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## Article

# Work motivation under communist rule: Heritage from the past in modern public sector organisations

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## Work Motivation under Communist Rule: Heritage from the Past in Modern Public Sector Organisations

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### Abstract

Applying retrospective design methodology, the article adds to our knowledge about inherited organisational values and their impact on management policies and practices. Questioning the label of Central and Eastern European workforce as low-motivated, shirking and passive, this article outlines the historical context of work motivation in former communist countries, investigating to what extent the motivation in public service organisations today may be explained by the past. It employs a framework developed by Vandenabeele et al. (2013) that connects management intentions to organisational and employee outcomes to analyse the malfunctions of the former rewards system and to examine how those impairments continue to influence public sector motivation today.

Confirming Inglehart's 'scarcity' theory, this article demonstrates that the several decades that passed after the fall of communism were insufficient in completely overcoming communist heritage. Malfunctions of the centralised communist motivation system resulted from the discordance between the management intentions and actions. Dysfunctions of monetary-based incentive schemes caused overwhelming work lethargy of shirking employees, who were discouraged from being creative or displaying initiative. Such patterns have still been observable at some public organisations in former Soviet countries. Thus, the past centralisation of the state continues to determine individual work motivation in public sector domains even today.

### Keywords

centralised systems | work incentives | nonprofit sector | Central and Eastern Europe

### JEL Codes

C99, M54, P30

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## 1. Introduction

Labour force restructuring has been the vital element of establishing democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (Sil, 2017). Decades of communist rule left behind a workforce that has often been characterised as low-motivated, shirking and passive, and therefore, not suitable for the new challenges of open and free market systems (Ost, 2000; Sil, 2017). Consistent with Inglehart's (1990, 1997) 'scarcity' theory, which claims gradual change of values takes generations to pass by, and with some recent empirical observations of the region (Prysmakova, 2016; 2019; 2021), the study questions whether those three decades after the fall of communism have been enough for public service systems to free themselves from their communist heritage.

Some past practices have proven to be especially adhesive. For instance, in line with the communist doctrine, communist rule supported itself through

high centralisation of the government apparatus and public service management (Marx et al., 1848; 2019). Working culture, individual motivation to work, as well as management practices absorbed pros and cons of that centrally-governed society (Prysmakova, 2016; 2019; 2021). Despite the enormous attempts of some former communist countries to decentralise on the national level, e.g. Poland, Hungary, and East Germany (Wollmann, 1997; Sakowicz, 2017), the question remains of whether on the organisational level, some current human resources practices and behaviours that fit neither the lines of New Public Management nor the modern ideas of governance can be explained by the authorising environment and public values of the highly centralised communist states of the past. Answering this question constitutes the main contribution of the present study.

This study also aims to contribute to public administration theory as it advances our understanding

of the public service motivation (PSM) concept. This concept, briefly defined as a desire to work towards public benefit, shows slightly different patterns in the countries with a long-lasting communist past (Prysmakova 2016; 2019; 2021; 2024). Despite being present as a phenomenon for a while, as an academic concept, PSM was given its name only in the 1990s and in Western scholarship. With the theoretical development of the concept, it was fast-acknowledged that that sort of motivation has been shaped by the institutional environment that employees find themselves in. Following Inglehart's scarcity propositions (1990; 1997), it takes generations to change the institutional environment. Thus, quite logically, we can infer that the PSM of the employees of post-communist terrains has been to a large extent determined by the managerial past of that region that ruled those lands decades before the concept of PSM was even created.

To better address the posed practical and theoretical challenges, the presented research is designed as a retrospective study of several previous observations and reports. The qualitative character of the study and the reviewing reference to several sources instead of, for instance, their metanalysis, is the result of the scarcity of the empirical observations. Few Western researchers were allowed to visit and study communist systems, while the information and data gathered by the local communist researchers have been questionably reliable. Their motivation to record true facts have been limited by many work factors, which, among others, will be outlined in this text.

A retrospective methodology allows the investigators to formulate hypotheses about possible associations between the currently observable outcomes and possible exposures in the past. It explores the potential relationships between variables through the lens of past experiences. In our case, we are looking backwards at the data collected in previous studies of the Central and Eastern European workforce during communist times and right after its collapse, and in a qualitative way, checking how those past patterns can explain the shirking behaviours of some of the public workforce today. From the standpoint of the retrospective methodology, if we want to better understand the shirking motivation of some public sector employees today, it is essential to look at the roots: the establishment of the system and values of that past (Sil, 2017).

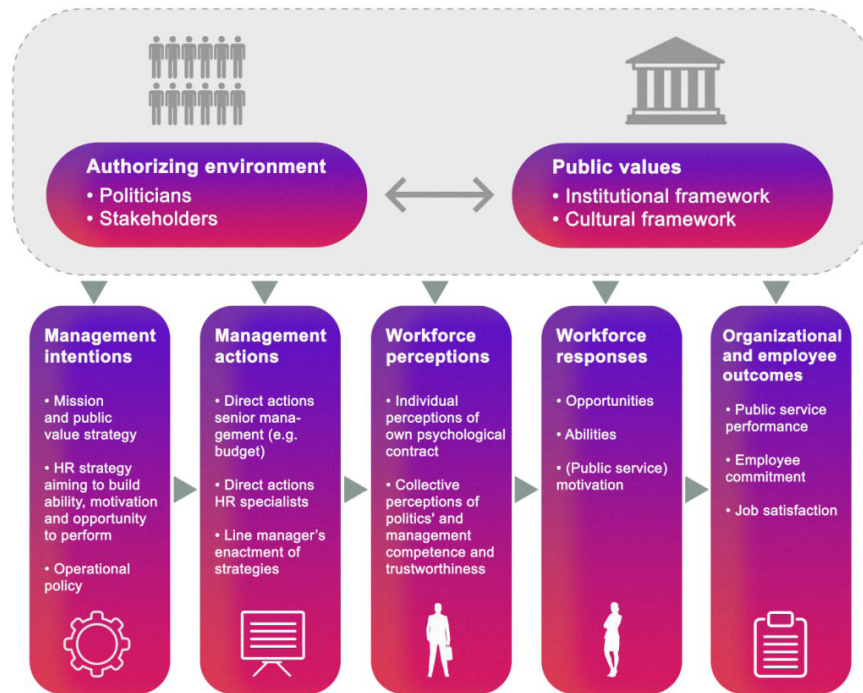
While retrospective methodology is frequently used in clinical studies (Powel & Sweeting, 2015), it

