

1991: A Look at Events 30 Years Later

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WAS THE GEOPOLITICAL CATASTROPHE OF THE USSR MAN-MADE?

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Abstract. *The article analyzes causes, conditions and factors of the 1991 events, which became the starting point for the collapse of the USSR, liquidation of the first socialist state and rejection the possibility to realize socialism and communism ideas. Various attempts are analyzed from different worldview and ideological positions to explain the course that returned Russia to the capitalist path of development. Challenging and rejecting many of these explanations, produced under the influence of both purposeful and speculative reasoning and spontaneous conscientious delusions, the article focuses on the absence in most publications and political statements of an analysis of such key factors as ignoring the will of the people and scholarly conclusions and recommendations that focused on rational, balanced and reasonable means and methods of overcoming the crisis-ridden state of society. A significant place is given to the subjective factor – poverty of imagination, limited vision, primitive thought of those ruling the country who failed to offer a scientifically grounded development strategy. As a result, the country evolved in the framework neither of a revolutionary, nor an evolutionary path, but embarked on a turbulent, chaotic and contradictory path of development leading to what the author calls society of trauma. In conclusion, it is stated that the geopolitical catastrophe was largely man-made, caused by subjective factors that played a decisive role in the destruction of a great country. These conclusions are based on the results of 1985–1991 all-Union studies of social consciousness carried out by sociologists of the then Academy of Social Sciences under the Central Committee of the CPSU.*

Keywords: *USSR, socialism • capitalism • perestroika • revolution • evolution • social consciousness • soviet man*

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On December 8, 1991, agreements were signed in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, fixing the words of G. Burbulis, a confidant of Boris Yeltsin: “The Soviet Union as a geopolitical reality ceases to exist.” Quite naturally, the question arises: how can a state that was one of the most powerful in the world end its existence by a will of a group of high-ranking officials? After all, the USSR was an objective reality, which even its enemies did not doubt. But, nevertheless, this happened. Why did this become possible?

Despite numerous explanations of the conditions and causes of this disaster, the truth has not yet been fully perceived. In our opinion, this is due to the fact that these attempts almost

always exclude the state and trends in the development of public consciousness, orientation and public opinion, ignoring to some extent the fact that the arbiter of the fate of their country were always masses of the people. In our opinion, the statement of the philosopher A. Nekless: "Historical transformations are preceded by a revolution of consciousness as a transformation of a worldview, social mentality, methods of cognition together with the correction of practice and lifestyle" [Nekless, 2019: 9]. They determine the course of history, despite the contradictory zigzags in the public consciousness and behavior.

However, why did not the will of the people come to the fore in 1991, but the judgments and actions of the "perestroika" state bodies, as well as various groups and associations which expressed the aspirations of small social groups aimed at eliminating socialism?

How the disaster was explained/justified. So, 1991 is a geopolitical catastrophe, which led to the disappearance of one of the world powers, which for more than 70 years personified a fundamentally different – socialist – system. This milestone also meant the destruction of the Soviet economy and the principles of its functioning. The social and political face of the country was radically changed. The existence of such a phenomenon as the "Soviet man" was questioned, which, despite various interpretations, was a reality, manifesting itself both in fundamentally new worldview positions and in real historical practice. We want analyze the existing points of view on explaining the causes of this geopolitical catastrophe as a start of our research. First, there were attempts to completely reject everything connected with Marxism, with its Leninist embodiment in the October Revolution of 1917, with the implementation of plans to build a new economy, culture, and the creation of new social relations. Everything was rejected as both theory and practice (for more information, see, for example [Gaidar, 1994; 2005]). The French sociologist A. Berelovich, commenting on the ideas of these books, wrote that they "contain insufficiently substantiated statements, arbitrarily selected data and outright disregard for factual material that does not fit into the author's concept." He sees the main drawback of E.T. Gaidar's books in the "rigid economic determinism inherent in his thinking, which eliminates the problem of choosing one or another alternative, as well as, importantly, the problem of the responsibility of a political figure" [Berelovich, 2005]. In such works (as by most neoliberal politicians), the author's ideas were presented from pretentious positions, everything had to be done differently. For justification, the authors borrowed the postulates of the Chicago School of Economics, which denies state regulation, ignoring the fact that its recommendations were not consistently got even in the United States. But these recommendations were not only formulated, but also implemented in the new Russia, showing the dubious usefulness of both the defended theory and the implemented practice. It is characteristic that the most prominent representative of this trend, A.B. Chubais, who defiantly left the CPSU, used such hard words as it is necessary to "hammer the last nail into the coffin of the Communism". Of course, with such a hypercritical assessment, reformers could find nothing positive in the country's previous experience.

