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POPULATION'S OPINION OF DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVE  
AND INDIVIDUAL LABOUR ACTIVITY\*

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In June, 1989, the USSR State Committee for Statistics polled 101 thousands of the workers, employees, collective farmers and pensioners in all Republics, territories and regions of the country, the rural and urban locality as regards their attitude towards the cooperative and individual labour activity.

What is the public opinion in relation to the new kinds of activity, the extent of the spread of the extreme viewpoints in relation to the latter, how actively various groups resort to the services of the cooperative or individual sectors, how the population estimates the first results of their development, the positive and negative consequences as viewed by the population these and other issues formed the basic content of the Poll.

The poll employed the territorial-production sample whose principal socio-demographic characteristics comply with the structure of the USSR population.

The major conclusion of the poll as regards the attitude of the country population towards the cooperative and individual activity is ambiguous and versatile. On a whole in the USSR, out of all polled persons, 15 percent positively view the development of the cooperative and individual labour activity, 29 percent display the negative attitude, 27 percent exhibit the ambiguous attitude and 13 percent are indifferent. So far, others find it difficult to estimate these kinds of activity. On a whole in the country and in each Republic, more than half of the polled persons are still not certain in their attitude towards the cooperative and individual labour activity (Ref. Table 1).

As regards the Union Republics, three groups can be picked out in terms of the population's attitude towards the new kinds of activity. The first group includes the Republics among the population of which the number of the supporters of the new forms exceeds (approximately equals) the number of their opponents, i.e. the Estonian SSR (30 and 8 percent, respectively, the Armenian SSR (28 and 18 percent), the Latvian SSR (22 and 16 percent) and the Azerbaidzhan SSR (22 and 23 percent). It is characteristic that in these Republics the scope of realizing

the commodities and services to the population in the cooperative sector is 1.8 to 3.5 times higher than in average in the country except for the Azerbaidzhan SSR. The second group incorporates the Turkmen SSR, the Moldavian SSR and the Uzbek SSR wherein the number of the opponents exceeds the number of the supporters in terms of over 20 points. The third group comprises the remaining Republics wherein the number of the supports is less than that of the opponents by 8 to 16 percent.

The likewise approach is used in subdivision of the Republics in terms of the other indices of the population's attitude towards these kinds of activity (the rate of resort, the estimates of the motives of the activity of the cooperative officials and persons involved in the individual labour activity, satisfaction with the provided services, etc.).

Practically, in all Republics the attitude of the urban citizens towards cooperation is better than that of the rural citizens.

The estimates of the cooperative and individual labour activity as given by the polled persons depend largely on the fact whether they have the personal experience of procuring the commodities (services) produced in these sectors of the economy.

Among those who resorted to the services or bought the goods of the cooperatives (individuals) and they number more than 26 percent, the number of the followers of the new kinds of activity is 1.3 times higher than that of the supporters (the positive attitude is expressed by 25 percent, whereas that negative by 19 percent). This trend is characteristic for all Republics except for the Uzbek SSR and the Turkmen SSR (Ref. Table 1). The persons with no personal experience and familiar with the cooperative and individual labour activity from the indirect sources view it more negatively.

Most of the followers of the new kinds of activity is among the managerial staff (25 percent), though the number of the opponents is about the same (24 percent). The least number of the supporters is among the pensioners (9 percent and 29 percent display the positive and negative attitude, respectively) and the collective farmers (10 percent and 31 percent, respectively).

The intermediate position is occupied by the workers (14 and 31 percent) and the employees (15 and 31 percent), more positive are the estimates of the specialists (21 and 23 percent).

The growth of the educational level of the polled persons is followed by their higher estimates of the new sectors of the economy, i.e. among the persons with the higher education, the cooperative movement is supported by 24 percent, among those with the secondary specialized education, by 16 percent, the secondary general education, by 14 percent, the incomplete secondary education, and primary education, by about 10 percent.

The population's attitude also depends on the level of the labour payment and income, i.e. the supporters with a monthly wage up to 80 roubles were only 8 percent, 130 to 220 roubles, about 15 percent, over 250 roubles, about 20 percent, with the average-per-capita income up to 50 roubles, 11 percent, 50 to 200 roubles, about 15 percent and over 200 roubles, 20 percent.

Among women, the number of persons with the negative attitude is somewhat higher than among men. The highest estimates of men, aged under 25 (21 percent and 22 percent with the positive and negative estimates, respectively), the lowest estimates are among women aged over 60 (9 percent and 31 percent with the positive and negative estimates, respectively).

On a whole, formation of the ambiguous attitude towards the new sectors of the economy is contributed by the population's nonacceptance of some kinds of activity in the cooperative form. Over 70 percent of the polled persons believe only the state enterprises should deal with the public catering and publications and the nursery schools should belong to the state, 65 percent, that only state enterprises should deal with fabrication of the goods for the children, about 60 percent, diagnostics and treatment of diseases.