is not limited to them. The presented study, similarly to retrospective medical experimental scholarship, serves two primary purposes of retrospective research: it uses the found past events as an audit tool for comparison of the historical data with the more recent practices, and it investigates uncommon and rare events (as the fall of the communism in our case), where the size of a sample and time-frame for a true experiment would be prohibitively large and take too long to conduct.

The article pursues a two-fold objective and contributes to the knowledge of work motivation in the public sector on two dimensions: (1) provides a step-by-step review of how the centralisation of the country's and organisation's administration can influence employees' individual motivation (i.e., to examine if and how centralisation influences motivation); (2) provides a historical overview of political, economic and cultural changes that have been influencing work motivation in Central and Eastern Europe throughout the last century, which facilitates understanding of the public and nonprofit sectors' origins and the workforce attracted by these organisations today.

The first objective reflects the main research question of the article: "How does the degree of government centralisation influence employees' motivation in public and nonprofit service providers?" The expectation is that the centralisation level of government affects the PSM of individuals involved in public service provision. This article informs this proposition by providing historical evidence that centralisation affects the PSM of employees. Namely, it examines the mechanisms of these relations in accordance with Vandenabeele et al.'s (2013) framework (See Figure 1) by analysing the secondary data—reports and research articles.

The second objective is to define the context from which today's workforce in Central and Eastern Europe originated. First, to assess the initial condition of the motivation among employees of the public and nonprofit sectors right after the fall of the communism, we need to analyse whether (1) decentralisation in some former communist countries had an impact on public values and PSM and if (2) centralisation in other former communist countries reinforced the public values established during the communist times. Analyses of the past are important to trace the generational changes in values and attitudes (Inglehart, 1990; 1997). Thus, motivation of



**Figure 1.** Management Intentions Leading to Organisational and Employee Outcomes. Based on Vandenabeele et al. (2013)

a large segment of the workforce today is still likely explained by the past.

The article proceeds as follows: first, it discusses the theoretical expectations about the effect of the authorising environment on public values and workforce motivation. Then, it provides some evidence from the centralised communist government. After a brief overview of the establishment of communist rule, it shows how communist politicians were changing the system of values by ruining old institutions and creating new ones. Thereafter, the article proceeds with an operation analysis of a Soviet organisation. The article provides historical evidence for the way the party's and organisational needs were addressed with the managers' actions, and how these actions affected the workforce.

## 2. Authorising Environment and Public Values in Centralised Regimes

### 2.1. Theoretical Frame

This article distinguishes between two types of centralisation: centralisation of organisations at

the sector level and centralisation of administrative systems at the country level. Since strong governmental administrative systems can undermine any democratic systems within the state (Foster, 2001), both levels are linked. The more centralised the state administration is, the more centralised public sector and nonprofit organisations subsidised by the government are. Tschirhart (2006) concludes that in highly centralised regimes, strong dependency on governmental decisions undermine the degree of democracy within an organisation: "... if an association is linked to a non-democratic state through personnel, financial, decision-making, or operational procedures or arrangements, then state interests dominate member interests" (p. 534).

The centralised climate of the state not only shapes management arrangements of an organisation, but also frames employees' behaviour, since the government has a leading role in determining what people—both service providers and their clients—collectively value (Benington, 2011, pp. 43–44). By defining social values, institutions directly and indirectly influence motives guiding individual behaviour (Hughes, 1939; Scott, 1987; Friedland et al., 1987; Perry et al., 2008).

The value-creation role of the state should be especially visible in public service organisations. As the mainstream public administration literature suggests, public servants are receivers of top-down



public themes (Rubington & Weinberg, 2010, p. 4) and guards of the regime values (Frederickson & Hart, 1985). Therefore, the state becomes a determinant of public values.

The discussion here takes the perspective that public values are normative ideas or principles promoted by the government, and PSM refers to an individual behavioural orientation to do something good for society (Andersen et al., 2013). By setting social values, institutions tend to standardise behavioural patterns (March & Olsen, 1989), but it does not always happen. While the state only determines what the public values are, it is up to an employee's discretion whether to materialise these public values into reality (Lipsky, 1980). On the one hand, if a public service employee considers values promoted by the government as proper, then, while behaving within an individual PSM, this employee also creates public value (Moore, 1995). In this situation, complying with norms and values is satisfying and therefore motivational (Andersen et al., 2013). Richman (1963a) provides some evidence that employees in communist countries had a high sense of moral obligation to the state. Despite the high level of centralisation, those individuals who believed in the ideas of the party should have had the feeling that complying with the party directives leads to the society's improvement, and thus, those individuals should have been highly public-service motivated. As research shows, a decentralised market model does not always create the best environment for public-service motivated employees. In a comparative study of the United States and New Zealand, Moynihan (2008) finds that the market model weakens PSM, because it appeals to the extrinsic/monetary motivation of public service employees. On the other hand, if individuals view public values promoted by the state as different from their own perception of society's well-being, then either they follow their own PSM and behave in an inconsistent manner with the organisational tasks or they are simply discouraged to work.

