

From communism to guaranteed basic income

The ideal of Soviet man was communism, many dreamed of living under it. The authorities supported communist ideals, but each ruler pushed back the timing of the onset of communism. It is hard to justify the current difficulties of being during a long time (food deficit, poor-quality clothes, many year lines for free apartments, etc.) and at the same time observe moral standards (the code of the builder of communism), enormous military costs, etc.

Anyone wants to live happily ever after. Everyone knew: communism is for each according to his needs, from each according to his work. Communism guaranteed any benefits: high-quality and varied food, beautiful fashionable things, your own car, your own home. Labor was becoming the norm of life, a way of self-realization.

Everyone also knew what communism might look like - from the novels of Soviet science-fiction writers to the real benefits of the capitalist West, which Soviet propaganda called "Decaying" or "Rotting" and unspiritual. At the same time, trips to Western countries were very prestigious, remaining the unattainable dream of many Soviet citizens: Levis jeans, chewing gum, Beatles music and rock and roll, whiskey and emigration.

In "the period of stagnation" most already not perceived state propaganda. But the dream yet remained.

With the collapse of the USSR socialism was destroyed, the borders opened. The era of "wild" capitalism began, the dream faded. Former Soviet citizens recognized the real state of affairs in the world, the hypocrisy of their authorities. With the development of the Internet, the last obstacles have disappeared: everyone can communicate in real time, enjoy all the benefits and achievements of civilization. Innovative ideas reach people freely and quickly, passing borders. So the idea of basic income penetrated the former socialist camp. Communism turned into a pipe dream, ruthless capitalism and constant deception of the authorities taught people not to trust anyone. Therefore, basic income, like altruism, was perceived in our countries very critically: it is someone's interests, you can lose something.

Today came COVID-19 - a global problem, the same for all countries of the world. The common person sees how other governments give out money "just like that", just to help their citizens, this is the duty of the authorities. And the governments in our countries, in response to distress, raise taxes, habitually lie and avoid responsibility.

People begin to compare the actions of the governments of different countries in the same difficult situation, in big trouble. And questions arise:

- How can somebody be cured (avoid infection by COVID-19) by grass smoke, tractor, vodka or a bath? Despite the fact that doctors usually treat with the help of expensive drugs and devices.
- Why nobody don't must to talk about COVID-19?
- Why in the country does not officially have the coronavirus, and people die with the same symptoms? Is that possible? In neighboring countries there are already many infected and dead.
- Why does the government that choosed by themselves not help people with money. In other countries, people are already receiving money, not flour, butter and groats at the optionally of officials.
- Why there is no help from the oligarchs and businessmen who have accumulated huge fortunes in the same country.

And discussions, petitions or even popular unrest begin.

Our Social movement in Russia also initiated a petition to introduce cash payments at least in the amount of a living wage (approximately \$ 164) per month per person, including children, for the period of a pandemic. We also appealed to many Russian oligarchs and businessmen with a proposal to support Russians in hard times by direct cash payments, expanding the basic income pilot project, conducted jointly with the Russian Academy of Sciences. But no response has yet been received.

At the same time, Russian oligarchs are actively promoting yourself (self-PR): they claim that they allocate billions of rubles for the purchase of medical masks, ventilation devices (ventilators), the construction of hospitals, support for small businesses, etc. According to the oligarchs, they provide financial assistance through their own or state funds. Due to the high corruption in Russia and the closed nature of structures, it is difficult to verify the sources and recipients of these benefits. Judging by the general figures of "donations", all the problems of Russian medicine should be resolved. In practice, there is not even a wide distribution of medical masks for free; the condition of many hospitals is deplorable, financial assistance to people is not provided.

The same oligarchs actively donate money in other countries, including Europe, UK, USA, which enthusiastically accept Russian money, possibly of dubious origin. This is a very big ethical and legal problem: should a welfare country accept foreign money without proof of legitimacy despite the fact that in the country of origin of money there is high corruption, an authoritarian regime, millions of people are poor?

During the pandemic in Russia, communist ideals and principles are almost not mentioned. More and more debates and discussions related to helping people, the idea of direct cash payments, the basic income, its characteristics, sources of financing, etc. At people makes an impression by the term "guaranteed," since it has something in common with the guarantees and stability of the Soviet Union.

Of course, there is a lot of self-PR, political use of the idea by unscrupulous politicians and parties, manipulating the term "basic income" in the selfish interests (give discounts, points for loyalty) as basic income, etc. But people are more and more interested in the basic income idea, basic income identified with new forms of social guarantees.

It is important that politicians and officials begin to publicly support the idea of direct cash payments. One of the first to support the issuance of a fixed amount of money to needy categories of citizens was a well-known political, state and economic leader, co-author of the privatization program in Russia, head of the state corporation "Rusnano" Anatoly Chubais back in March 2020. A group of economists and deputies also called for direct payments to all Russian citizens during the period of the pandemic.