

SCTCMG 2021
International Scientific Conference "Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of
Modern Globalism"

POVERTY AND MISERY – CATEGORIES OF THE PHILOSOPHY
OF LAW AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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Abstract

The level and quality of living standards are deteriorating in almost all countries of the world, including Russia. The article analyzes one of the features of modern Russia – an abnormally large proportion of the poor population in a rich country. This population group does not have stable socio-economic characteristics, in this regard, it needs constant monitoring: studying the mode, level and quality of life, value system, behaviour strategy to improve the social policy effectiveness of the state. Issues on the level and quality of living standards have always been given some attention, but mainly scientific searches were conducted in the field of socio-economic, monetary and financial relations, comparative sociology and statistics. In the paradigm of the philosophy of law, the problems of poverty and misery were not studied. The object of the study is the low-income population of Russia. The subject of the study is the dynamics of the main indicators of the living standards, the causes of poverty and misery, their conditionality by the social legislation of the state. The purpose of the study is to identify the signs, scale, and depth of poverty in Russia. Based on sociological comparative studies, the analysis of poverty and misery in Russia in comparison with other countries, in particular, with the People's Republic of China, is carried out. The peculiarity of the article is that the analysis of the "population poverty" phenomenon is not limited to socio-economic, sociological and statistical methods, but is conducted in the paradigm of the philosophy of law.

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Keywords: Poverty, misery, living standards, philosophy of law



1. Introduction

The key problems of human and social development are the level and quality of life, the degree of population well-being, which has two vectors of global civilizational development: spiritual (science, education, health, culture, sports) and material (social well-being, well-fare, poverty, misery). They determine the place of the Russian population in the global system of social and political coordinates, in the community of nations. The Constitution of the Russian Federation (Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2021), adopted by a nationwide vote on 01.07.2020, gives special relevance to this issue. Article 7 states: "the Russian Federation is a social State whose policy is aimed at creating conditions for a worthy life and a free development of man". Humanity is not able to solve the problem of poverty, it still remains an integral feature of any society. The adoption of the new Constitution actualized the problem of the Russian population welfare, enable greater attention to the growth of poverty and misery, and improved social legislation and law enforcement practices. It is these problems that are the focus of this article.

2. Problem Statement

Social and cultural transformations in the context of modern globalism have practically not affected such a sphere of life as the material well-being of the population. The world community spends no less money on the supplies of officials who are involved in understanding and solving the problem of poverty and misery of the population than on supporting those who are actually poor. They are rich only in the enormous attention that is paid to them in the normative acts of both international and national-regional scale. The list of documents aimed at combating poverty and misery will take more than one hundred pages. For example, within the framework of the European Union, the "Europe 2020" strategy was developed in 2010, which consisted of five main areas designed to reduce large-scale poverty, but in most countries, it was not possible to achieve noticeable results.

Radical liberal reforms of the 90s of the twentieth century led to a sharp deterioration in the social well-being of the Russian population, an increase in poverty and misery. The measures taken by the Government have led to some improvement in the situation of poverty. In 2000, more than 42.3 million people were below the poverty line in Russia, in 2019 – 18.1, now 13.5 % of Russian citizens belong to the category of poor, 19.8 million people (Butkalyuk, 2021; Rosstat, 2019). The transformation of the Russian economy has led to the emergence of a working population, which by its parameters can be attributed to the "working poor". The poverty level is calculated under the minimum subsistence level, which in 2021 is set at 12,392 rubles for a working person, 11,423 for a child, and 9422 for a pensioner. The World Bank classifies those with income living of \$ 1.9 per day as poor.

