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**Возникновение прекариата как показатель мирового кризиса на рынке труда**

**Аннотация**. Традиционная модель трудовых отношений деформировалась под влиянием неконтролируемой миграции, разрушения государства всеобщего благосостояния, недостатков частных пенсионных фондов, старения населения, возникших проблем системы образования и т.д. Следствием этого стало возникновение новой социальной иерархии, ухудшившее положение наименее защищённых социальных групп: молодёжи, пенсионеров и мигрантов. Распространение глобализации лишь усиливает этот эффект и сужает «окно возможностей» для этих слоёв населения. Теория «прекариата» стремится изучить новые экономические процессы, а также наглядно продемонстрировать и доказать их разрушительное влияние.

**Ключевые слова:** прекариат, рынок труда, экономика труда, глобализация.

**Precariat emergence as an indicator of a worldwide labour crisis**

**Abstract.** Traditional labour has eroded because of the uncontrolled migration, crisis of the “welfare state”, failure of private pension funds, population aging, education problems, etc. As a result, modern society has born a new social hierarchy, which hurts the most unprotected social groups: the youth, the elderly and migrants. The more globalisation develops, the less opportunities they have. “Precariat” theory is trying to analyse new economic processes in order to show and prove their destructive power.

**Key words:** precariat, labour market, labour economics, globalisation.

XX century is over, and its labour model is being suffocated by globalisation, open borders, TNC’s and their aggressive business-models. Competition has intensified tremendously, and as a result, both companies and workers are struggling for a better place in the sun. This struggle, often irrational, brings about not only the most amusing production rates humanity has ever reached, but some adverse consequences as well. One of these consequences is mass pauperisation, i.e. downgrading of social status, net income decrease and elimination of career perspectives (Сорочайкин, 2012). Workers affected by pauperisation are making up a new potentially “dangerous” class – precariat – having neither leaders, nor programmes or means of protection from aggressive market forces. This paper’s aim is to trace the origins of the present-day labour crisis and explain the ongoing processes exacerbating the collapse of the “welfare state’s” legacy.

What is precariat? It is generally defined as a social class having neither social and employment guarantees, nor any means of protecting and promoting its interests (Гасюкова, 2015; Вострокнутов, Найдёнова, Осипова, 2016). This notion was first used by Pierre Bourdieu in order to describe unprotected masses (migrants, youth, elderly, women, etc.) (Гасюкова, 2015). He believed that neoliberal policies disadvantage people working in unstable conditions and isolate them from each other as well as other classes. As workers of extremely different occupations make up precariat, traditional mechanisms which helped create trade unions in the past are working no more. Thus precariat has lost common identity and common values, being unable to unite disadvantaged masses (Лукина, 2015).

A well-known US socialist thinker, Noam Chomsky, has also used the term “precariat” in his works in order to describe the modern disadvantaged majority as the contrary to the rich minority – plutonomy (Chomsky, 2012). According to Chomsky, the main characteristics of the precariat are social insecurity, precarious and depressive existence, inability to find stable full-time jobs and limited economic and social mobility (Хомский, 2015). He believes that present-day workers live in the “Great Moderation Era” characterised by slowing economic growth, shrinking real income and widening inequality gap.

One of the most prominent and systematic works on precariat is Guy Standing’s research “The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class” describing new social structure and aforementioned processes that have led to its emergence (Стендинг, 2014). According to his study, modern society has born a new social hierarchy:

1) Marginalised minority,

2) Precariat,

3) Proletariat (workers with sustainable future prospects, members of trade unions),

4) Salariat (high-profile specialists; the notion is derived from the word “salary”),

5) Elites.

Proletariat and salariat (or so-called middle class) enjoy social status, decent salaries and clear career prospects, but market forces are squeezing their size as elites are trying to maximise their profits. As a result, inequality is skyrocketing due to enormously extending income gap, while former proletariat and salariat masses are joining precariat. And once they lose their status, it’s almost impossible for them to restore it due to severe competition.

Let’s take a closer look at the preconditions provoking precariat emergence. Trade unions have become official institutions long ago, having developed from the semi-official socialist human rights organisations to unalienable part of market economy. But new economic challenges of 1970-1980-s (grain crisis of 1972-1973 (Dawe, 2010), oil crises of 1973-1974 & 1974-1975 (Ергин, 2012), a series of defaults in Latin America, etc.) made political leaders change the deep-rooted “welfare state” policies and introduce new ones based on a neoliberal paradigm. These policies eased market regulation and promoted entrepreneurship, open borders policies and globalisation. What is more, Mao’s death in 1976 spurred economic reforms in PRC which later opened its markets for foreign direct investments pouring hundreds of millions of workers on the global labour market (Коуз, Ван, 2016).

From then on neoliberal globalisation has dominated the globe prompting three main processes that have sharpened labour competition dramatically (Стендинг, 2014):

1) Mass migration encouraged by businesses as well as authorities of developed countries,

2) Levelling of the playing field making companies seek for other ways of production costs reduction,

3) “Welfare state’s” social guarantees erosion.

Their combined effect makes companies in all market economies fight for every dime and reduce expenditure at all costs. Technologies’ development puts limits on product’s improvement, its price depends on market factors, while governments cannot afford to subsidise businesses constantly. Market logic has inevitably made entrepreneurs come to a conclusion that much more accessible and controlled way of making your business profitable was exploiting new trends on labour markets.