Following Andersen et al. (2013), this study assumes that the possible separation of the PSM and public values concepts is hard and that the overlap of these concepts is unavoidable. Public values and PSM cannot be totally separated, because "values can be motivating and motivation is often oriented toward something desirable" (Andersen et al., 2013). Yet, the working definition remains that "public service motivation is part of a behavioural process in which public service motives lead to behaviours that benefit

the public" (Kim et al., 2010), whether or not the PSM corresponds with the public values promoted by the government.

In this discussion, PSM refers strictly to the motivation of individuals to do good for others and society through public service delivery (Andersen et al., 2013). This motivation can be reduced by the centralized nature of the government and/or organisation. Research shows, that if not the entire public service motivation level, then at least some of its constituent dimensions are affected by political situation in the country: the public service motivation level is reduced by the lack of democratic public institutions (Vandenabeele et al., 2008; Prysmakova, 2019). While the compassion dimension of public service motivation in Eastern Europe is similar to that in Northern and Western Europe, Australia and Asia, self-sacrifice and politics/policy dimensions are significantly lower (Vandenabeele et al., 2008). Some PSM-related activities as political party membership or volunteering activities acquired completely opposite function and purpose from its Western analogs (Prysmakova, 2019).

Centralised government propagandises public values down on public service providing organisations and the dependent nonprofits. In decentralised systems, public values are shaped by the citizens and come from the individuals up to the government, rather than being dictated from above by the state. Such an alignment might create more situations when public values coincide with the employee's views of how to better society. Based on these assumptions and the findings above, this study proposes that the PSM level within in the same sectors might differ depending on the type of administrative system. Moreover, implementing Inglehart's (1990; 1997) 'scarcity' theory, which states that gradual change of values takes generations to pass by, the PSM level of employees today is also determined by the values established by the previous regimes. In the case of an Eastern European region, which is the focus region of this article, PSM today should to a certain extent reflect public values established by the highly centralised communist government. The following section depicts the authorising environment, in which the centralised communist government was adjusting public values to its needs.

## 2.2. Historical Evidence

The totalitarian rule of communist politicians recognised forcible change of the value system as a necessity, assuming that any means that lead to the desired results could be applicable. Under the new regime, the stakeholders were limited to the communist party members, working class and peasants. The first group constituted the centralised administration, and the second consisted of poor underprivileged and non-entrepreneurial citizens. Elites and successful businessmen were eliminated at the establishment of the communist rule. The subsequent subsections clarify some crucial changes of public values brought by the new authorising environment.

***Institutional Framework: Ruining Old Institutions and Creating New Ones.*** For Central and Eastern European countries, the creation of the Soviet Union and expansion of its influence on the neighbouring countries marked the beginning of the great transformation of public values and institutions in the 20th century. Thus, the first transformation came with the changes of values previously determined by religion and traditions, which had to be substituted with communist visions of the world order. This period was characterised by breaking old value systems and changing it for the new one. Contrary to the Russian rural and urban work force conditioned by a traditional collectivist mentality even before the Soviet revolution (Tidmarsh, 1993), Belarus and Polish people used to enjoy more freedoms and had a longer history of running individual farms and businesses. People from that region were accustomed to individual decision-making and personal responsibility for centuries. Thus, the period of the communist rule before the World War II was characterized by the struggle of the government to change deeply rooted individualistic values. The value-change enforcement took various forms from liquidation of successful individual farming (“razkulachvanie”) to deportation of highly educated and entrepreneurial individuals to Siberia, or their execution.

The second transformation of institutions started after the World War II and was embedded in the process of reforms aimed to maintain and strengthen communist rule. Public values have been addressed not only by enhanced propaganda but shaped by implementation of the changes in rewards systems and incentives. This period was characterised by efforts to maintain the values established before the war, with the simultaneous effort to modernise the economy and the society.

***Cultural framework: Creating and Maintaining Communist Work Culture.*** Since the national culture plays an important role in determining what motivates people (Fey, 2005), communist culture strongly affected employees’ work mentality. During the establishment of the communist system, scientists and politicians were already aware of the importance of the cultural surroundings, realising that the social context greatly molds an individual’s personality. The communists believed in basic educational theory stating that the new ideology could be indoctrinated into the child from the birth, which they actively practiced (Schultz & McFarland, 1935).

Even though in communist countries a lot of attention was paid to the importance of work, which was considered the most honoured activity (Ardichvili, 2009), and while unemployment was labelled as “parasitism” (Aslund, 2007), few studies were completed about the impact of the human motivation on the enterprise environment (Richman, 1963a). The lack of interest in the topic is not surprising, since, during the communist era, attention to the human side of an organisation was usually neglected (Luthans et al., 2000). In communist countries, an interest in organisational performance was superior to individual performance.

While denying individualism at the workplace, communist work culture still had to implement some capitalist features, whose importance was especially recognised after the World War II. At that time, communist countries encountered severe difficulties in structuring their economies to provide managers the proper incentives to obtain desired results. Adherence to communist ideology and the difficulties encountered in developing an integrated and workable plan had led to serious operational problems. The 1950s were marked by the ineffective performance of managers of industrial enterprises, which resulted from the overall defective economic, cultural and institutional environment (Richman, 1963b). Undesirable managerial behaviour was not a question of incompetence, but the framework in which the manager had to operate. Evidence for the malfunction of the system will be provided in the subsequent sections.

Soviet communism created a demoralised and low public service-motivated work force. An established principle that the more productive worker must receive higher pay did not work out in the reality. Communist ideology—“From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”—created a situation that

benefited those being less productive. Therefore, the countries under communist rule tended to exhibit an ascription culture, where status was based on who or what a person was, and which connections she/he had, rather than how well they performed their functions.

