The Collective and Class in a Russian Factory*

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1. Introduction

Ever since the collapse of a planned economy, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor has been the constant concern of the Russian public. When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Russia's Gini coefficient was 0.29, but it rose up to 0.41 at the end of 2006, showing the booming economy in the 2000s has barely changed income disparity (Bank of Finland 2008). Perhaps to some optimists, though it is not sound by international standards, this figure might not seem so seriously grave, compared to the USA (0.40 in 2004), or even China (0.496 in 2006).1)

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1) Statistics on China notoriously vary, but the Bank of Finland and other sources estimate that economic inequality in China exceeds that in the USA. See an article on the 15 Feb., 2007, Dong-A Ilbo. For reference, the Gini coefficient in Korea was 0.351 in 2006, and those in Japan and Sweden were 0.24 and 0.25 respectively.
2) Lilia Ovcharova, the Director of Academic Programs at the Independent Institute for Social Policy and of the Laboratory for Standards of Living at the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute for Socioeconomic Issues, points out that comparing the poorest 10% and the richest 10% in the same region masks the income disparity between regions. "Moscow has the same level of development as Europe, while the South and Eastern Siberia are more like Africa." (http://gateway2russia.com/st/art231925.php; search: 10 Feb. 2008). For example, she argues, the average income in Moscow is seven times higher than in the
However, an ordinary Russian has every reason to believe the existing economic inequality should exceed this official figure. One of them is the widespread existence of the side income, of which the rich must have more opportunities; and the other is a great regional difference in income, which these kinds of statistics do not reveal.  

For many Russians who have lived the old Soviet days, the rising income disparity is a shocking and deteriorating development the newly-introduced market economy has brought with it. Over a glass of vodka, people often pinpoint the name of “enemies” among those in authorities in the past and at present who should be blamed for the presence of the homeless, the unemployed, the increasing public utility charges and the oligarch extravagance. Poverty is a popular topic you can hear everyday and in every corner of Russian society. Nevertheless, people’s complaints, curse and deploration, all of which usually evoke the interlocutors’ resonances successfully, hardly lead to the actual action to protect their rights on a collective basis. Instead, they tend to ask for a favour to those in power in an individual way when they are themselves in trouble.

The anthropologist Ries (1997) ascribes this mysterious phenomenon—the actively vicious complaint and the inertia in action—to the structure and functioning of the discourse, as Russian talk contributes itself to the cultural reproduction of social evils Russians are complaining about. The sociologist Ashwin (1999) analyses workers’ incompetence to stand up for their rights on a workshop level, concluding that the workers have been organised through the trade union, but that it has not been in the interest of workers but functioned merely as a belt between the workers and the Communist Party since the 1917 revolution. In this paper, I shall argue for the other dimension of sociality—the collective (kollektiv)—in order to understand better the seeming contraction of discourse and action at the poorest region, Ingushia.
workplace. As I explain later, the collective (kollektiv) is a primary unit of social life in every sense during the Soviet times, and has continuously shaped the people's sociality even after the collapse of the old system. It has eroded and dominated "class consciousness," while the way in which the idea of class is interpreted and consumed to make sense of people's everyday life transforms itself in a Russian way. My argument here refers in the first place to a group of working people in an enterprise, but hopefully has some implications beyond certain workplaces and toward Russians' social lives in general.

The data and information I use for this paper is mainly based upon a fieldwork in Irkutsk and its neighbouring cities during 2001-2002 and 2003, but preliminary fieldwork in 2000 and library research afterwards also help me to understand the changing, social context in which the workers live an everyday life. The main research site for this paper is a printing-house which used to employ about 550 people at its maximum in the early 1980s, but now about 220 people after the lay-off during 1996-97 3). Along with the lay-off, five workshops were incorporated into two: the book and journal workshop and newspaper workshop. It was not the state's but the Communist Party's property in the Soviet era, and thereby as of 2007 has not yet been privatized like other 67 printing-houses of the same kind. The official figures for wages in the printing-house were not given to me, but an approximation from my person inquiry in 2002 was: less skilled workers were paid around 3,000 roubles a month, and more skilled workers were paid around 9,000 roubles a month. In short, the average wage in the printing-house seemed to be no lower than that of many other enterprises in Irkutsk and in the whole of Russia. In 2001, the average monthly wage of Irkutsk was 4,124 roubles, which was, of course, far lower than that of Moscow (4,924 roubles), but higher than that of Krasnoyarsk (3,916 roubles) and of Vladivostok (3,584 roubles)4). In this paper, the term

3) In order to protect the informants' privacy, I will not specify the name of the enterprise in which I carried out my fieldwork, and I will use the pseudonym for the persons I interviewed.
“workers” refers to “manual workers,” and the term “the employees” refers to the whole employees including office workers and manual workers altogether.