Secondly, there were many who blamed the inefficient Soviet economic system for everything, they applied various techniques to this. At first, these were accusations against the stagnation during the Brezhnev rule. This was followed by criticism of industrialization and collectivization, five-year plans for the development of the national economy, decisions to create military industry [Inozemtsev, 1998; Aven, Koch, 2013].

Thirdly, among the arguments of those who justified the inevitability of the collapse of the USSR, there are arguments blaming the political system, the one-party system, and specific leaders of the CPSU for everything. The events of the "bloodthirsty" Civil War, the policy of "dekulakization" (repressions against rich peasants), the persecution of the intelligentsia, the great purge in 1937–1938, the Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact, the failures of the first months of the Great Patriotic War, arbitrary zigzags in Khrushchev's policy, Brezhnev's detachment from active actions, Gorbachev's feverish behavior were used for this accusation. All this merged into a continuous disjointed, spontaneous, poorly justified political activity, which poorly or completely did not take into account objectively emerging reality. Within the framework of this

approach principles of selection and functioning of the party and state nomenclature, activities of public organizations, ideological work, and the direction of international politics were rejected. Among the works of supporters of this direction, the publications of the former secretary and member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU A.N. Yakovlev were particularly distinguished, A.N. Yakovlev used the most offensive definitions to the party within which he was responsible for ideological work [Yakovlev, 2001; Toshchenko, 2016: 113–151].

Fourthly, there are many who laid the main blame for this catastrophe on the policy of “perestroika” and its initiator Mikhail Gorbachev, who, although he felt the need for significant changes, however, could not offer a well-thought-out strategic program of transformation, replacing it with brilliant uncertainties (such as “new thinking”, “European house”, “glasnost”, “human rights”, etc.). Such an outstanding thinker as A.A. Zinoviev, who sharply criticized the vices of the Soviet system in his book “Yawning Heights” (1976), repeatedly said later: he was not against socialism, not against the Soviet system – he wanted to free the country from pressing problems, to improve the lives of Soviet people. Moreover, he bitterly admitted that if he had known that this book and similar works would contribute to the collapse of the USSR, he would not have written them. In the book “Katastroika” (1989) Zinoviev sharply condemned and rejected Gorbachev’s policy of shying away, uncertainty and incompetence [Zinoviev, 2003; Akhiezer, 1997; Butenko, 1990].

Fifthly, various conspiracy theories have become widespread, with the help of which the deliberate activities of the foreign backstage (including both official and intelligence policies), as well as the actions of “internal enemies” in the form of an explicit or spontaneous “fifth column” were proved [Latysh, 2015; Platonov, 2015: 3]. Of course, the hostile policy of the West (first of all, the United States) played a significant role in shaking the foundations of the USSR, in destroying the image of the socialism. However, this was not the main and far from the only reason for the disappearance of the Soviet Union. After all, although the USSR was constantly subjected to various kinds of “ideological diversions”, until the end of the 1980s there were always forces and opportunities to successfully resist them.