Were the communists successful in changing public values and working culture? Richman (1963a) shows that employees in communist countries had a sense of moral obligation to the state. Another cross-country study reveals that work ethic at the time became stronger in former communist countries compared to Western ones (Stam et al., 2013). The authors apply modernisation theory to explain how former communist countries share traditional conformity values, one of which is the feeling of the necessity to work, as compared to socio-economically developed countries that rather emphasize post-modern values, for instance, self-expression. At the same time, it should be taken into account that believing that everyone should work is not the same as working hard yourself. Thus, on the other hand, several authors (e.g., Lipset, 1992; Neimanis, 1997; Pucetaite & Lamsa, 2008) claim that personal work effort, motivation and productivity were deteriorated by communist ideology.

In one way or another, the culture in communist countries has been formed by the authorising political environment for decades, and it is fair to assume that it will take decades to change it. Thus, the theoretical part of this chapter is based on Inglehart's (1990; 1997) "scarcity hypothesis", which argues that changes of values do not come simultaneously with the changes of socio-economic conditions, but values change gradually when older generations die out and younger generations take their place.

### **3. Motivation in Soviet Organisations: From Management Intentions to Workforce Responses**

The sections above overviewed the centralised authorising environment created by the communist politicians and public values determined by the newly established system of institutions and organisational culture. The most important for the analysis of individual motivation, however, is how the authorising environment and public values influenced

management intentions and actions, workforce perception and responses, as well as organisational and employee outcomes in highly centralised communist states. Simply said, why would an individual work in a communist country?

Communist countries maintained a high level of centralisation of the state and organisations that were mainly public. Under the pressure of the authorising communist environment, management needs in public-service-providing organisations had to meet the public values propagandised by the regime. As concluded from the previous section, those values would not necessarily go along with the PSM of an employee. The previous research on individual work motivation in communist countries indeed reveals controversial findings. On the one hand, work ethic at the time became stronger in former communist countries compared to Western ones (Stam et al., 2013). On the other hand, some studies show that work effort, motivation, and productivity were deteriorated by the communist ideology (Lipset, 1992; Neimanis, 1997; Pucetaite & Lamsa, 2008). Assuming that the working culture and management practices absorbed pros and cons of the centrally-governed society, this section examines employees' reaction to the ways that managers approached the organisational and party's needs, i.e., how the centralised managerial actions would curve work motivation in general, and PSM in particular.

Based on the analyses of historical evidence (reports and research articles), the section illuminates the "communist heritage" of the Eastern European workforce, and focuses on its origins applying the framework proposed by Vandenabeele et al. (2013). It stresses the importance of the administrative context and its particular characteristics that shaped work motivation and work outcomes in the public sector under communist rule. The selected materials belong to different decades starting from the establishment of the communism after the October Revolution in 1917 through the fall of the communist bloc in the 1990s, and they are analysed for the factors that might have influenced individual motivation. The analyses reveal actions that managers undertook to meet a particular central government need, perception of these actions by employees, and most importantly, the reaction in their motivation to work.



### 3.1. Need №1: Redirect/Eliminate Profit Motive

In order to eliminate profit motives, Soviet leadership applied various techniques. For instance, ubiquitous liquidation of successful individual farming known as “razkulachvanie” (also known as dekulakization) took place from 1929 to 1932. Razkulachvanie was a campaign of political repressions, including arrests, deportations, and executions of millions of the better-off peasants and their families, which were labelled kulaks and considered class enemies. Only in 1930–1931, more than 1.8 million peasants were deported from their native villages and towns (Werth et al., 1999). Simultaneously consolidating individual land and labour into collective farms, the stated purpose of the ‘razkulachvanie’ campaign was to establish a centralised control over an agriculture sector and individual peasants.

Other widely applied methods to reduce profit motives among the workforce were the deportation of highly educated and entrepreneurial individuals to Siberia, or their execution. As entrepreneurial individuals were able to recognize that they had to be eliminated from society, in the years following the revolution the remains of skilled and unionized European-style workforce had to emigrate abroad. The government would constantly attack those who stayed by propaganda aimed to suppress “economic” (i.e. rational) motives: “profit is a sin and to be rich is anti-social” (Schultz & McFarland, 1935, p. 289).

Workforce perception of administrative actions was determined by the boundaries of adaptability of human nature to the new environmental settings. Assuming that “economic man” rooted in human nature (e.g., according to John S. Mill, Adam Smith and David Ricardo), workforce negatively reacted to the governmental attempts to redirect monetary motivation. Workforce response is captured in a popular expression across the communist countries: “you pretend to pay, we pretend to work”. In reality, the administration was successful only in redirecting the form, but not the substance of an individual enrichment strategy. Since employees were not allowed to mention larger salary as a driven factor for choosing a career, successful individuals would choose between careers that provide more social benefits. The consequences for the quality of the workforce in Soviet organisations were detrimental. Lack of entrepreneurship underpinned work lethargy, shirking behaviour became the widely accepted norm.

The effectiveness of propaganda was undermined by the fact that it was designed by politicians, not psychologists, which placed some limitations (Schultz & McFarland, 1935). For example, communist propaganda was not planned to appeal to basic traits of human nature. The party found it easier to scare employees of the negative consequences of shirking rather than to motivate them to work for the equivocal “common good”. At the same time, despite the constant ideology work utilised in communist countries in order to bring employee behaviour in line with the wishes of the state, material incentives remained the most prominent motivational force that will be discussed in the further sections (Richman, 1963b).

### 3.2. Need №2: Substitute Individual Competition by Group Competition

Originating from communist ideology, attempts to replace individual competition with group competition became another pervasive operational policy in Soviet enterprises. Propaganda would constantly encourage people to work for the “common betterment of the society” rather than for personal enrichment. Central and local governments would promote a contesting atmosphere and request senior managers to demonstrate the superiority of their organisations: “between hospitals as to the efficiency and effectiveness of their work, and between schools as to the quality of their art, sculpturing, or handicrafts” (Schultz & McFarland, 1935, p. 289). The only question regarding personal motivation that management was interested in, was how that motivation could be translated into improved organisational performance.