2. Manual Workers as a Working Class

Just like elsewhere, Russian factories officially categorise their employees, but what is distinctive about Russian factories is the fundamental division between basic (osnovnoi) workers and non-basic (neosnovnoi) workers. In the case of this printing-house, most employees fall into the category of basic workers, whereas the non-basic workers include porters, security guards, and cleaners whose jobs are mainly carried out by pensioners (the former workers of the printing-house). Actually, this is more of a differentiation rather than a simple division. As the term “non-basic” implies, porters, security guards and cleaners are not seen as being crucial, but as being auxiliary to the production, thus their jobs could be easily filled by anybody without training, fired if necessary, supplemented by other basic workers and therefore badly paid. This division is not peculiar in this printing-house, but commonly found in all (Soviet and) Russian factories.

Table 1: The Number of the Workforces in the Printing-House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of the Employees</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Basic Workers</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialists</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Workers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Workers</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Non-Basic Workers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this official categorisation, managers include not only shop chiefs and departmental chiefs, but also foremen and forewomen. Specialists largely refer to engineers, economists, lawyers and so forth who have usually had a higher education. Another division among the basic workers in the above table is between the office workers and manual workers. In Russian, they have completely different words (office workers, sluzhebnye; manual workers, rabochie), and imply a significant importance. Although the division between the two is merely a kind of sub-division under the category of the basic workers, the workers often call the office workers “them.” Again, among the manual workers, depending on their career, work skill and profession, there is also differential status, economically and socially. Nonetheless, the manual workers as a whole have a strong sense of belonging to the working class (rabochii klas). However, the notion of “class” they have inherited from the Soviet era is different from what the official Soviet ideology stipulated, which defined social classes as those historically determined by their relation to the means of production (cf. Lenin 1972: 409-434). Working class is identified by the workers only as a group of manual workers, but not as including office workers (sluzhebnye) and specialists, although their relations to the means of production are not different. Office workers are recognised as ‘them’, against ‘us’, “who lived [live] off them [workers] in a morally reprehensible way” (Davies 2000: 57).

One day in the printing-house I asked Losha, the photoset operator in the book and journal workshop, how many people worked in his workshop. He answered, “I myself don’t know. But maybe thirty people…” “No, definitely more than that,” I retorted to him. Then, Losha said, “Many more people in the other building are engaged in the administrative jobs. I don’t know what they do. Anyway, newspaper shop people make money,

5) I agree with Fitzpatrick (1999: 20-46; 2000: 5) that in the people’s perception during the Soviet era class was related to differential consumption, but not to the ownership of the means of production.
but the administrative staff just count. White skin (*belaya kozha*)!" According to the official figures (Table 1), the number of manual workers definitely exceeds that of office workers, specialists, and managers (190 vs. 37). Nonetheless, the number of the former is often imagined as being small and the number of the latter as being excessive. When the workers express their unhappiness about office workers, they exclude production managers from the category of "unnecessary people who just calculate." Whether or not one is directly engaged in production is the yardstick between "us" and "them." Those engaged in production create value that is nowadays profit or money, whereas the administrative staff are often described as being "a parasite" (Bahro 1981: 168; Clarke 1995: 7).

Thus their sense of belonging is based upon common experiences obtained through working in production, but this sense of belonging also requires moral justifications and imagination. The moral justifications the workers make for their innocence and moral superiority has a long history in Russia, and is similar to that found in the idealist populist language elsewhere. What is interesting in Russian workers' moral dimension is that it is based upon Marx's labour theory of value. Discussing social identity in the 1930s' Russia, the historian Davies found ordinary workers and peasants still influenced by the language of the church (Davies 2000). By contrast, even after the collapse of the Soviet system, the workers borrow the language of the Soviet ideology which they believe would make their moral superiority accepted by all. Pasha, the photoset operator in the newspaper shop as well as the ex-secretary of the Party, said:

"Earlier, working class was considered the most important... When we got to know each other, we asked, "I am a factory worker. What are you?" 'Uhm... You are a respected person,' the interlocutor would think and answer, "I am a medical doctor." 'Woo... You are a shit, although your profession is important,' we thought. "What are you?" "I'm a shopkeeper." 'You are a shit.' "What are you?" "I am a teacher." "You are normal." "I am a kolkhoznik (a peasant working in a collective farm)." "You are all right, but who makes the tractors and trucks? We,
workers." But at present you can be a respected person by engaging in trading and making money. What’s that?