In conclusion, we should mention the position that the people themselves rejected the Soviet government, did not want to cooperate with the Communists. Moreover, the people, they say, constantly criticized the policy of “perestroika”, its economic reforms and attempts at political rearrangement, since the changes undertaken did not lead to an improvement in life. In fact, the Soviet people demanded the implementation of the promises proclaimed by Gorbachev. More and more people agreed that “it is impossible to live like this” (the title of the film by the famous film director S. Govorukhin). Other accusations were also made against the people suffering from “a kind of political insanity” [Tsipko, 2020: 8]. However, did criticism, even the most severe, mean that people wanted to overthrow the Soviet government, but not to improve it?

Let’s consider results of sociological research as a base for understanding. Our further conclusions and assumptions are based on the data of the All-Union sociological studies conducted in 1985–1991 by the team of sociologists of the AON (Academy of Social Sciences) under the Central Committee of the CPSU. During this period studies were carried out, including in the monitoring mode, of economic, political, moral and historical public consciousness, which showed the mood of the population of the USSR from the first years of the beginning of the proclaimed transformation. These studies covered from 3 thousand to 4.7 thousand people in 10–18 regions of the country according to a representative sample. The uniqueness of research of this scale is evidenced by the fact that in the late Soviet period, nothing similar was carried out by any of the academic or university institutions.

Their main result was that they showed the complexity and ambiguity of the attitude of the Soviet people to the events taking place in the life of the country. First, the Soviet people pinned great hopes on the proclaimed course for the restructuring of the country’s development. Secondly, in the course of its implementation, as a result of an inept and erroneous course, criticism of this gradually grew: people expressed dissatisfaction with its implementation

and, first of all, with the changes in their occupations and everyday life. Thirdly, they did not lose hope that the erroneous actions of the authorities could be changed, and therefore they intensified their participation in solving those problems that directly concerned them.

The opinion of the people about the real and future existence of the Soviet state.

So, what kind of problems did worry people in the 1980s, in the final years of the existence of the Soviet state? Were they aimed at denying the Soviet system? Let us first consider the evolution of real socio-economic expectations.

Let's start with the source data. Already the first study (April 1986–4,075 people, 934 experts, 11 regions) showed that the majority of Soviet people welcomed the policy of "perestroika", expressed hope for successful transformations, sincerely supported the proclaimed course for implementing long-overdue changes. First of all, it should be noted that the majority of the people discussed the planned measures to restructure the economy: 67.5% of people constantly (and another 28.7% sometimes) talked about them with colleagues at work or in the circle of relatives. An interest for the "perestroika" program was great: 84.2% drew information about it from TV shows, 77.3% from central newspapers. This was a reaction to the statement of Gorbachev, the new General Secretary of the CPSU, who promised to make significant policy adjustments to radically improve the Soviet people life. At this initial stage people understood that it was impossible to immediately achieve impressive results in implementing the ideas of "perestroika", but they sincerely expressed hope that many things would change for the better in the near future. This was especially true of expectations in the field of labor relations, their position directly at work: 37.5% believed that they could realize their abilities better at work, and 65.8% claimed that they could work with even greater efficiency with improved working conditions and organization. Hence, it was concluded that the Soviet people did not limit themselves to verbal support, but took the initiative, believing that they were thereby making their personal contribution to the policy of perestroika supported by them [Perestroika of Economic Consciousness..., 1987: 30, 32].

However, "business" followed. One of the first actions was proclaimed a restructuring of heavy industry, this recalls for comparison that the PRC was coming out of the legacy of Mao Zedong by the primary transformation of agriculture in order to feed the entire population of a country. This was followed by an ill-conceived anti-alcohol campaign that caused great economic and social damage, which created a huge financial hole in the state budget. The seemingly attractive calls to reduce the alcoholization of the population were followed by the destruction of vineyards, a depleting factories, an unhealthy hype around the availability of alcoholic beverages. Although the first one and a half to two years there were victorious reports about the reduction of mortality from declined consumption of vodka and wine, about increasing the birth rate and reducing diseases, it soon became clear that instead of a well-thought-out policy, hasty laws were adopted without consulting people and especially experts. But at this time and earlier there was on the pages of the press an active work to promote the so-called cultural drinking, which would be a more worthy way.