The substitution of competition skewed individual perceptions of own psychological contract, since direct individual benefits became detached from the work completed. Depersonalisation of success undermined individual abilities and desires to help others. Moreover, it determined collective perceptions of politics and management competence and its trustworthiness. Competition replacement provoked distrust in government policies, which would punish ambitious employees: “Not only were individual efforts virtually unrewarded but any display of initiative could be dangerous. Forced labour camps nurtured a universal revolution for work among prisoners and guards alike. This “Gulag complex” eventually spilled over to grip the entire country” (Tidmarsh, 1993, p. 70).

The workforce reacted with a general indifference to work. Unable to compete with other employees in fulfilment of tasks, initially unambitious employees became even more discouraged to be creative or display initiative. A display of individual PSM or its constituent elements like self-sacrifice was condemned to stay unnoticed by management.

### 3.3. Need №3: Suppress Feelings of Class, Racial and Individual Differences and Superiority

Minimising feelings of superiority of any nature remained one of the key communist missions throughout the entire period of the regime's existence. The government and management of public organisations pursued that goal *inter alia* with equalitarianism in wages. In the Soviet Union in the late 1950s to the early 1960s, the difference between the highest and lowest wage fell to 1.5 times from 3.5, previously (Tidmarsh, 1993). Thus, in workforce perception, wages lose their ability to be a material incentive.

Undertaking more responsibility at work was unrelated to advancements in payment. Lack of an opportunity to increase individual remuneration by advancing in a career played a destructive role for working-class professionalism (Tidmarsh, 1993). Even though leverage in wages was recognised as a dangerous movement already in the 1930s (Schultz & McFarland, 1935), it had been practiced until the fall of the regime. After the World War II, narrowing pay differentials regardless of skill and output wiped out the last remains of experts and specialists.

### 3.4. Need №4: Replace Religion Doctrines by Beliefs in Social Betterment and Certainty

Paying tribute to communists, they were able to succeed at least in something, namely they successfully replaced religious concepts by the Marxist-Leninist's ideology. Within the central government strategy, in addition to education and mass media, citizens were approached at workplaces through the party and trade union channels (Richman, 1963a).

Soviet human resources specialists ensured that the ideology would penetrate every moment of an employee's life. Numerous meetings and conventions

devoted to communism indoctrination (collective newspaper readings and similar activities) took place directly at jobsites.

The main tool remained the ubiquitous propaganda: work ethic was proclaimed a moral duty for all persons in society (Stam et al., 2013). Richman (1963a) mentions ideology indoctrination as one of the three most important motivational devices widely used in communist countries.

Collective workforce perception of politics and management's competence and trustworthiness in the pursued strategy especially increased after the Soviet Union's victory in the World War II. Employees in communist countries developed a sense of moral obligation to the state and had considerable pride in their country and progress (Richman, 1963a). In such a situation, PSM should have increased together with the raised popular enthusiasm in the face of hardships (Stam et al., 2013).

Some studies suggest that work ethic in fact became stronger with the time in former communist countries compared to Western ones (Stam et al., 2013). Even today, former communist countries share traditional conformity values, one of which is the feeling of the necessity of work, compared to socio-economically developed countries that rather emphasise post-modern values, for instance, self-expression (Stam et al., 2013).

In terms of organisational and employee outcomes, the chronicles suggest the positive influence of the propaganda of collective "building of a brighter future" on employees' commitment and job satisfaction (Richman, 1963a). That was especially visible after the World War II and the Era of Stagnation (Brezhnevian Stagnation), a period of economic, political, and social stagnation in the Soviet Union that began during the rule of Leonid Brezhnev and lasted until Gorbachev's perestroika. At the same time, there is a lack of reliable records of public service performance improvement. Moreover, it should be taken into account that making citizens believe that everyone should work is not the same as making them work hard (Stam et al., 2013).

### 3.5. Need №5: Assure Highly Productive Workforce, Encourage Greater Effort

As any human resource strategy pursued by any other regime, a communists' plan of action equally aimed to

build ability, motivation and opportunity to perform for their employees. However, through the long history of communist domination, Soviet administration would try quite contrary techniques to achieve these goals. Initially, the direct actions of management were within classic communist techniques. It was against the party's ideology to openly advertise individual monetary benefits as a reward for hard work. While in Western countries, capitalism emphasised individual competition and the profit system with individual rewards, in Soviet systems, salary could not be claimed as the main motivator to work.

In order to improve individual and group performance, enterprise managers would create a competition atmosphere of "who works harder" simultaneously bringing social attention to those who fell back: "In factories and even in scientific institutes the workers' names may be posted on a bulletin board opposite to a bird, deer, rabbit, tortoise, or snail relative to the speed with which they turn out their work" (Schultz & McFarland, 1935, p. 289).

However, the communist countries encountered severe difficulties of obtaining desired results when they would utilise pure communist incentives. Adherence to Communist ideology and the difficulties encountered in developing an integrated and workable plan have led to serious operational problems. The 1950s were marked by the ineffective performance of the managers of industrial enterprises, which resulted from the overall defective economic, cultural and institutional environment (Richman, 1963b). Undesirable managerial behaviour was not a question of incompetence, but the framework in which the manager had to operate.

The importance of capitalist techniques was soon recognized with special attention given to them after the World War II. Surprisingly for the capitalist observer, the communist administration widely used monetary incentives to encourage greater effort (Richman, 1963a). The high level of performance, as communists' leaders would advocate, should be rewarded by more pay. Both Lenin and Stalin emphasized the significance of material self-interest, and both asserted that moral incentive is not enough (Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta, 1962). Another leader, Khrushchev also emphasised that it was wrong to oppose material incentives to moral ones, since they are strongly linked: "We should remember V. I. Lenin's directive that we should be able, if necessary, to learn from the capitalists, to adopt whatever they have that is sensible and advantageous" (Khrushchev, 1962).