Numerous works have been devoted to the study of the social state, various aspects of the issue on the level and quality of life, the degree of well-being, poverty and misery, the identification of causes, the development of methods for improving the well-being of the population (Abrahamson, 2001; Acemoglu, 2012; Antonova, 2019; Kapeliushnikov, 2019; Orlik, 2020; Rzhantsyna, 2018; Slobodenyuk, 2018; Varshavskaya, 2015; Zhukov, 2012, 2017). The article analyzes the poverty level of the Russian population from the perspective of the philosophy of law.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the dynamics of the main indicators of the living standards, the causes of poverty and misery, their conditionality by the social legislation of the state. Statistical data are systematized, the dynamics of social well-being, poverty and misery of the Russian population are analyzed. On this basis, a comparison of the relevant doctrines and concepts peculiar to different countries is carried out.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to establish the actual parameters of poverty and misery, to determine the place of the Russian population in the global system of social coordinates. The following tasks are solved: the features of Russian poverty are revealed; the dynamics of the number and the proportion of poor citizens in Russia is considered, the main parameters of poverty are monitored in comparison with similar ones in other states.

5. Research Methods

The main research methods are comparative analysis (comparative studies), sociological and mathematical methods of objectification of official statistics; philosophical method of revealing the transition of quantitative phenomena into qualitative characteristics of the social well-being of the population. On this basis, the method of forecasting the further development of the poverty and misery phenomenon is used.

6. Findings

Table 01 shows official statistics on the number of poor people and their share in the population of Russia, 1992–2019 (Rosstat, 2019).

Table 1. The number of poor people and their share in the population of Russia (1992-2019)

Year	Number of poor (million people)	In % of the total population
1992	49.3	33.5
1993	46.1	31.3
1994	32.9	22.4
1995	36.5	24.8
1996	32.5	22.1
1997	30.5	20.8
1998	34.3	23.4
1999	41.6	28.4
2000	42.3	29.0
2001	40.0	27.5
2002	35.6	24.6

2003	29.3	20.3
2004	25.2	17.6
2005	25.4	17.8
2006	21.6	15.2
2007	18.8	13.3
2008	19.0	13.4
2009	18.4	13.0
2010	17.7	12.5
2011	17.9	12.7
2012	15.4	10.7
2013	15.5	10.8
2014	16.1	11.2
2015	19.5	13.3
2016	19.5	13.2
2017	19.3	12.9
2018	18.9	12.3
2019	18.1	13.2

The dynamics analysis of the poverty and misery development in Russia has shown its abrupt nature. Thus, the number of poor people in the country decreased by 13.2 million from 1993 to 1994. Such a sharp decline in the number of poor people in one year is not found in the subsequent social history of the country. The largest number of poor people was recorded in 2000 – 42.3 million people (29 % of the population).

Since 2014, the deterioration of the social well-being of the Russian population has been recorded: prices for almost all types of goods and services have increased. A tenth of the population has changed to poor and destitute over the past 5-7 years. Not complying with the law and not taking into account the most difficult conditions associated with the pandemic, bailiffs acted vigorously, often without warning, they zeroed out accounts, including accounts of the pensioners, and the Moscow Government Finance Department did not return funds illegally confiscated from Muscovites, even in the presence of judicial decisions.

Of all the countries that have declared their commitment to poverty alleviation, the People's Republic of China has achieved impressive success, where the share of extremely poor people in 1990 was 61 % of the population, and by 2014 it had fallen to 4.2 % of the population (Antonova, 2019). For 30 years, China has increased the living area of the country by 8 times. The Chinese do not buy apartments, but access them. Incomes below 47 thousand rubles (in terms of Russian money) are not taxed in China. In the 20 years period of the 21st century, China returned 2,500 corrupt officials and 8.6 billion yuan to the country.

If offences, illegal behaviour, criminal infractions, and even crimes are classified as legal deviations, then the poverty of the Russian population is a political deviation, a deviation of the social policy pursued by the government from the norms of justice and basic human right to a dignified life.

Thus, the rights and freedoms of the individual, the interests of the country, the law, and morality are most bizarrely intertwined in such a phenomenon as the social well-being of a person.