The reaction to these actions of the country's leadership was the first doubts about the fruitfulness of the perestroika policy. 2741 respondents, 668 production managers within 7 regions had the opportunity to evaluate the first results of the state's policy. And here sociologists are faced with a surprise: the number of people who positively thought about changes in economic and industrial life has decreased by one and a half to two times. If in 1986 27% saw the beginning of positive changes, in 1988 only 9% of respondents did this. A similar pessimistic collective opinion was about the organization of labor, 29 and 19%, respectively, declared its improvement, working conditions 21 and 13%, respectively, labor discipline 88 and 54%, respectively [Economic consciousness..., 1989: 23]. The responses of production managers have also changed in approximately the same proportion. Why did this happen?

In our opinion, a gap had got ground between the managerial efforts of the authorities and the real state of affairs. There were in the upper echelons of power hard discussions about what and how to do to implement the planned tasks. But these noisy discussions "at the top"

did not affect in any way what was happening in the grassroots production organizations. It was during this study, in an interview with one of the respondents, that this situation received an accurate assessment "there is noise upstairs, but we have silence". In other words, there were the first and justified doubts about the effectiveness of "perestroika", which called into question the ability of the authorities to skillfully solve problems posed by life and to rule of the country during a crisis, and not plunge the Soviet state into an even more dangerous situation.

Further steps of the political leadership only aggravated a hard situation. There was with the further implementation of "perestroika" an increasing number of problems. Gorbachev and his supporters feverishly searched, proposed and even implemented some very often ill-conceived-provisions, instead of taking fundamentally new, cardinal and urgent measures to transition to market relations, the need for which many Soviet people were beginning to recognize. Gorbachev and his team were unable to generate ideas, to offer society effective way to solve urgent problems, as did Deng Xiaoping (China), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore) and Mahathir Mohamad (Malaysia). Instead, there were patchwork extra-systemic laws that were externally focused on solving a certain fundamental problem, but, being not linked to other problems, led to the collapse of the entire Soviet economy. This was especially evident in connection with the adoption and implementation of the Law "On Cooperation" (1988). Its implementation has brought irreparable damage: The so-called cooperatives began to extract resources from state enterprises, laying the foundation for plundering of the national wealth of the country, which led to the disorganization of production. This act, despite its external attractiveness, brought huge losses.

Because instead of improving the economy people saw a deteriorating situation, critical assessments of the reconstruction began to prevail in the minds of people to an increasing extent. It was a study in the 1989, when only 7% already considered themselves the owners of their enterprise (in 1986–28%, in 1988–11%). And this assessment is not surprising, since, according to employees and specialists, as a result of chaotic transformations, mismanagement increased (according to 26% in 1986, 42% in 1989). At the same time, there was a deterioration in the estimates of other indicators: if 44% of respondents spoke about improving the organization of labor in 1986, 28% in 1988, then only 20% in 1989%; and in terms of working conditions – 30, 22 and 17%, respectively [Economic consciousness..., 1989: 42, 44]. In our opinion, this is a consequence of chaotic decisions to find a way out of the current negative situation in the country's economy and the deteriorating indicators of the development of the national economy.

This conflict of interests of the people and official policy has increased every year. In 1990 62% of respondents said that the economic policy was wrong, and the same 61% said that the economic situation was very bad. It was during this period that the issue of the shortage of goods became acute: difficulties with the purchase of food products were noted by 70%, industrial goods 82%, household services – 54% [People and economy..., 1990: 61, 62, 68, 74]. Moreover, such painful manifestations as mafia groups and organizations were identified and began to be felt by 46% (!) of respondents. The main thing is that by 1990, people were losing hope for the future in their expectations: only 2% positively believed in the possibility of economic improvement in the next one or two years, while 53% rejected such a likely prospect. And if we add to this 36% of those who did not express own opinion, then we can say that already in 1990 the collapse of "perestroika" was clearly marked. In other words, an incomprehensible economic policy created all the conditions for the destruction of the economy, which the people felt very acutely.