Of course, this hierarchical valuation of professions is not made by every worker, nor is it agreed upon by many people who are not manual workers. In the Soviet era, for instance, some school teachers warned their pupils that should they neglect the course they would become nothing but a worker in the factory. However, the moral claim that those who produce the wealth of the country should be treated better and fairer is widely shared by workers, and this claim is in turn applied to justify differential status among workers—those who make more of a contribution to production should be treated better.

In order to regard those working even in the same workshop as belonging to the same group, from the outset a worker needs a political imagination that explains what the common experiences in production are meant to be, and that calls individuals for the collective subject. Otherwise, an individual worker might be no more than a photoset operator, paper loader, or trolley operator within a hierarchical order. On this point, the Soviet ideology provides a good enough reason for the workers to assume that they are all working class in the sense that they create value which is the nature of the wealth of the nation. As such, it taught the workers that they should be proud of becoming workers, and that as the master of the nation they must not have any cause to be subversive. However, when social practices have revealed that the opposite is the case, workers may make use of this ideology in order to assert their claim for a fairer treatment.

In this light, as Zizek points out, "ruling ideas are never directly the ideas of the ruling class" (1999: 186) because "the very form of ideological universality bears witness to the struggle between (at least) two particular contents: the 'popular' content expressing the secret longings of the dominated majority, and the specific content expressing the interests of the forces of domination" (ibid.: 185). Just as anti-colonialist national
movements are generated by colonialist oppression which paves the way for passive ethnic self-awareness to transform itself toward a modern nation-state (ibid.: 255), so has the Soviet ideology, which was geared up for the proletariatisation of the whole society, opened up a space in which workers have recognised themselves as a distinctive social group with their social interests being suppressed. This is not to say that the social category of "working class" imposed from above automatically leads those, who believe themselves to belong to this social category, to uncover the self-contradiction of the ruling ideas in a destined direction. Rather, it is to say that there is always room for struggle over identity, whose trajectory takes up distinctive and individual features depending on people's social lives and the way in which they interpret them.

Indeed, the term, working class itself is a product of a specific historical experience in Britain, for instance, where 'industrious classes' with various jobs such as smiths, weavers, shoemakers, and the like, converged toward the political identity of the working class through asserting incessant claims to new rights since the 1780s. "Thus working men formed a picture of organization of society, out of their own experience and with the help of their hard-won and erratic education, which was above all a political picture" (Thompson 1964: 782). Regarding the making of the working class, the historian Thompson concludes, "Class also acquired a peculiar resonance in English life: everything, from their schools to their shops, their chapels to their amusements, was turned into a battleground of class" (ibid.: 914). In England, the class identity of the working population was formed as being clearly against 'the other' in every aspect of social life, and 'the other' was in this regard the possessors of capital which "is reserved labour" (ibid.: 912).

By contrast, despite the clear distinction between us and them made by Russian workers, it remains uncertain who 'they' are as a social group. Depending on the context, 'they' may be office workers, managers, or political leaders, but none of them are perceived as 'the other' against whom the workers have developed their social identity. In Mandel's
interview with one of the leaders of the workers’ uprising in the 1970s (1993: 66), the workers made direct demand to the government, considering the directors not as their antagonist but merely agents from the regime. But what was the regime? Whereas the leaders of the regime such as Khrushchev and Putin are perceived as coming ‘from the people’ by some workers, certain leaders such as Gorvachev are those who have belonged to ‘above’ from the beginning. Therefore Simon Clarke (1992) defines the Soviet Union as a unique social formation, distinctive from the capitalist mode of production and from the socialist in an ideal sense, in which it was hard to pinpoint the structure of exploitation.