The large percentage of the polled persons treats the new kinds of activity negatively and ambiguously, which is explained by the specific forms of their development at present. If among the persons negatively viewing the cooperative and individual labour activity, 72 percent in assessing the first results noted that the negative consequences associated therewith are more than the positive consequences, among the persons with the positive attitude, 36 percent.

Every seven polled persons out of ten believe that the people are motivated to deal with the appropriate kinds of activity by the desire of very high profits, enrichment. At the same time were named as the stimulating motives: 44 percent, the wish to earn as one works, about 23 percent, the desire of independence, freedom, 17 percent, the desire to realize one's potentialities and 7 percent, the desire to be use to the people.

The poll has enabled to find out that the estimates of the population in general are not always based on the sufficiently comprehensive information on the activity of the new sectors of the economy. Only 5 percent of the polled persons noted that they have the detailed information on the goods and services offered by the cooperative and individual sectors; nearly one half of the polled persons, only some information; the rest (45 percent), have not any information or are not interested in it. Among the persons negatively regarding the new kinds of activity, the level of the information on the new kinds is much lower.

In estimation of the first results of the cooperative and individual labour activity development, over 29 percent of the polled persons noted appearance of the new goods and services, 24 percent, the possibility of acquiring the commodities and services which were in short supply before, 16 percent, the reduction of deficit of the goods and services. Among the persons who used the products of the cooperatives (individuals) 1 to 3 times and more, these estimates are higher by 10 to 15 points. And the estimates are higher, the more frequent the resort is.

Every eighth polled person noted the contribution of the cooperative officials (individuals) in the place of residence into the better range and quality of the commodities and services, the service and medical treatment, 8 percent, into the public catering. As compared to the rural residents, the urban residents furnish the higher estimate of the contribution made by the cooperatives and individuals over all these trends: improvement of the medical treatment as indicated by 14.9 percent and 4.9 percent of the urban and rural residents, respectively; the service, by 15.8 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively.

among the persons who resorted to the cooperative officials (individuals), the estimate of the positive contribution is about two times higher (Ref. Table 2).

Among other positive consequences of the cooperative and individual labour activity development, more than 20 percent of the polled persons named the increase of employment of the population, about 18 percent, the possibility of getting the just labour payment, 12 percent the stimulating effect on the state sector.

Among the major drawbacks of the cooperative activity, 86 percent of the polled persons noted the unfounded prices, 48 percent, the absence of the guarantee of the offered goods (services) quality, 44 percent, the poor quality, 19 percent, the poor sanitary inspection, 13 percent the unsatisfactory range of the goods and services, 9 percent, the low culture of service.

More than half of the polled persons also names among the drawbacks the increase of the number of the persons getting the unjustified high incomes, about one third, the increase of deficit in the state trade, more active criminal activity, replacement of the state goods and services with the cooperative ones, higher differentiation in the population's incomes. One fourth of the polled persons indicated the run-off of the highly-qualified personnel from the state enterprises.

Most of all, the services (commodities) of the cooperative individual sector is used by the population of the Armenian SSR and the Estonian SSR, over 35 percent, less in the Byelorussian SSR and the Moldavian SSR, 17 percent. The major part of the polled persons resorted to the cooperatives (individuals) 1 to 2 times, 16 percent, 3 to 5 times, 6 percent, over 5 times, 3 percent, a bit more than 1 percent, regularly.

Among the persons resorting to the cooperative sector, every second persons bought the ready-made clothes or knitted goods, every third person, footwear, 10 percent visited the cooperative snack bars (lunch counters), 5 to 6 percent received the medical services, bought the fancy goods, bijouterie and culinary goods.

The higher the share of the persons who used the services of the cooperative (individual) sector in the Republics is,

the more frequent the repeated resorts are. If on a whole in the USSR about 60 percent of all resorted persons are those who used offered articles and services 1 to 2 times, in the Estonian SSR, only 38 percent, i.e. the new circle of the persons exhibiting the growing interest in their consumers' behaviour in the new forms of the services is being formed.

The rate of resorting to the cooperative officials (individuals) depends largely on the age, educational level, kind of activity and incomes of the polled persons. The persons aged under 25 (39 percent) resort to the services of the cooperative (individual) sector most frequently, whereas the least number is represented by the persons aged over 60 (12 percent). The young women apply to the services of the cooperative officials somewhat more frequently than men of the appropriate age, on the contrary, the aged women, more seldom.

The higher the educational level of the polled persons is, the more willingly they resort to the services (commodities) of the cooperative officials and individuals. (out of the persons with the higher education, 35 percent applied; with the incomplete secondary and primary education, 19 and 12 percent, respectively).

The specialists and persons belonging to the managerial staff apply to the cooperative officials (individuals) most frequently, over 32 percent, whereas the pensioners and collective farmers, much more seldom, 9 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

Noticeable enough is the relation between the wage level, income of the polled persons and the rate of their resorting to the cooperatives (individuals). If among the persons with a monthly wage up to 60 roubles; only 14 percent used the services (bought the goods), 60 to 130 roubles, over 22 percent, 150 to 250 roubles, over 27 percent, over 300 roubles, over 33 percent, accordingly, those with the average-per-capita income up to 50 roubles, 19 percent, 50 to 100 roubles, 25 percent, 100 to 200 roubles, over 19 percent, over 200 roubles, over 31 percent.