In order to encourage managerial behaviour to suit the changing conditions, the government had to change the "rules of the game" for enterprise managers. The Soviets started to ubiquitously utilise monetary incentives as a key motivation device. Monetary compensation for work took two basic forms: (1) wages and bonuses linked to performance, (2) remuneration linked to the profits derived from implemented employees' suggestions (Richman, 1963b). In 1959, the Soviet Union introduced "success indicator" reform. The premiums were now awarded not solely for the gross output, but, for instance, for the assortment indices, quality, product and service delivery schedules. As for remuneration based on employees' suggestions, yet still related to the payroll, it was to encourage employees to participate in planning and decision making. It partly balanced the dysfunction of general monetary-based incentive schemes, since in addition to the salary bonus, it encouraged employees through public recognition of their work and the prestige that came with it.

Workforce perception of management actions should have been extremely positive: employees finally got an opportunity to receive public recognition of their work and the prestige that came with it (Richman, 1963b). That should have increased overall motivation to perform assigned tasks. However, the general dysfunction of monetary-based incentive schemes did not allow it to happen. In the absence of a market-price mechanism, capitalistic profit motivators only blocked efficient resource utilisation and the satisfaction of citizens' needs and demands (Richman, 1963b). Considering the payment equalitarianism and elimination of profit-motivated individuals that were mentioned in the previous subsections, Richman's (1963b) anticipations were that in the long run, communist and capitalist systems may become more similar than being considered hopeless. Moreover, in reality, abovementioned capitalist techniques were introduced at only relatively few enterprises (Richman, 1963b). As a result, work effort, personal motivation, and productivity were further deteriorated by communists ideology (Lipset, 1992; Neimanis, 1997; Pucetaite & Lamsa, 2008).

### 3.6. Need №6: Establish Centralisation of Command

To maintain its power, the Communist Party had to ensure subordination on every level of the society.



Everything was determined by the regulations, rules, directions and plans of the party: starting from what type of clothes people should wear to where they should spend their vacations.

In order to establish absolute control, centrally planned economies were concerned with coordination and enforcement of production goals (Smith & Gronbjerg, 2006, p. 223). One of the ways for the communist regime to achieve this was to reject the market-price system. In this situation, the suppliers and quantities of goods and services were determined not by need, but by the plan. Since alternative sources of supply did not exist, it negatively affected managers' behaviour whose position was highly depended on compulsory plan fulfilment: "the manager often had to obtain supplies through bribery, personal influence or by whatever illegal means he could" (Richman, 1963b).

Another direct action of the Soviet administration aimed to strengthen the centralisation of the command was the liquidation of horizontal links among professionals and other groups.

The Party understood that the role of civil society (associations, clubs, unions, churches) was to sustain and mobilise political opposition under authoritarian rule (Clemens et al., 2006, p. 210), and thus, all civil institutions in Communist societies remained controlled by and closely identified with the state (Mishler & Rose, 1997). Nongovernmental organisations (for instance, independent trade unions) were placed under the strong subordination of the Party and re-obtained their autonomous status only after the fall of the regime.

The system of incorrect work indices based on plan fulfilment caused the conflict between morality and material incentives related to performance standards, which was even openly acknowledged by the state mass media (Richman, 1963a). Moreover, neither were able to influence centralised plans through civil society organisations nor had an opportunity to stop working for the system (see Need №7 further in the section), fear and overall sense of helplessness confronting the Party dominated collective perceptions of politics and management's competence and trustworthiness.

Affecting organisational and employee outcomes, the centralisation of command put institutions and individuals employed in them in a constant competition for limited facilities and resources, let on shirking any nobler goal or motivation (Tidmarsh, 1993).

### 3.7. Need №7: Provide Full Employment

As mentioned in the previous subsection, communist countries operated under a planned command economy, which also entailed guaranteed full employment. Through numerous propaganda channels, the government aimed to build an understanding that work was considered the most honoured activity (Ardichvili, 2009). At the same time, unemployment was labelled as 'parasitism' (Aslund, 2007).

In individual perceptions of one's own psychological contract, a physical presence at work became more important than the results of work. Without having an option to wait, individuals had to accept positions well below their professional capabilities, which should have had a strong demotivating effect on the desire to provide high quality products and services.

As a result of a full employment policy, some studies show that just before the fall of the communist system, more than half of unskilled jobs were filled by workers with more than obligatory primary schooling (Tidmarsh, 1993).

### 3.8. Need №8: Low-Wage, Low-Skilled and Low-Productivity Workers

A labour policy depending on low-wage, low-productivity employment tends to require low skills and low education. However, in reality, governmental and management actions would be contrary to operational needs. Within the established public values, learning was promoted as a crucial part of the building of communism. Corresponding to a famous Lenin's motto in Soviet countries, "Eat, sleep and breathe studying", higher education establishments would admit more students than the labour required at job sites. Thus, the paradox is that the well-developed and structured education system in the communist countries was producing a larger number of skilled workers than needed.