I have so far argued that the sense of belonging to working class is very obvious among the workers, but that the notion of working class the workers have is distinguished from English working class, for example. Although they recognise their interest as a worker is different from the director or the office workers in general, their potential competence to stand up for their right is limited. In their notion of class, although they often mention “them versus us,” who they are is not clear and very contextual. The other fundamental reason is, however, that the more embracing and inclusive notion of the collective (kollektiv) exerts powerful influence on the workers’ everyday life. This realm of sociality, the collective (kollektiv), has competed with, has been intertwined with, and has eroded ‘class consciousness’ over identity struggle.

3. The Whole Employees as the Collective

Indeed, whether a worker works as a pressman, newspaper loader or mechanic, the first point of reference for his/her group is collective

6) Interestingly enough, the Soviet directors in turn perceived commissariats as 'them', implying anybody above in hierarchy might be 'them' and despised (Gregory & Markevich 2002).
(kollektiv): “We Russians have always worked as a kollektiv.” The word, kollektiv, whose etymological root is the English word ‘collective’, seems obscure and elusive at first glance. Depending on the context, it may connote a workshop or brigade to which workers belong, a whole enterprise for which they work, or even the Soviet state of which they all were citizens (cf. Kharkhordin 1999). Nonetheless, collective (kollektiv) refers to certain established, if shifting, social relations. Whatever the term indicates, an individual was able to exist as a proper social entity only through membership (or memberships) of the collective (kollektiv). I shall argue that the kollektiv in the Soviet and Russian workplace has been a materialised form of society that imposes and expects an individual to perform desirable deeds, and in turn provides what is needed to secure an individual’s social survival. The abstract notion of society has been made visible to people through the kollektiv, forcing them to feel its presence within a defined nation-state.

In my discussion of collective, I am inspired by the Russian sociologist Kharkhordin for his rich analysis and historical evidence, but I take a different path to his approach. At first, Kharkhordin sets up core elements of individualism which in the West have been developed through private confession within the Catholic Church (Kharkhordin 1999: 3). Drawing heavily on Foucault’s work, History of Sexuality (1978), he then attempts to seek out what a Russian equivalent to confession in the West would be; i.e. criticism and self-criticism in the Soviet era that served for a discovery of the self and self-fashioning in the public gaze. He notes that in Russia the individualization process has taken place through a different history and its constituent factors are also not completely identical to the Western Christian tradition. However, what Kharkhordin takes for granted in his discussion of the collective and the individual is a universal concept of individualism that may have merely regional variants. However my argument is that what is actually understood as individualism varies depending on culture, just as the notion of class is different in cultures.

As Verdery has observed, the party-state in socialist countries cleansed
"other organizational forms which might compete with its initiatives" except for nationalities in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the two long-term federations (Verdery 1996: 85; author's emphasis). The state instead attempted to organize itself as an all-embracing social entity through collectives. Kharkhordin cites a group of Soviet scholars' work which classified sixteen distinctive types of Soviet collectives, ranging from a family, children's collectives in institutions, students' collectives, production-based collectives to collectives of sports enthusiasts and a collective of tourists abroad (Kharkhordin 1999: 87). In short, each and every social unit in the Soviet Union was supposed to be organised as a collective. "A Russian entered a collective as a small child, passed from one to another in the course of life, but was never (normally) outside a collective" (ibid.: 87).

In its reception from the English word "collective", kollektiv originally referred to a social group dedicated to the Communist cause and was used as a synonym of a Party cell after the 1917 revolution. In the mid-1930s, the usage of the word was expanded to indicate every group of state employees working in the same factory or office because socialism was officially proclaimed to have been established in 1934 with the eradication of the hostile social classes. Every citizen was qualified as part of a social body imbued with Communist Consciousness. Although the word, collective was the Party's terminology in the beginning, after the mid-1930s it gradually served as a general sociological term for a group in opposition to an individual. Towards the late Soviet era, as Kharkhordin shows, the political implications the word once contained slipped away, despite the state's attempt to invoke the difference between socialist collectives and capitalist social groups. The Soviet public simply presumed that in capitalist countries people would also live and work in what was equivalent to collective in the Soviet Union.

The organization of the whole population in this peculiar way resulted in two things: first, the creation of the object that would be disciplined, monitored, and studied as a constituent element of the state; second, the
homogenization by which an individual was directly associated with a social unity which after all returned to the state. Let me start with the first point: that the collective as the subject has emerged from the simultaneous process of the creation of the governable object. An individual citizen was invented as a member of a certain social group which would impose sets of morals, expectations and punishments, and also offer a whole array of social lives. This corresponds to what the police do and how society is created as the object of the police in Foucault’s discussion, if, for the sake of analysis, the realm of politics (socialist regime), whose task is fighting the internal and external enemies of the state using weapons and laws, is separated from that of policy which aims to foster the citizen’s life and the state’s strength by means of intervention in the behaviours of individuals (Foucault 1991: 87–104; Gordon 1991: 1–52). “The police see to everything regulating society...In short, life is the object of the police” (Foucault 1988: 157).