The apotheosis was the collective mind expressed in 1991 about the economic policy being implemented, when 41% recognized it as wrong, another 31% rather wrong than correct. In other words, by this time the people were disappointed in the measures taken to restructure the economy and actually turned away from this policy. The public mood continued to deteriorate: 46% agreed that there was a collapse of the ruling the national economy, 48% were concerned about the rising prices. New worries appeared and began to grow, which did not

exist before: almost every second (44%) expressed fear of losing job due to the working places cuts which had begun. This was also manifested in the fact that to the question "Who, in your opinion, can protect a "simple" person at the present time?" 51% of respondents answered "no one" [A person and market..., 1991: 15, 17, 138, 143, 144].

Did these data mean that people opposed the Soviet government? Their analysis shows that, while criticizing many actions of the authorities in the economic sphere and giving them a negative assessment, people were still aimed at improving the existing social situation. It was in accordance with this understanding of the prospects for development that they proposed ways and methods to solve the problems that concern them. In particular, a survey of the population in March 1991 showed that the activity of the population to develop proposals for overcoming the crisis had increased. A positive attitude towards the market was growing as people saw in it some promise for solving urgent problems. It was the hope for the market that was manifested in the fact that 43% of respondents believed that they would increase the intensity and quality of their work in these new circumstances (in May 1990, only 26% thought so), and 39% pinned their hope on competition from which consumers would benefit.

In this regard, it is necessary to cite the following impressive fact: in 1990, when asked whether it was necessary to switch to market relations, 28% of the population expressed a positive attitude towards this [Political struggle..., 1990: 7]. Surprisingly, at that time we had an incident that was rejected by officials: in this survey, 44% of Communists supported the idea of the need to introduce market relations. It turns out that ordinary communists (there were more than 18 million of them at that time) were more advanced in professional and civil awareness of the importance of such a decision. It was the ordinary communists, and not the leadership of the CPSU, which more realistically represented and understood the urgent needs of the period.

There were also other well-founded proposals on the transfer of enterprises to the ownership of labor collectives. Such measures as improving the principles of voting for the election of deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were proposed and even implemented, which, however, had an ambiguous effect. But it was a search, testing of the most different options for transforming work and everyday life. Already in 1989 42% of people agreed with the need to recognize the institution of private property. There were numerous proposals for an organization of market trade, farming, additional measures to force the military industry to switch to the production of civil goods (conversion). In other words, the people were full of confidence in the possibility of transformations within the framework of the existing policy: their proposals fully fit to the principles of the socialist structure of society. However, the measures taken by the state's leadership steadily led to a catastrophe.

Politics as a field of approbation of ideas of the USSR catastrophe. Zigzags and failures in the economy were simultaneously accompanied by perturbations in the field of politics. It was the political processes that became one of the main factors that had determined the fate of the country.

"Perestroika" in politics began with the proclamation of a course for the development, strengthening and improvement of democracy, which became an inspiring force for many people. Its first indicator was the proclamation of publicity¹ as a key link in the upcoming transformation of the Soviet society. And this was welcomed by most people. It was already 1987, when 32.2% respondents noted that publicity really exists and gives its fruits in the form of access to any information of interest to people. For the first time in the USSR, Soviet people had the opportunity to discuss any issues, including activities of the country's leaders. There were practically no forbidden subjects. It was possible to discuss everything and everyone. And this pleased many persons. It is enough to say that millions people "stuck" to the TV screens, watching programs which showed the meetings of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and then the RSFSR, these programs were previously uninteresting and unattractive. In other words, this aspect of the transformation fully corresponded to the interests of the Soviet people. However, at the same time, the first inconspicuous process of destroying the worldview of the Soviet people was gaining strength. And it began with a simple question: was everything all right in the history of the Soviet state?

