
DEVTECH Sphere

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THE LEGACY OF MARXIST EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

Many mistakes were made by virtually all of those who catapulted themselves into the republics of the Soviet Union even before its demise. But none of the mistakes was as costly as formulating economic policies that utterly ignored the legacy of over seven decades of Marxist education.

During the cold war years, anticommunist propaganda was full of propositions explaining the behavior of citizens living behind the “iron curtain” as the result of indoctrination, brainwashing, and massive Marxist-Leninist propaganda. Even though that campaign failed to recognize the most sophisticated forms of Marxist education, it is surprising how, when the opportunity arose to promote democratic and liberal economic values in these countries, the advisors did not include in their proposed strategies any public education campaign to counteract the effects of the communist educational legacy. The advisors were working under the assumption that once the prices were set free, enterprises and citizens would behave as instant profit and utility maximizers and the old centrally planned economy would be

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THE INDONESIAN CRISIS ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Last fall’s natural disasters and the crippling economic downturn caused Indonesia to lose much of its capacity to provide for even the basic needs of its 200 million citizens. Civil unrest followed in the spring of this year, erupting after security forces killed several students. The widespread and increasing violence against women that resulted led the U.S. Agency for International Development to assess the condition of women in the economic and political transition in Indonesia.

CONTEXT

Women make up the majority of the Indonesian population and a significant percentage of the country’s labor force. Since the 1980s, women have constituted a large part of the formal labor force in Indonesia’s export-oriented economy — providing up to 80 percent of the workforce in export processing zones. Women often work in export-oriented production in the informal and home-based sectors as well. Before the monetary crisis, Indonesia had about 63 million laborers working in the formal and informal sectors, with the percentage of women at 55 percent across both sectors.

Women were the primary means through which the Indonesian economy initially responded to changes in global demand. A 1992 study found that a 1 percent increase per annum in gross domestic product was associated with a 1.96 percent increase in women’s participation in nonagricultural employment. The increased demand for labor during the labor-intensive phase of export-oriented development was met by a rapid rise in the rates of female labor force participation.

Nonetheless, the last 30 years have witnessed the systematic marginalization of women in Indonesia. A dictatorial regime suppressed women’s freedom of

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DEBT-FOR-NATURE SWAPS: CAN THEY HELP RUSSIA?

One of the key challenges to environmental reform in former communist countries has been lack of money, pure and simple. Environmental protection has often been thought to be a rich country's game. However, innovations spawned by the Third World Debt Crisis of the 1980s sought to turn that notion on its head. Many financial institutions assumed they would never be repaid for loans made to developing countries and sold that debt for whatever anyone was willing to pay, much as a local business would sell an overdue bill to a collection agency for a discount. Rather than pressure the Third World country to repay the debt with hard currency it didn't have, governments and environmental organizations would forgive the

debt in return for a promise to protect an area of ecologically sensitive land. It was hoped that such deals would both settle the problem of financing environmental protection in these countries and give them the financial solvency to develop economically.

Sometimes, it worked. A notable example in former communist countries is Poland. The United States forgave \$360 million, or 10 percent, of Poland's debt in exchange for protecting nature and establishing an EcoFund. The EcoFund, which has received technical assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development, further funded environmental projects in Poland. In addition to its extensive national park system, Poland has several areas that are set aside specifically to protect rare species of plants and animals.

In many ways, Poland was an ideal candidate for such swaps. It had a large amount of cheaply priced debt, a strong central government with clear power over land use, and a tendency to keep its word.

IN MANY WAYS, POLAND WAS AN IDEAL CANDIDATE FOR SUCH SWAPS

Likewise, Russia has no shortage of precarious debt. It also has huge areas of ecologically sensitive land that have inadequate protection. However, Russia's central government is weak. Additionally, Russia's sole profitable sector — apart from military armaments — is extractive resources such as timber and oil. Limitations on the exploration or exploitation of such resources would be hard to agree to and difficult to enforce.

No debt-for-nature swap to date has been large enough to wipe out a country's debt. While the Russian government is cash-strapped enough to grasp at any debt-forgiveness straw, it is also too poor to spend money on enforcement. While it may be possible to arrange such deals, other methods of environmental assistance will prove to be more cost-effective in the near future. ♦

— Sandford Smith

RELATED INTERNET SITES

These sites contain information related to debt-for-nature swaps and international conservation efforts.