The paradox directly affected individual attitudes towards work. Once out of school, they would have to accept positions well below their professional capabilities. Workforce found itself in the situation of possessing high abilities but lacking opportunities for career with the obtained profession, a situation which should have had a strong depressing effect on individual motivation to perform within the production industries and to help others within the

service industries. The overqualified workforce was discouraged with the perspective of being stuck with low grade tasks until the end of their careers. Tirmarsh (1993) points out that the absurd mismatch in the number of professionals educated and positions available was particularly striking in the medical service provision, where the costs for the government to educate an employee were particularly high.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. PSM in the Centralised Soviet System

If the democracy is a necessary determinant of PSM (Vandenabeele & Van de Walle, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008), would it mean that during Soviet times, public sector employees did not feel a moral obligation to work for their people? Could employees of the ubiquitous public sector in communism-led societies be public-service motivated? Contemporary studies show the variation of the motivation levels across different parties (Pedersen, 2010). In democratic societies, the variation is natural and can be explained by the differences in the party policy agendas: a person has the right to choose whether they belong to the party and if yes, to which one. The communist regime was marked by the lack of choice: individuals were only exposed to the Communist Party, and a membership did not necessarily mean sharing values. Yet, in the communist one-party system, a person may have participated without supporting it or even when having contrary beliefs. Not everybody in the system was faithful to the ideals of the party. The proof of it would be, for instance, a constant search for the “enemies of the people” within the system. Since not everybody was supporting the system and shared the party’s values and approaches, there should have been people devoted to the moral democratic ideals.

Very often, employees would not articulate their personal beliefs and values publicly, but in private conversations, they showed their hesitations about the properness of party values. The doubts were especially strong in countries “occupied by Russians”, like Belarus or Poland. The doubts were not openly expressed not only because of the fear to be sent to Siberia or executed, but also due to a certain regime loyalty as one of the public values “in the constellation of values associated with the behavior of a public servant” (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007).

A statement that “there were no public service motivation in the communist countries” equals the statement that “there were no professionals at all”. Tidmarsh (1993) indeed points out that communist countries exhibited a breach of professional traditions. Does it mean absolute absence of professionals devoted to the code of values that comes with their job? Were the professionals in social work or education serving the regime or the public? Professional is someone who does a job that requires special training, education, or skill and who is guided by specific knowledge and a set of values related to that particular job. A professional attorney is supposed to defend a client, a professional doctor is supposed to provide medical help to a suffering person (as a part of Hippocratic Oath, at least) and etc. While the communist system provided very good professional education and training, professionals enjoyed a very limited freedom to independently practice obtained skills.

Communist countries were not the ideal place for professionals since they were not properly highly valued by the government system. What attitude towards highly educated professionals would you expect in the country of “workers and peasants”? Yet, it does not mean that there were no professionals, since the country would not function without them. Previous research shows that communist countries had competent individuals, but they were not able to perform effectively within the framework established by the government (Richman, 1963b). The professionals were overused and underpaid, sometimes performing the imposed duties that go against their individual moral beliefs, usually under the pressure of threats. In the context of limited freedoms, talented individuals were not able to refuse the party’s requests. For example, the fact that a famous Belarus sculptor Zair Azgur created hundreds of Lenins and Stalins, and even was invited to make a sculpture of Mao, does not necessarily mean he would be fascinated by the ideas of these leaders. Sculpting them, however, was the only way to stay in the profession, to have access to the work materials, and to have an art studio (Kucilo, 2010).

### 4.2. Motivation after the Fall of Communism

After the fall of the communism, not only production industries, but also public service providing organisations had to go through the transformation



to a market economy. In addition to the internal organisation problems such as a lack of capital, resource shortages, prohibitive costs of needed technology and equipment, employees of public and newly established nonprofits faced the necessity of changing work values. While under the former regime, the main goal of public organisations was to satisfy requirements of the party, the challenge of the 1990s became to find the ways to meet the needs of citizens.

Luthans et al. (2000) show that the legacy of communist ideology per se was not a problem and refer to China's case as an example. The difficulties in changing the work motivation occurred more likely due to complex cultural issues, which resulted from the ways communist ideology was implemented in practice. The working culture in modern post-communist states is not driven purely by the individual values and morality, but rather by results from complex factors that were in place for decades in countries under the communist regime. These factors consist of malfunctioning system of appraisals, rewards and salaries not connected to the complexity of the tasks performed, propaganda, discouragement of individual competition, while emphasising the group competition (e.g. norms, five-year plans).

The impact of the Soviet regime on public servants was to a certain extent destructive: "For three generations a negative selection process systematically weeded out workers of the greatest drive, know-how and resilience, giving rise to a pervasive, cowed apathy and scheming work ethic, with the liveliest initiatives directed at seeking maximum personal gain with a minimum expenditure of effort" (Tidmarsh, 1993, p.67).

Soviet communism left a demoralised and low individual PSM culture, which after the fall of the regime started to move towards the achievement dimension, given the fact that capitalistic novelties made individuals value individualism (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Employees' work motivation reflected a new-found entrepreneurial spirit (Luthans et al., 2000).

In the mid-1990s, studies of the former Soviet countries showed that individuals in general were depicted as being high in power distance (acceptance of authority), uncertainty avoidance (value security), collectivism (value group membership), femininity (care for others, low stress) and having a short time perspective (Puffer, 1994). Many of the gender patterns remain true for the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s (Funk & Mueller, 2018). In contrast, Trompenaars and

Hampden-Turner (1998) found that former Soviet countries were high on individualism, meaning that people in these countries tend to look after themselves and their immediate family and expect others to do the same. They do not feel responsible for the welfare of the group, like in the case of communitarians.

Contextual factors of the communist environment continue to shape motivation of public service providers in public and nonprofit sectors. Working culture in countries from the former Soviet bloc has been adjusted to the Soviet realities. For example, it is still considered socially acceptable not to work, but to be paid. This state of values that came as a communist heritage is shared with the younger generation, which was raised after the fall of the regime. In everyday conversation, young employees like to emphasise how little they work, how many breaks they could take and mention different possibilities to shirk from performing their duties. A popular expression "rabotka ne pynaja" (literally, "the job does not make my hands dirty") is a good description of the "ideal" job place.

Another communist characteristic inherited by the current job market is superiority of "protégé" over the proper qualifications. The system of "making connections" or "networking" is equally suitable to the Western world. The main difference of the Soviet style "protégé" is that a person might not possess any proper qualifications but would be recommended anyway. The fact of who gives recommendations overshadows the held qualifications, which, as commonly believed, could be obtained at the workplace.

