

The Collapse of Traditional Values: Russia's Demographic Crisis

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In recent years, against the backdrop of a rapidly deteriorating demographic situation, the Russian authorities have actively begun promoting morality and family values. 2024 has been declared The Year of the Family. High-ranking officials propose paying allowances to pregnant students, banning child-free ideology, and punishing those who discredit family values. But why has demography become such an important issue for government officials?

The media keeps talking about the growth of industry and the increasing need for labor, which is also linked to recent political events, economic sanctions, and trade restrictions. Politsturm has repeatedly published materials about the growing demand for workers and labor shortages. Workers are extremely necessary for the capitalists, as their shortage reduces profits due to increased labor costs and reduced supply in the labor market.

In the anarchy of production inherent in a capitalist economy, businesses are forced to plan their operations and try to hire workers at a lower cost. This is difficult when the population is shrinking and competition for jobs is weakening. Businesses find themselves in a disadvantageous position as they are forced to hire people to work for higher wages, which increases expenses and reduces capitalists' profits.

According to the Russian Academy of Sciences, by the end of 2023, the labor shortage in the Russian Federation numbered around 4.8 million people. Given that the situation with the shortage of qualified personnel will only worsen, the Russian state is trying to take measures that are convenient for business, as it represents its interests.

For example, the government continues its policy of attracting migrants, both as a cheap workforce and as a factor that lowers the cost of labor in the country and allows it to fuel nationalist sentiments. Also, in response to the demographic crisis that threatens the reproduction of the labor force, measures have been introduced to encourage fertility, such as lump-sum payments to female students giving birth, and the expansion of the Maternity Capital Program. At the same time, as part of the struggle for "traditional values," penalties for discrediting family values are being increased, reflecting official ideology.

However, these measures do not solve the systemic problems of deteriorating quality of life and impoverishment of the majority of the population. The average level of income continues to decline, while inflation and rising prices for basic goods and services aggravate the financial situation of citizens. The authorities are not interested in solving these problems, preferring to maintain the stability of the existing system and create favorable conditions for businesses and the elite.

The state does not even care enough about the situation of large families, two-thirds of which, according to the Higher School of Economics, have loans. Their income is not enough to live on and they are forced to borrow money at high interest rates. The HSE survey shows that only 34% of families with children have at least some savings. This means that if a working parent falls ill, most families will be on the brink of survival, living "paycheck to paycheck" and paying interest to banks. Neither allowances nor maternity capital are sufficient. One in three large families is below the poverty line.

In addition, Russians with children began to be denied benefits because of interest on deposits. Some citizens put their savings in the bank with interest gained to protect them from inflation. Now this interest is considered as income, and if this amount, together with the salary, exceeds the established minimum, families are denied child benefits. Despite the claims of the officials, the real living conditions of the workers and their families continue to deteriorate. The existing programs do not provide the necessary changes to significantly alleviate their hardships. This will have a negative impact on the birth rate, which will aggravate the problem of the country's population decline.

The demographic problem must be solved comprehensively by improving the quality of life of citizens. This requires significant investments, radical changes, and efforts of the government in the sphere of domestic policy. One-time payments are not enough; without basic social support and financial stability, young families will doubt whether it is a good idea to have a second or third child. The common people, not the profits of oligarchs, should be at the center of the state's interests.

However, this approach is unacceptable to the bourgeois government, which does the bidding of the richest businessmen. Lump-sum payments for the birth of children, modest allowances, and benefits for large families will very quickly end up in private pockets, which is favorable to business. Preferential family mortgages have allowed developers to raise housing prices without fear of falling demand. Businesses are capitalizing with the help of the government.

We know from recent history that the socialist state provided workers with everything they needed: jobs, education, free housing, kindergartens, and milk kitchens. Young mothers could quickly return to work and continue their careers without fear of being fired due to maternity leave.

There was no need to take out loans to prepare a child for school, there was no need for expensive tutors, all extracurricular activities were free, and children could spend their holidays in summer camps. The Soviet state took care of the family, which improved birth rates and population growth. The Soviet state was a people's state, it did not serve the interests of the oligarchs and therefore found funds to build children's summer camps, free education, and housing for young families without mortgages.

The global problems of the population are directly related to their material living conditions, which are determined by the economy. The market economy aims to increase the profits of private owners. It is extracted from the unpaid labor of hired workers and speculation on the needs of citizens. Thus, under capitalism, the prosperity and wealth of a few entrepreneurs are ensured at the expense of the impoverishment of the majority of society, which aggravates the demographic situation.

The planned socialist economy develops without crises and shocks that mainly affect ordinary people. Its goal is the development of all branches of production, science and technology, medicine, and education for a harmonious and fulfilling human life.

To create such a state, it is not enough for the workers to win various strikes for pay increases and welfare as this can be taken away by the capitalists just as easily as it is given. The main task is to create a political party that expresses the will of the common working people and can lead it to victory. This requires the cohesion and organization of the workers at the grassroots level, awareness of their class interests, and mastery of Marxist-Leninist teachings.