¹ "glasnost" – free expression of one's views in media

First, the theme of the tragic years of 1937–1938 appeared, which, along with giving voice to crimes, gave rise to arbitrary, and sometimes downright fantastic fabrications about the number of victims. The idea of the criminality of the entire Soviet history began to form implicitly. This was served by a distorted account of collectivization, the Kronstadt rebellion, the peasant uprising in the Tambov province and many other things that were given for the struggle against the Soviet communist regime. Fabrications about the history of the Great Patriotic War and the Great Victory allegedly obtained by “piling up corpses” contributed to the aggravation of the negative mood. Gradually, they came to the outright denial of the October Revolution of 1917 as almost a political robbery, from which the conclusion was drawn about the illegitimacy of the Soviet statehood.

In parallel, there was a massive offensive in the field of theory against the foundations of socialist ideas. Moreover, this undermining of the ideas of socialism was also carried out gradually. At first, they looked for the “true” foundations of socialism from G.V. Plekhanov, not forgetting to mention his divergence from Lenin and his non-recognition of the “October revolution”. Then they looked for “fruitful” ideas of N. Bukharin and even L. Trotsky. Then the search for vices and mistakes in the work and activity of Lenin began. Starting from the denial of his contribution to a development of Marxism and ending with the “analysis” of notes or random words on current events in the first years of the Soviet state [Kotelenets, 2017: 39]. And all this is to show the artificiality of the Soviet government and the need not just to abandon the Soviet past, but also to develop a fundamentally different path of a development. It was especially difficult for I.V. Stalin, who was charged with all sins, the sins real and imaginary, in order to show that a criminal was at the head of the country.

How did the people react to these actions of the opponents of the Soviet system? Agreeing with many critical remarks and even supporting them, the Soviet people made the opposite conclusion: not to overthrow the Soviet system, but to improve it. Among the achievements of the first years of “perestroika”, 51.4% named the opportunity to express their opinion, 41.4% – to vote for their candidate in the elections, 35.6% to express their opinion critically about any processes in society. 27.7% of respondents spoke positively about such an implemented measure as the election of the state’s head. It is very important to note that the verbal approval of the measures taken was manifested in the assessment 42.5% said that they had the opportunity to realize themselves, 37.1% made suggestions and critical comments on improving life and work in their organizations, their settlement, and the country [Perestroika of economic consciousness..., 1987: 30–35, 42–45].

A study in November 1989 (1,360 people, 8 regions) demonstrated that from the absolute hope and confidence that the state’s politicians wanted to implement the desired changes, the public consciousness began to be inclined to disappointment in their ability to realize the declared goals. Every year the doubt grew, and then the rejection of the proposed measures. In this study, 50% of the population (and what is especially striking 2/3 of the communists) began to deny the existence of the success of perestroika [Political consciousness..., 1989: 6, 8]. It was this study that for the first time showed that the party *de facto* lost the right to its monopoly position in the country. Further studies (June 1990, 1,433 people) showed that negative assessments of the CPSU’s activities began to prevail over positive ones (by 9.3 percentage points). According to 61% respondents, the policy pursued by the state’s leadership is incomprehensible to them, it is confused and contradictory. In other words, in the political views of the population, the opinion about the inability of the political power to solve the goals began to prevail. The political consciousness of the population had also evolved-from rosy hopes to complete disappointment and even rejection, but without losing hope that this can be corrected and improved.

So, the political consciousness of the Soviet people was at a crossroads. This was getting worse as the state’s leadership took actions: there was a personnel leapfrog, the doors were opened to obvious anti-socialist movements. As the apotheosis of everything, the CPSU was pushed away from the leadership of the country, although, according to the chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, G. Zyuganov, it was necessary to turn it into a state organization which could really manage the state and its economy. Both the state of the economy and the political confusion demonstrated convincingly that not only the collapse of “perestroika” was coming, but also

the collapse of the state in the conditions of a complete refusal of the population to support the proclaimed ideas that were so attractive at first.