Luthans et al. (2000) claim that individual employee motivation in former Soviet countries still has to be changed. The Soviet framework of labour-management relations was not eliminated by the collapse of the communist system: "it is [was] not easy for these people to grasp that the market mechanism does not function by the planners' fiat and that new methods of consultation and remuneration are needed to motivate an inert labor force" (Tidmarsh, 1993, p. 75). For instance, in Belarus, a lot of jobs in public sector services still apply a lavish bonus system not related to the performance as the main motivator to perform duties. Monthly salary bonuses in health, education or the militia in Belarus often equals the amount of a basic salary itself. This misbalance between salary and bonuses negatively influences the system of work values of an employee. They have the feeling that their work costs little, but due to the generosity of the

supervisors/ or the president (e.g., special presidential bonuses) an employee could survive.

Public services suffer from the lack of working culture, Soviet attitude to work and undeveloped human relations, which take generations to nurture. The process of changes slows down by the employees' inertness caused by the decades of Soviet rules: the employees were used to the responsibility being taken from them and delegated to the administration of the state. As a survey among 120 workers in industrial establishments showed, they perceived that their material improvement would not come due to any change in their own motivation but rather as the result of some administrative action taken by the state: "The institutional change alone will not suffice to extricate millions of ... workers from the mind-set created by many years of subordination to communalist and command systems (Tidmarsh, 1993, pp.76–77)."

This article provided some evidence that individual motivation to work and management practices had to adjust to the centralised authorising environment in the country. The question for the empirical follow-up is to test whether the high centralisation level of the past continues to shape motivation of public service employees in today's Central and Eastern Europe: for instance, after the decentralisation reforms in Poland or after strengthening the centralisation in Belarus. Taking into consideration the humane idea of the nonprofit sector, another question is whether the nonprofit sector became the retreat for highly public-service motivated individuals that were not able to self-realise their prosocial motives in the overwhelming public sector of the communist system, or whether it occurred just as an opportunity to utilize EU funds as in the case of Poland or to confront the government as in case of Belarus.

At this point, it is also important to mention the limitations of the present study that are related to the choice of the applied methodology. As in any other retrospective study, while the validity of the previous records is reasonably high, the complete list of other possible exposures from then until now, e.g., a global public administration doctrine change, technology growth, etc., is simply not available. The other important disadvantage of the selected methodology is the potential for the selection bias of the controls (Powel & Sweeting, 2015). The choice of surrounding factors and the description of their role in the cultivation of the Soviet-style workforce as presented in the current study were based on their occurrence

in the previous studies, and by no means constitute a comprehensive list of impactful factors.

## 5. Theoretical Contribution

Being more than just a literature review, the presented qualitative analysis offers some significant theoretical contribution. Theory here is defined as a statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and why a phenomenon occurs, and theoretical contribution is something that advances our understanding of such concepts and interrelationships (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Ågerfalk, 2014). To the best knowledge of the author, the presented article is the first attempt of PSM researchers to deeply look into the past for preceding institutional exposures. Thus, the presented article, despite resembling a literature review, has a significant theoretical contribution as it advances our understanding of the peculiarities of the seemingly universal PSM concept on the examples of the communist and post-communist terrain.

What seems like a review of the past managerial literature has much more to it. The researchers, whose empirical observations of the Soviet workforce were analysed here, looked at communist systems from the theoretical perspectives of their times, thus, mostly from the standpoint of behaviourism. Human behaviour and motivations were considered by Western scholars as something universal, and the communist context as something peculiar. In the presented article, however, we attempt to assess those behaviours from the prism of individual PSM, which as a concept has been shaped much later and after the fall of the Soviet Union. In other words, we look at the past motives and behaviours utilising the vocabulary of today.

It has been widely acknowledged that PSM of employees all around the world to a large extent reflects the institutional environment of their administrative states (Vandenabeele & Van de Walle, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008). Following Inglehart's propositions of the scarcity (1990; 1997), we conclude that, indeed, generations must pass by before the footprints of the institutional environment of the communist system will finally disappear from the motivational patterns of seemingly modernly trained employees.

## 6. Conclusion

The communist evidence presented in this article allows the conclusion that the centralisation of the state and the centralisation of the organisation determine individual work motivation in the public sector to a great extent. The article approached organisations in the centralised systems with the following questions: how do organisational actors make sense of public values established by the centralised government? How do organisational actors manage the multiplicity of these values, the potential tensions and their responsibilities to the public domain? For example, how do organisations manage to follow centralised rules, while meeting citizens' demands?

The retrospective analysis of the selected articles and reports suggests that malfunctions of the centralised communist motivation system were caused by the discordance of management intentions and management actions. While ensuring full employment, the overarching human resource strategy aimed to raise motivation and create an opportunity to perform within the communist ideology. Managers' difficult mission was to eliminate the profit motive, substitute individual competition by group competition, suppress the feelings of individual superiority by equating the pay among high and low-skilled employees, replace religious concepts by the belief in social betterment, and yet, encourage greater effort at the workplace.

Yet, the direct actions of communist administration on both governmental and organisational levels led to the liquidation of entrepreneurial individuals and discouraging detachment of individual benefits from the work completed. The workforce developed a sense of helplessness confronting the party and a realisation that presence at work was more important than its results. Dysfunctions of monetary-based incentive schemes caused overwhelming work lethargy that captured shirking employees, discouraged to be creative or display initiative.

The article concludes with the examples of how the inherited work attitude continues to influence employee motivation after the fall of the communism. It also suggests that the newly emerged nonprofit sector may have become an employment solution for highly motivated individuals, a hypothesis that should be further tested by the empirical research of the current attitudes and behaviour of such workers.

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