What are those trends? First of all, we should mention illegal migration (Стендинг, 2014). Thousands of unskilled workers originating from the underdeveloped countries (mainly from Latin America, China, India, Pakistan, Middle East, etc.) are illegally crossing European and American borders annually, creating secluded ethnic communities. Goods they make are usually badly crafted with the use of the cheapest machinery and technologies. What is more, they avoid contacts with government, any kinds of corporate taxes and regulations while flooding local markets with low-quality goods at lower-than-market prices. As a result, local manufacturers lose competition as they cannot reduce costs the same way migrants do. Worse still, migrants’ labour is not paid fairly and proportionally as they are extremely dependent on the sole source of illegal income. They don’t join trade unions and cannot sue their employers as they do not have citizenship. That’s why they practically have no means of self-protection from employers imposing unfair payment terms. Therefore their presence brings about double adverse effect: not only do they bring down goods’ prices, but they unwittingly bring down regional labour costs level as well, forcing local workers to sign disadvantageous contracts in order to win competition.

Another trend is an ongoing pursuit for “labour market flexibility” (Гасюкова, 2015). This euphemism stands for an additional way of reducing labour costs by means of adapting a number of staff workers to companies’ output depending on market fluctuations. In other words, every time companies’ proceeds decrease its top-management shrinks the staff size in order to diminish losses to the detriment of workers. Companies can also exploit the high availability of working force and hire part-time or even freelance workers on a project-work basis shrinking staff to the minimum (Тощенко, 2015). Even more powerful weapon for combating labour costs is outsourcing which helps companies avoid social responsibility burden and hiring expenses.

Ageing population poses a certain threat to young specialists as well. More and more developed countries are facing a problem of negative “worker to beneficiary” ratio due to breakthroughs in healthcare and diseases curing (ECOSOC, 2015). Classic government-supported pension funds are failing to meet the excessive demand for decent pensions, while private ones (including hedge funds) proved to be irresponsible while managing their clients’ money (e.g. investment practices leading to the subprime mortgage crisis). As a result, elderly’s well-being is put at stake, which makes them continue working after reaching the retirement age. They are predictably less ambitious than youngsters, more reliable, responsible and experienced in most cases, which makes them a perfect alternative for hiring a young specialist.

Finally, one of the latest trends is further automation of production, i.e. usage of cutting-edge technologies like latest developments in robotics, blockchain, cybersecurity, so-called cloud data storing, AI, etc. Humans physically cannot compete with computers calculating millions of similar operations in minutes and assembling robots working with flawless accuracy. One robot or complex computer technology can replace whole departments, making labour market even more unstable as high salaries become approachable only for high-profile specialists handling sophisticated equipment (Вершинина, Маркеева, 2015). Robots and computers are certainly to add to the list of an average worker’s problems.

Education system is also experiencing fundamental problems. Although different institutions are training a lot of skilled workers, national economies oversaturated with influx of skilled migrants, local university graduates and elder workers unwilling to retire are unable to provide them with desired workplaces. Unemployed graduates are making up a new social group called NEETs – abbreviation standing for “Not in Employment, Education or Training” (Панов, 2016). Nevertheless, educational programmes has degraded significantly because of the commercialisation of education: universities’ administrations are acting as entrepreneurs when trying to consider their courses as “consumer goods”, which negatively affects education quality and its correspondence with both students’ and market demands (Стендинг, 2014).

The latest data on labour trends is truly disturbing. In Germany almost 8 million people (18% of all workers) are considered to be part-time unstable employees. This proportion is even higher in France and Netherlands, where 25% of all workers are claimed to belong to precariat; UK – 15% of non-standard workers; Japan – 40% of non-standard workers; South Korea – 57% of all female and 35% of all male workers are believed to be irregular; USA – from 20% to 40% of all working places are considered to be non-standard (Гасюкова, 2015).

The size of precariat in Russia ranges from 27% to 50% of all workforce in the country (Вострокнутов, Найденова, Осипова, 2016; Гимпельсон, Капелюшникова, Рощина, 2017). Although Russia is experiencing the same labour market turmoil, it differs from Western economies for a number of reasons. First of all, Russia is having one of the biggest inequality gaps in the world. What is more, market fluctuations and enterprises’ outputs do not affect employment rates at all. On the contrary, Russian entrepreneurs prefer salaries cuts to staff shrinking, which makes Russian unemployment stay in allowable limits, while virtual income can be declining badly. Finally, Russian state-owned companies tend to reduce staff and hire part-time workers, which can be explained by federal budget’s deficits as well as their striving for competitiveness.

This report investigates present-day market competition and analyses ongoing processes distorting fundamental economic institutes. Outcomes of the research show that theoretical concept of “precariat” is viable as data verifies main assumptions made by Bourdieu and Standing. It means that market forces have virtually become much more aggressive, which results in social unrest, pauperisation and inequality growth. Classic social policies are no longer effective as they were initially not supposed to deal with exaggerated size of ageing population. Governments should develop and implement new effective redistribution and legal models which can help people feel protected, enter labour market freely and find decent as well as respected jobs.

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