This process was made possible in the Soviet Union through sometimes brutal purges, frequent punishments, and consistent surveillance in the name of Communist ideals. Nonetheless, the creation of governable human beings was not an easy task, but required the state to make tedious and relentless efforts because the task is only completed when the object itself has internalised the techniques of governance. Thus, as late as the Khrushchev era, the ‘all-out collectivization of life’ was once again re-invited to intensify collectivist practices in established collectives and to found new collectives for those used to be outside collective (Kharkhordin 1999: 279–280). However, despite the nominal functioning of the collective as the all-embracing entity in the Soviet state, there were always those who were excluded from the collective because the collective could not be perceived and recognised without the existence of its outside, ‘the Other’ (Humphrey 2001). Yet the disfranchised were easily forgotten by those who stayed in the collective because those outside the collective were not a social entity proper. In Vietnam, too, the project of creating the object of the police and the acceptance of it on the part of the object is not
functioning without obstacles. Against the notion of society imposed by the regime which expects every citizen to feel affiliated to it, the people are obstinately more reliant on their “home place” as a referential point of their social presence (Schlecker 2005).

However, the creation of the governable object that at the same time produced the subject, i.e. the collective, was realised to a certain degree in the Soviet Union partly because the collective not only designated the boundaries of social lives, but also provided material resources for them. The Soviet enterprise in particular, among various collectives, functioned as a total social institution that “provided most of services that are provided by many different institutions in other societies” (Humphrey 1995:7). It was “a social institution of production, exchange, consumption and culture” and its basis “was not capital, but the productive activity of the labour collective” (Clarke 1992: 7). This might seem similar to what Goffman terms a total institution, referring to prisons, camps, mental hospitals etc. where “all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority” (Goffman 1961: 17). In Goffman’s total institution, all members are treated alike and required to do the same thing as tightly scheduled by the authorities, while many human needs are fulfilled by the bureaucratic organization. Unlike Goffman’s total institution, however, the Soviet collective is not cut off temporarily from the wider society, but is rather society itself. There is nowhere outside the collective and, in its ideally mature state, no split between staff and inmates under “the faultless and ubiquitous disciplinary grid” (Kharkhordin 1999: 303).

Secondly, as a homogenizing force, the collective plays down what may appear as differentials among its members, such as social classes. In the case of the enterprise (production collective) that, of course, includes management, the collective has competed with and has dominated class consciousness over the identity struggle. Like any other identities, the collective mandates its members not to think of differentials but to be reminded of the sameness among them. The director is recognised as “them” (“He is different from us”) within the collective, but this difference
is naturally given to the collective. Management is not understood as an intrinsic antagonist of the differentiating structures but as an indispensable, functional element of the production collective. The differential pay, social status, and various privileges appear as a 'natural' reward prepared for the different task which the director does to the production collective. This seems to be comparable to Radcliffe-Brown's exposition of structural functionalism, in which he used an analogy of the human body and its parts with reference to society and individuals (1952). By the same token, the differential status among workers is also 'natural' and inevitable, as far as the collective comprises different jobs and professions together with different degrees of work skill. Members of the collective have performed different jobs in order to fulfil universal needs for any society which will outlive the ideological connotation initially attributed to the collective. If the political mobilization toward the making of the working class in England called workers for "unthinking" different social environments among them, apolitical mobilization towards collective in the Soviet Union urged its members not to be wavered by the differentials within the collective. However, to put something aside from the realm of the political is an extreme way of being political.

The making of the collective as a homogenizing process is not just to neglect the existing discriminatory differentials within it, but to create and essentialise them as a crucial basis for the collective. In this way, fair treatment is perceived by workers as a reward in proportion to their contribution to production. The differential contribution to production 'naturally' results from organizing a work collective, as there is no production outside collective. In this sense, we could say that those engaged in production are not what is called working class, but members of a collective which include fore(wo)men, managers and often directors. In contrast, after the retreat of the dictatorship in 1987, one of the main goals that the explosive growth of labour movement in South Korea attempted to achieve was to abolish or diminish discriminatory treatments among workers, such as gaps between office workers and manual workers and
among manual workers (Koo 2001).