In the sociology of law, poverty is a socio-economic category that has its own parameters and methods of measurement. In qualimetry, this phenomenon can be determined using more than 300 indicators (Zhukov, 2012). In politics, the topic of poverty is used as a means of influencing the electoral behavior of the population. In journalism, it is a way of exposing the greed of the oligarchs. An inexhaustible number of stories gave rise to numerous publications that reveal an absolutely social and legal evil – poverty and misery.

Modern researchers who consider social and legal problems on the conceptual basis of economics, sociology, philosophy and law have paid attention to global processes, as well as the combination of world and national trends. "At each new stage of mankind history, the most important indicator of its reasonableness is the degree of socio-normative system development, including law, personal and public morality" (Zorkin, 2018, p. 12). Zorkin (2019) is also right that "Russia has not designed a development strategy that would meet the expectations of Russian society and its ideas of justice" (p. 72).

Among foreign thinkers, the first to address the philosophical problems of poverty was the French economist, philosopher and sociologist P.J. Proudhon (1809–1865). "The old civilization is dying. The rising word "equality" is already illuminating the earth, and soon it will boil with a different life... With new feelings, new thoughts will also be born: faith, morality, law" (Proudhon, 1906, p. 36). Pierre-Joseph Proudhon developed these ideas in many of his works, but his main book was "The System of Economic Contradictions" or "The Philosophy of Poverty", published in French in 1846, that is, two years before the publication of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

It would seem that K. Marx and F. Engels should not have paid much attention to the socialist-anarchist Proudhon (1906), who confessed: "I do not propose any system... I demand the abolition of slavery, I want equality, I want the rule of law. Justice and only justice – this is the essence of my article" (p. 39). Dialectics of P.J. Proudhon is simple to explain, but difficult to understand. He writes: "...Communism strives for equality and for the law; property ... for independence and proportionality". At the same time, communism "becomes unjust and tyrannical", and property – "shy, anti-social". In this regard Proudhon (1906) concludes: "What communism and property want is good, but what they both lead to is bad", since "communism denies independence and proportionality, the property does not satisfy the requirements of equality and the law" (p. 63).

K. Marx gave an immediate response to the "Philosophy of Poverty" as early as December 1846. His book with the ironic title "The Poverty of Philosophy" was published in Paris and Brussels in 1847. Such a quick and abrupt reaction of K. Marx is probably explained by two circumstances: first, the ideas of P.J. Proudhon prevented the spread of Marxism in the proletarian environment, and secondly, the criticism of the philosophy of poverty allowed K. Marx to give his first systematic exposition of economic theory. In particular, criticizing the ideas of P.J. Proudhon about consumer and exchange value, K. Marx made one of those conclusions that has not lost its significance for the characterization of modern law, economics and morality. Also, he noted that "virtue, love, respect, knowledge, conscience" became the subject of trade under capitalism (the dominance of the liberal economy), that is, what was

never exchanged, sold, or bought. Marx (1955) characterized this period as "a time of universal corruption and universal venality" (p. 174).

In the XXI century, the ideas of P.J. Proudhon is experiencing a renaissance, as the problem of population poverty and misery came to the fore in the philosophy of law, the concept of human rights, and the theory of state and law. As an economist, P.J. Proudhon concluded that the well-being of the population depends not on the total amount of accumulated wealth, but on its fair distribution. The philosophical conclusion from this social economic axiom is that the power of production cannot be compared with the power of consumption, and therefore inequality and poverty will be universal phenomena. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon also justified another axiomatic conclusion, which was confirmed in the twentieth century and became one of the most striking characteristics of globalism in the twenty-first century: inequality of access to fair distribution leads a part of the population to poverty, and people driven to despair by hunger are on the path of deception, violence, robbery, and murder. He left as a legacy to his readers the commandments that poverty can be avoided in three ways – the education of the people; the improvement of industry; and the removing of parasitism.

