Ukraine experienced the feeling of full or partial social unclaimed, more than one third of them unsatisfied by their own social output [3]. Such social environment stimulates a problem of overcoming the social alienation, disputed perception of social relations by those who experience any forms of the alienation from the society. The given ground has been a source of a protest social mobilization. Besides such environment forming the structural and cultural positions of poverty raises and stimulates expansion of the social exclusion phenomenon. The exclusion, using the idea by A. Giddens, reflects “the mechanism, removing group of people from a main social flow” [4].

Second. The modernization of the main social cleavages (by St. Rokkan [5]), that existed in the soviet period in the latent and distorted forms, becomes a consequence of some open forms of social alienation, that promote the protest social mobilization and social exclusion. There is a split between the action and cultural positions, one of which is focused on the market mechanisms of social participation, and the other is focused on the public or community support and on the appropriate mechanisms of social inclusion. These positions create various social worlds submitted by various social actors, their habitus and praxis. The positions of the first world are connected to orientation to the life success and individual resources of its achievement (about 15% of the population of Ukraine, according to the data of the monitoring by the Institute of Sociology); the positions of the second world connected with orientation to a survival and to the extra-personal conditions of its maintenance (about 60% of the population [3, p. 201]). The representatives of the first world, on behalf of a significant part of the officials, businessmen and entrepreneurs, and also those who can be defined as “Mafia” (according to the mass attitudes of the Ukrainian population), play the essential role in determination of the public policy; the social influence of “others” is insignificant. One social world is focused on the complete social transition to the market, the other one is focused on return to the previous social type — “before the Perestroika”: the weight of the given worlds is, accordingly, more than 20% and about 40% of the Ukrainian population [3, p. 188].

Third. The active symbolical struggle for the market discourse legitimization became a modus for two social worlds, their dispositions, resources and practices. For the post-soviet society a new phenomenon has become not as much the market relations, which transformed or undeveloped forms existed in the soviet condition, but, first of all, a discourse of a market. The informal discourse of the “blat”, the gamble, the barter as forms of the “black” market exchange, the privileges, etc., reflected the reality of informal economic relations in the soviet society; in the transforming period it was legalized, advanced, cleared from the numerous perverted forms. This discourse has received other nominations in a semantic field of the enterprise initiative and was essentially extended in the new forms. At the same time it leaves a significant “trace” of semantic field of the “black” economy and still continues to exist together with the anti-market discourse. The concentrated expression of these discourses is the positive or negative social estimation of the market mechanisms and the private business. According to the last indicator, the ratio of prevalence of these discourses in Ukrainian society in 1999 looked as 46:26 that represents about inverse ratio on the indicator of an estimation of the market mechanisms [3, p. 186]. A steady domination of one of these discourses will mean the end of the socio-economic transition of the post-soviet society to any qualitative certainty.

Fourth. The symbolical opposition in the struggle for resources and legitimization of discourses receive the brightest expression in the political form, especially during the electoral campaigns. In such social opposition there is a formation of a class system of the post-soviet society as a system of alternative social forces articulating own interests, taking place in dynamic interaction with ability to influence essentially the process of social transformation.

The social cleavages, existed in post-soviet Ukraine and, probably, in other similar societies, are the grounds for formation of the basic potential class positions allocated above and under the threshold of possible social alienation and social and economic exploitation, which reflect the opposite market and work situations (by J. Goldthorpe [6]) and produce various habitues and social practices. Both social formations, that occupy these positions and acting carriers of social cleavage, are numerous and create organizational mechanisms of activity. The accumulated opposition between them gives powerful splashes under the electoral campaigns. Such displays allow defining these social formations, having essential social force, as the (proto-) class formations with the mar-

ket and extra-market orientations. These formations are non-uniform internally and are in the class forming process now. The formation of class is not realization of a consecutive chain: some resources — structural positions — consciousness — action. It is, by A.Giddens and P.Bourdieu [7; 8], a result of the process of mutual definition of the structure and culture, the structure and action finding its expression in the mutual spontaneous coordination of social actions those who occupies some similar social positions and has similar motivation structure of consciousness. The social prospects of these class formations are differing.

These distinctions are well seen through the empirical data received by sociological surveys in Ukrainian society. The identification of these class formations in the urban social space was carried out by the cluster analysis with using of the following indicators: the orientation to the alternative ideals of a social device (soviet model of the socialism or the capitalism), the preference of the economic development way (anti-market, market, mixed), the attitude to the social inequalities (admit or non-admit), the estimation of social role of the private business (positive or negative). The effective criterion of differentiation of these social formations is the distinctions in perception of the social justice (on a scale of the communal or liberal values).

The class formations with the market orientation distinguish the active social inclusion to the society. They unite, first of all, individuals, who have some combinations of the socially significant resources (organizational, property, cultural, social capitals, authority, human resources, etc.), which can be used nowadays in achievement of the individual life success. The primary social structure of this group includes sub-elite groups, employers, chiefs and managers of large enterprises, the top public officials and administrators (including a regional level), businessmen of a different categories, and also significant part of the experts and university students. The overwhelming part of this group could take advantage of new opportunities, which have appeared in the society in process of the market relations institutionalization, and ensure rather good life chances for themselves. The significant part of this group has managed to convert the organizational and social resources, which they had earlier, into economic (first of all, through the mechanisms of the nomenclature privatization), cultural (through purchase of additional competitive knowledge and skills), symbolical (through positions in the structures of political influence and authority), and also additional social ones. The consolidation of this class

positions (with the relative exception of students) occurs on the basis of active development of social networks, associations and organizations, stylizing social practice. At the same time, the group does not represent the entire class formation. The life styles, models of social practice of the post-nomenclature social fragments, proprietors, employers and experts differ appreciably. Whether they will generate the independent class formations, or there will be a coordination of their social actions — these questions can become a subject of the next sociological investigation.

The alternative social formation with the extra-market orientation looks differently. It unites the individuals experiencing the subjective social alienation which is revealed, on the one hand, through the attributes of the social powerlessness, the self-discharge and exclusion, and, on the other hand, through the social protest, expression of anger and indignation concerning the existing social order. Contrary to the previous social groups, the action potential of this proto-class formation is not so strong. The mobilization force of this group is realized not as much through traditional forms of social action, but through the protest character of actions and visibility of the offered social alternative. This group has much lower size of the social significant resources and this creates the objective conditions for exploitation of them. The social structure of this group consists of different categories of workers (skilled and unskilled), the supervisors at the state enterprises and in bodies of the public service offices, and also the pensioners. Their social experience, available resources and the life chances are directly reflected on social dispositions and practices.

If social practice of the first group is focused on the achievement of life success, the positions and forms of actions connected with survival are characteristics of the second group. These are opposite social worlds.

Thus the displayed social cleavages on the social alienation line and the socio-economic exploitation are possible to be considered the major feature of the post-soviet transformation at least of Ukrainian society. These cleavages are institutionalized in the forms of specific class practice and are the basis for creation the post-soviet class system. Whether we receive fastening of this social practice in the forms of the inter-generation mobility, whether they get social stability — these questions require the next special studies.

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