Conclusions. The data of all-Union studies allow us to conclude that the Soviet people were right to support the proclaimed ideas for the restructuring of society. But they were no less right when they stopped supporting them, as they saw the failure of the country's leadership to implement them.

The main result was that, despite the critical attitude, 75% of the country's population which took part in March 1991 referendum voted for the Soviet Union and for its further development and strengthening. Soviet people, when deciding the fate of the country, most often linked their future with a society which followed exactly the socialist path of development. However, six months later, this decision of citizens was ignored. Anti-Soviet forces came to power and declared themselves the winners. Their favorite argument was the statement that the people did not rise up to support the GKChP in August 1991. But this argument ignores the fact that most of the local authorities came out in support of this action, due to the lack of not only intelligible, but also any actions on the part of putschist ("gecachepists") to implement their proclaimed position, the initiative was intercepted by Yeltsin's supporters, who gradually brought their position to December 1991, to the tragic Belovezh agreement.

And why, in fact, did the people remain silent? Firstly, they were attracted by the promise by the new government of radical improvement. And this idea, of course, was pleasant to many persons, because people wanted to live better. Secondly, the history of the USSR and the CPSU demonstrated that after all the turns of politics and changes the state's heads (after Stalin came the rise of Khrushchev, the career of Brezhnev and others), nothing fundamentally new happened: some accents in politics changed, but there was always hope for improvement, which, by the way, was partially justified. So the arrival of Boris Yeltsin to power was also considered in the mass consciousness from these positions as an opportunity to correct the situation within the framework of the existence of the former country. Thirdly, the replacement of the USSR with the CIS was clothed in an externally acceptable form of organizing a new state association like a confederation, in which military and foreign policy, as well as financial activities stood united with the independent implementation by each of the republics. And the majority of citizens accepted the proposed changes as true. Fourth, there was an incredible deception of the people: in all the plans and promises, Yeltsin and his **colleagues** did not say that they were preparing and intending to put the country on the path of capitalist development, that they wanted to reject every socialist institute and idea as not having justified itself. And even the first steps as an emergency transition to market economy did not alarm people, especially since Yeltsin was sworn ("I'll get on the rails") that all difficulties would be overcome by the end of 1992 (in fact, by the end of this year a completely different effect was achieved like 2000% inflation). In other words, the people were deceived not in small things, as the Soviet leaders did, without doing anything fundamentally new, but on a large scale – by changing and irrevocably destroying the Soviet system, hiding their true intentions for a long time. All of the above allows us to conclude that the process of forming social inequality has already started in the Soviet society, the precarization of labor started then and a loss occurred of homogeneity of the social structure. This meant turning the country into a society of trauma [Toshchenko, 2020].

To this it is worth adding another significant conclusion, which was kept silent. The point is that the decision to "abolish" the Soviet Union did not take into account the conclusions and recommendations of science. But the Institute for System Research of the USSR Academy of Sciences, a team of which consisted of scholars from almost all sciences (both natural and social), conducted a thorough and scrupulous analysis of the existence of the great empires as British, Ottoman, French and others, identifying the factors that led to their fall. Then, from these positions, the state of the USSR was analyzed and a conclusion was obtained (see, for example: *Izvestia*, December 15, 1999, No. 235) that the potential of the Soviet Union was still great and significant, it could still exist for 200–220 years after an implementation of verified and consistent reforms. In other words, the conclusion was made about the forcible termination of the USSR. And how else to judge this geopolitical catastrophe, if

both the subjective factor (the opinion of the people) and the objective conditions (possibility of existing for two more centuries) were completely ignored?

The above arguments, in our opinion, are sufficient to conclude that this geo-political catastrophe was artificial. Neither the position of the people nor the conclusions by scientists were taken into account, so development followed the path imposed on the passive majority by an active minority consisting of ambitious, determined anti-Soviet people ready for radical changes in the country and skillfully hiding their real goals. This is the case in history when the so-called "pressure groups", even relatively small, but well organized and proactive, impose their own scenario for the development of events on the background of atrophy of the existing public power.

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