The Philosophy of Poverty is a European work. But serious philosophical treatises on the greatest hardships of the impoverished state of the Russian people were written by P.Ya. Chaadaev, N.I. Novikov, D.I. Fonvizin, A.N. Radishchev, G.V. Plekhanov, V.I. Lenin. For example, A.N. Radishchev (1749–1802), working on the translation of "Reflections on Greek History" by Mably (1773), then in "Letter to a friend who lives in Tobolsk due to the duty of his rank" (1782), "The life of Fedor Vasilyevich Ushakov" (1788) and in the main book of his life – "Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow" (1790), he condemned poverty, disenfranchisement and slavery, their social consequences, in particular, the growth of crime. The suicide of A.N. Radishchev, the first Russian revolutionary writer, became a form of protest against the social vices of society.

In modern science, poverty is understood as a state when an individual or his family does not have the means to meet the basic needs of life. It is clear that in different countries and different historical periods, these needs have been assessed differently. One of the indicators of population poverty level is the ratio of the average per capita monetary income and the subsistence minimum, which is also a characteristic of the life quality. The subsistence minimum is a state standard and includes the consumer basket, the amount of mandatory payments and fees. The consumer basket consists of a minimum set of goods and services necessary for the maintenance of human life.

Conducted research showed that currently in Russia the lowest level of poverty is observed in the following subjects: Moscow, the Nenets, Chukotka and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrugs, the Magadan Region; the level of poverty is below average – in St. Petersburg, the Moscow, Murmansk, Tyumen, Sakhalin Regions, the Kamchatka Territory, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). When the unemployment rate increases by 1 %, the population with monetary incomes below the subsistence level increase by about 0.19 %. If the average per capita monetary income increases by 1 ruble, the population with incomes below the subsistence minimum will decrease by 0.22 %.

The main drawback of existing global and national poverty reduction programs is a poor understanding of the essence of the phenomenon itself and the processes that lead to or out of this state.

Terminologically, this is manifested in the use of definitions that are devoid of a reliable idea of the phenomenon. The most common calls are to "eradicate" poverty, although in real life it can only be reduced. There are quite a lot of options for reduction, but it is necessary to know that not only poverty, misery and deprivation lead to large-scale conflicts, but also radical ways to reduce them. Any social problem is solved through the redistribution of resources and material goods, which is inevitably accompanied by conflicts, the severity of which depends on the political wisdom of the rulers.

Sociologists know that behind wealth and poverty there are quite certain strata of society, which represent a differentiated pyramid. This social structure will overturn if the balance of interests is disturbed, and the centre of gravity begins to move towards poverty. In this regard, the threat will be caused by the poverty growth or its radical reduction.

If we take the European poverty threshold as a basis, consider the results of sociological research and their philosophical understanding, then the assumptions of the authors can be summarized as follows:

- poverty rate of 10–12 % of the total population guarantees the possibility of sustainable social development;
- at a decile ratio of 1:6–1:8, the social cohesion is preserved;
- property differentiation equals to the decile ratio of 1:20 and higher leads to devaluation of productive labour, disappearing of civilized incentives for its growth, block of constructive processes, and socio-economic development;
- the ratio of poverty to wealth exceeding 1:30 leads to political and cultural degradation and exacerbation of conflicts. The country is entering a zone of social turbulence with the resulting possibility of state and social non-existence.

7. Conclusion

The transformation of the Russian economy has led to negative changes in the social structure of Russian society. It led to the emergence of a significant social group, which by its parameters can be attributed to the poor. This group does not have stable socio-economic characteristics and needs constant scientific monitoring. It is necessary to study the mode of life, value system, behaviour strategy of the poor population to improve the social policy effectiveness aimed at reducing poverty and misery.

In the format of the philosophy of law and the history of the state, it is clear that since the beginning of the 90s of the twentieth century, Russia began to lose its sovereignty, its national interests were ignored, morality, and law were devalued. In the XXI century, these processes were blocked, but Russia is not yet able to reverse the situation and get out of the crisis.

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