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

<http://www.conservation.org> — *the organization that initiated the first debt-for-nature swap, with Bolivia in 1987*

THE WIN-WIN-WIN SCENARIO: CONVERSION OF DEBT

<http://www.oneworld.org/ecdp/anniv/fingug.htm> — *text of a background paper by Alfred Gugler (Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, Berne, Switzerland), presented at the ECDPM Anniversary Seminar, May 12-13, 1997*

UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

<http://www.uia.org/uiademo/str/j1186.htm> — *brief discussion of debt-for-nature swaps; check the home page for other interesting links*

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THE INDONESIAN CRISIS

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expression and their right to organize. The government co-opted women's organizations, creating women's groups as arms of the government and extensions of men's employment. Government-sponsored birth control and family planning, as well as a legal code that defined women's role within the family and men as heads of household, left women with little opportunity to make their own decisions. This same code prevented women from receiving equal benefits in the workplace.

The economic downturn, coupled with widespread and increasing violence against women, has opened the way for the development of a dialogue among women, and the number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focused on women is rapidly increasing. This is the first step in a process of rights awareness leading to political participation by women on a large scale.

However, short-term crisis responses must be steps toward long-term sustainable development solutions. Fundamental to this process is local control in decision making. Women in particular, and society in general, have been prevented from participating in decision making on even the most personal issues.

EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON WOMEN

The Indonesian financial crisis has devastated the entire country, but it has had a particularly strong impact on women.

- ◆ Women are prime targets for redundancy; this year, 240,000 women

lost their jobs in the textiles and garment industries alone.

- ◆ Restricted access to birth control is leading to a population explosion in poor areas — women must choose between food and birth control.
- ◆ Doctors report malnourished mothers giving birth to malnourished infants.
- ◆ There is evidence of nutrient-based discrimination between females and males: men are fed first, sons are fed before daughters.
- ◆ An increasing number of children are out of school.
- ◆ There has been a threefold increase in prostitution in Surabaya since the crisis.

SHORT-TERM CRISIS RESPONSES MUST BE STEPS TOWARD LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS.

- ◆ Clinics document a 35 to 50 percent prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in urban areas.
- ◆ One hundred sixty-eight rapes were reported in Jakarta during May.
- ◆ Threats against organizations and volunteers working to stop rapes and other violence against women continue.

SUGGESTED INITIATIVES

In order to improve women's condition and the situation nationwide, the Indonesian government should take certain specific actions, including revision of legal codes such as the Anti-Subversion Law, which has been used to arrest and imprison peaceful activists,

including women NGO members. Indonesia should develop legislation to protect the rights of ethnic minorities and women. The Marriage Code should be amended to reflect women's contribution and status as equal partners in marriage.

In addition, the Indonesian government and international donors can take significant steps to improve the current situation:

- ◆ Ensure 50 percent participation of women in food-for-work programs.
- ◆ Address gender discrimination in school retention and school feeding programs through awareness training.
- ◆ Monitor gender discrimination in the nutritional status of children, and address the issue through awareness training for husbands and wives.
- ◆ Support community mobilization around issues of violence against women and human rights training.
- ◆ Assist NGOs to expand their capacity for outreach to the urban poor.
- ◆ Support the position of women's NGOs and moderate groups on women's political participation under Islam.
- ◆ Provide support for NGO outreach and HIV/AIDS prevention programs as part of a strategy for addressing trafficking of women and girls. Support rights awareness and income-generation activity training programs developed by NGOs working in this sector. ◆

— *Hannah Baldwin & Christina Rawley*

COUNTERACTING MARXIST EDUCATION*continued from page 1*

transformed into a budding competitive system. They all ignored, for instance, the fact that large proportions of the population (over 80 percent reported in Russia) considered private ownership of the means of production to be immoral.

The rush to privatize, under the extremely naive working hypothesis that privatization would make reforms irreversible, contributed to the current economic and political nightmare in Russia. Those who believed in improvised privatization by “shock therapy” methods had forgotten the lessons of Russia in 1917 and Cuba in 1960, among many others.

Some bilateral donor agencies provided funds to perform some public information campaigns on behalf of economic reform and privatization. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding about this issue and, especially, the deplorably low level of knowledge among the people in charge of such efforts meant that donors spent many millions of dollars in incredibly ineffective campaigns.

Today, the problem remains, and many still wonder why Russia and many of the ex-socialist countries have not yet found their way to a market economy — as if everyone is born *homo economicus* the way we know it in the advanced western democracies. Ignorance may be bliss, but it is also expensive. ♦

— *Jorge A. Sanguinety*
President & CEO, DevTech Systems

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DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.

1629 K Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202/296-8849
Fax: 202/296-4884

8821 SW 69th Court
Second Floor
Miami, FL 33156
Tel: 305/666-5150
Fax: 305/666-5165

<http://www.devtechsys.com>

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DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.
1629 K Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20006 USA