However, the homogenising force of the collective does not obliterate the different voices about differentials but rather allows them to buzz and grumble from the periphery, as long as the whole system is not threatened to be overthrown. The existence of these different voices was what was omitted from the functionalist analysis many Soviet sociologists in the late Soviet era arduously adopted to explain their own society, when these sociologists did not regard them as social deviations. The complaints about the established system have been expressed under the surface of official rhetoric, as packing workers who are paid the least do. This is not only because workers' "class consciousness" has still indefatigably survived, but also because the collective, in a sense, exists as a process or movement whose aim—to create the governable object, to discipline it, and to erect it as subject—is never to be fully accomplished. The collective needs buzzing voices in order to prove its reason for being: "There is still something more left to be disciplined." Without fulfilling its unattainable aims, however, the collective is now on the wane in the wake of the social upheaval, in particular the lay-off in this printing-house.

4. The Lay-off and its Aftermath

From the workers' point of view, the most important event that took place in the printing-house in the 1990s is the massive lay-off that halved the size of the workforce. The lay-off in 1996-97 not only culminated the processes that had stripped the workers of social benefits and institutionalised protection, including stable wages?). It also symbolised the

7) Since around the time of the lay-off in 1996-97, the distribution of flats has ceased, one canteen has been closed down, and the site of the other is now rent as a Chinese restaurant. No cultural event is held in the concert hall any more. No holiday voucher, coupon for car purchase and gardening plot is provided. The financial support for a neighbouring school is now abandoned.
dismantling of the familiar environment into which workers had been inextricably integrated for a long time. What the workers feel about the upheaval is not just anxiety about their job, but insecurity about the whole of their social being. Whereas the collective still functions as the referential group for workers, what it offers to workers in the service of binding them to it is hardly more than monetary income that is sometimes unstable and always deficient for everyday life. Its functioning as ‘the social total institution’ ceased, but the alternative to it has not yet emerged. In other words, what is transformed is ‘the social whole’, or society from a certain type to the unknown.

Since the end of the planned economy, the workers begun to search for individual strategies of survival, instead of collective action to secure their job and workplace, although mutual assistance in a material and non-material form is still somehow practiced. Socialising has been less and less frequent, mistrust among workers has grown. In the past, they said, “You can find your best friend only at the workplace,” but as Petrovich, a photoset operator in the newspaper workshop, said, “Earlier, your shoulder was equal to mine. I believed in that, but I don’t now believe it. I don’t trust my colleagues because they trust only themselves. So you have to trust only yourself!”—this has become today’s maxim. The anxiety about their fundamental basis of social presence separates one individual from the other without reference to society. The anthropologist Strathern argues that the antinomy of society and individual always leaves attributes of a culture under study to be explained (Strathern 1988: 3–21). In the Russian enterprise, the assumption that individual is defined in relation to society, which is the collective, is now being questioned.

The municipal authorities now charge maintenance fees, and electricity and gas expenses for the flat, which have drastically increased even during my stay in 2001. Since the early 1990s, however, the printing house has made a contract with a collective farm to borrow plots of land for its employees to grow vegetables. The enterprise arranges transportation to go to the farm twice a year.
One may say that individualization in a Hobbesian sense is taking place, but this type of individualization takes various shapes to an uneven degree, depending on regional and social environments. In the city I carried out fieldwork, one of the exceptionally prosperous enterprises is the aircraft factory which can afford to maintain much of the social services and to pay one of the highest levels of wages in the city. The housing for its employees is located near the factory, establishing itself as a semi-autonomous town within the city. Outsiders who approach this district are immediately suspected and interrogated by the residents who call themselves *zabotniki* (factory people). To get a job in the factory is increasingly difficult, unless one has a member of family or relatives who has already worked in the factory. Like this aircraft factory, a social group which has managed to secure its survival may be extremely exclusive. In this regard, an individual in the atomization process may be not only a person but also a social group.

However, significantly the lay-off characterizes a fundamental change the workers had to undergo, and it is one of the topics which the workers often refrained from speaking about openly, particularly with me. The workers' silence about the lay-off may be related to what Boym calls 'communication with half-words' that refers to the ultimate truth (*istina*) of life (Boym 1994: 1-2). However, that is in this case only a partial explanation. The workers' reluctance to touch upon the topic is concerned with the fundamental ground of their ontology, that of inclusion and exclusion. Pasha, the secretary of the Party in the printing-house, said:

Dismissal! That's a tormenting remembrance. People want to remember something good, but not something bad... You have to bear one thing in mind, very important fact that people were not accustomed to unemployment. We lived in a country where there was never unemployment. Of course, there have been wars, collectivisation, revolutions, and the like. But despite all events, people could always find a job. In the beginning, we didn't understand what unemployment was like. In 1991, the first dismissal happened. Then, those who had worked
for one or two years and pensioners were made redundant. That wasn’t a big shock. They were not sacked, but went out on their own… Even in 1996, people thought that the dismissed people could find a job elsewhere. Bit by bit, we came to understand that redundancy was made everywhere in the country. We just opened our mouths and watched television. People went to other places to get a job. They found out that there was no place for them there as well… People were really scared. At that time, many people came to me, “You may be able to do something for me.” But what can I do? The company didn’t have the money to pay people. Soon they noticed that they wouldn’t be asked to go out because the main target was those with under five or six year career service, pensioners, and drunkards.

On the one hand, the broken-hearted memories of the lay-off that happened in 1996–97 still invoke poignantly the vulnerability of the current jobs they hold. On the other hand, those now working in the printing house were relieved that their service period in the company would bring some sort of security of their job. The reassurance they had was achieved in the face of the co-workers’ redundancy by way of confirming their superiority (in this case their lengthy service period) and showing indifference to others. The binding section of the book and journal workshop is one of the production units that underwent the most severe dismissal. When I asked them how they felt when the redundancy had been made, they would answer, “I knew that I would be safe because I had already worked for ten years then.” Olga (fifty years old) is one of the remaining workers in the binding section.

YH: Were you concerned about your co-workers at the time of dismissal?

8) This is because those who have worked for the company for a long time know the labour process inside and out, whereas those with short service period and pensioners are considered less productive.

9) The service period that decided who would resign varied depending upon jobs and workshops, but after the lay-off within the same section many remaining workers have fallen into an approximate service period.
Olga: Me? I didn’t think that they would drive me out. I am a specialist (спецпайсилит). Without me, who would work on the sewing machine? I knew that, and I wasn’t worried about dismissal. The foremost criterion for dismissal was the service period. The young workers were sacked first.

YH: I mean, what did you think of your co-workers’ dismissal?

Olga: They were young. It’s possible for them to find out a job somewhere. Some of them went to the Obmashinform [a new private printing-house: YH], or somewhere. I don’t know where they are now.

Mariya (her assistant): No. It was very difficult for them to get a stable job.

It is not coincidental that Olga started with her story in response to my question, “What did you think about the other workers’ dismissal?”, as many other workers do. They first confirm that they knew they would continue to work and proceed to talk of the others’ case. Another worker in the binding section, Tanya said, “The dismissal—of course, it was a shock, but that’s not a great shock. The process went very slowly. For a year, they talked and talked with the manager (начальник). We knew that we were going to work. During that process, many people went out on their own…” In her account, those sacked are already defined as ‘them’ who are outsiders to the collective in this context. I hardly encountered workers talking to each other about those who had already resigned, and they are easily forgotten. An old plumber who came to the printing house two years earlier after retiring from his former workplace told me that he never invited friends home and was not invited by friends since then. The work collective he used to belong to was completely disconnected from him, while the new collective was not a proper place for socialising as it was full of newcomers with diverse experiences, including himself.

Humphrey observes that exclusion from the political-social group has

10) The term ‘specialist’ here refers to a skilled worker who mainly work on a machine, differing from the way which is officially used by the company and in the table before mentioned.
constantly taken place both in the Soviet and post-Soviet period and has not been confined to the type of collective I discuss. In her extreme example of a state farm in the remote Evenki area, “’Exclusion’ here occurs on a different principle: almost everyone has alienated themselves and given up. Only the few friends of the director are left to run the farm” (Humphrey 2001: 346). Although the disenfranchisement from the collective in this case deprives free or subsidised access to petrol, hayfields, fodder, electricity, machinery, firewood and transport, all of which the people cannot afford to purchase on their own, it is accepted as a routine of social lives and those excluded are soon averted as outsiders. She argues that in contemporary Russia this inclusion and expulsion constitutes a more fundamental dimension of inequality than ethnicity, religion, class or gender based distinctions.

5. Conclusion

In principle, all social entities in the Soviet Union were organised into the collective, outside of which there existed only the state of nature, but at the same time the collective needed its outside in order to define itself. The collective included every soul in the Soviet Union, but at the same time it needed to exclude somebody in order to establish itself as a defined social entity. On this self-contradiction, exclusion from a collective did not work as a disenfranchisement from the entire collective, but as a demotion to a lower grade of collective, as the state of nature had already been internalised as an imagined counterpart of society within the collective and there was no state of nature per se. Since the Soviet era, in this way, the excluded are those against whom the members of collective have forged their sense of belonging, and those against whom they have developed fear.

In the meantime, the idea of class does not have clearly-defined “the
Other" against which their identity has developed. Class has functioned as a kind of sub-category of the collective in a sense, but has not designated the people’s sociality on a fundamentally ontological level. Russian workers have sometimes fought for their rights, as shown in the miners’ strike taking over an entire town and blocking highways in the 1990s, but not as the members of working class, but as the member of the collective the whole employees belong to. The directors also supported their demands to get much-needed subsidiary from the government. After the chaotic periods have passed and the interest of the workers has obviously separated from that of the director, the workers without experiences of having stood up for their right on their feet remain helpless grumbling about the unfair treatment from the management. Clarke cites the FNPR (Federation of Independent Trade Union of Russia) report on the 1999-2000 collective agreement campaign that "FNPR did not know of a single case in which a primary trade union organisation had taken any kind of action in support of its demands" (Clarke 2003: 220).

By contrast, fear of exclusion from the collective always haunts the minds of the workers, as it means the return to the state of nature in which everyone struggles with each other for his/her survival. At the same time, exclusion is needed, as it provides the existence of collective and its remaining members’ survival. It should be taken as a matter of the normal life, as it has functioned as a founding principle of the collective. However, the state of nature, deemed the survival of the strongest, had already been justified and realised within the collective, when they just watched their co-workers being sacked and were relieved by their (temporal) job security.
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초록
리시아 공장에서 콜렉티브와 계급

남 영호

리시아가 체제 전환을 진행한 이래, 사회적 지위의 급격한 하락을 경험해온 집단 가운데 하나가 노동자이다. 소비에트 시대 병목상으로 또 때로는 실질적으로 주어졌던 국가의 주인이라는 지위 대신, 일금체불, 실업, 생활 수준의 상대적 하락, 사회보장의 대폭적 축소 등은 수많은 노동자들이 일상적으로 겪어야 하는 현실이 되었다. 노동자들은 자신의 지위 하락을 피부로 느끼면서, 경영자의 이익과 자신들의 이익이 근본적으로 다르다고 주장하기도 한다. 그럼에도 불구하고 이러한 "계급 의식"이 자신의 권리 옹호를 위한 집단적인 움직임으로까지 발전하는 경우는 거의 없다. 이 논문은 러시아 노동자들의 의식/담론과 실천 사이의 이러한 피리로, 계급과 콜렉티브(коллектива)라는 서로 다른 존재론적 차원 간의 경계로 이해하려고 하는 시도이다. 콜렉티브는 노동자들에게 계급보다도 더 포괄적이면서 사회생활의 모든 면을 규정하는 존재 양식이다. 이는 소비에트 시대를 거치면서 그리고 시장경제 체제로의 이행 이후에도, 계급보다 우선적으로 러시아 노동자의 사회생활에 준거를 제공해 왔다. 콜렉티브 안에서 존재하는 경영자와 노동자 사이의 차이, 또 간부와 평직원 사이의 차이는, 생산조직 내에서 자연적인 역할 분담과 그에 따른 정당한 보상이라는 측면으로 받아들여진다. 반면 노동자들은 스스로를 노동자 계급의 일원으로 여기면서도, 그에 대응하는 타자의 존재를 분명하게 규정하지 못하고 있다. 이들에게 계급이란, 생산수단의 소유 여부로 갈라지는 사회집단 이라기보다, 생산과정 내에서 역할의 차이인 것이다. 이러한 점에서, 노동자들의 경영자에 대한 불만이란 결국 콜렉티브 내의 차이가 적절 수준으로 유지되기를 바라는 콜렉티브 의식의 또 하나의 측면일 뿐이다.

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