A bit more than one half resorted to the services of the cooperatives (individuals) in connection with the difficulty of acquiring the appropriate commodities and services in the



state sector, over 16 percent, in connection with the unsatisfactory quality of the similar state goods and services. About one third of the polled persons explained that by convenience of acquiring them in the cooperative sector and the shorter time; more than fourth, by compliance of the commodities with the vogue requirements and nearly one fifth, by a certain unique nature of the commodities (services).

Out of the persons who resorted to the cooperative sector: 31 percent are satisfied with their services (goods), 42 percent, partially satisfied, 26 percent, dissatisfied, 85 percent noted that the prices of the cooperative goods are higher than those of the similar state goods, 13 percent, that the prices are approximately equal and only 1 percent, that the prices are less than the state prices. In assessing the quality of the cooperative commodities and services, one third of the polled persons noted that quality is higher than in the state sector, 45 percent, approximately equal, 21 percent, below.

Among the persons positively viewing the development of the cooperative and individual sectors, only 5 percent noted that they are not going to apply to them in future, whereas among the persons displaying the negative attitude, 47 percent.

Among the persons not using the services of the cooperative officials (individuals), over two thirds explain their refusal to use the services by the high prices, 39 percent, by the absence of the need in the offered commodities and services, 29 percent are dissatisfied with quality and range of products, 9 percent indicated the absence of the required commodities and services.

Among the polled persons, 17 percent (20 percent of men, 13 percent of women) would like to take up the cooperative and individual labour activity. The highest percentage is in the Armenian SSR (37 percent), the lowest percentage is in the Kazakh SSR (13 percent). Most willing are men aged 16 to 25 (30 percent).

In estimation of the cooperative movement prospects, 50 percent of the polled persons were at a loss to reply, 23 percent

believe that it will be curtailed, 14 percent anticipate the difficult and slow growth, 6 percent think that it will remain at the existing level and the same number believes that it will rapidly develop. At the same time, among the persons with the positive attitude towards the new kinds of activity, 40 percent expect their fast or slow growth, whereas among the persons displaying the negative attitude, 42 percent believe that the cooperative movement will be curtailed.

Thus, inspite of the short development period of the new sectors of the economy and inherent contradictions, the population has already had time to estimate their positive contribution and associates the hopes therewith for improvement of the consumer market as well as regards them as the possible object of devoting one's energies to.

The disclosed results characterize the state, problems, positive and negative consequences of the present stage of the cooperative and individual labour activity development in the country.

In future, it is suggested to pick out the population groups characterized by the different attitude towards the cooperative and individual labour activity as well as to identify the importance of the factors influencing the formation of the ambiguous and in many respects contradictory estimates of the new kinds of activity, i.e. to what extent they are associated with the existing stereotypes relative to these kinds as alien to our society, being therein the reflection of their intrinsic contradictions and their display at the present stage of development, determined by the social characteristics of various groups of the population, the level of their information and other indices.

Table 1

Population's Opinion of Development of  
Cooperative and Individual Labour  
Activity (in Percent to Their Total  
Number)

	Estimate cooperative and individual labour activity:			Among persons who used their services (goods)		
	All polled persons					
	positive	nega- tive	ambiguous and at a loss to reply	posi- tive	nega- tive	am- bi- gu- ous and at a loss to re- ply
USSR	14.7	29.4	55.9	25.3	19.0	55.7
RSFSR	14.4	29.6	56.0	23.2	19.9	56.9
Ukrainian SSR	15.0	31.0	54.0	26.8	19.1	54.0
Byelorussian SSR	14.2	28.0	57.8	28.0	18.8	53.2
Uzbek SSR	9.5	30.2	60.3	18.4	24.3	57.3
Kazakh SSR	14.0	30.4	55.6	25.0	19.2	55.8
Georgian SSR	14.5	23.7	61.8	34.4	10.0	55.6
Azerbaijan SSR	22.3	22.8	54.9	41.2	14.7	44.1
Lithuanian SSR	14.8	22.7	62.5	56.7	10.7	62.6
Moldavian SSR	13.7	35.1	51.2	27.5	24.2	48.3
Latvian SSR	21.9	18.1	60.0	34.1	9.5	56.4
Kirghiz SSR	15.3	26.8	57.9	27.9	18.3	53.8
Tadjik SSR	10.6	23.5	65.9	22.4	17.3	60.3
Armenian SSR	27.8	18.3	53.9	48.9	10.9	40.2
Turkmen SSR	8.9	40.2	50.9	19.7	32.4	47.9
Estonian SSR	30.1	7.8	62.1	43.3	3.3	53.4

Table 2

Polled Persons Noted Positive Contribution of Cooperatives  
and Persons Involved in Individual Labour Activity  
(in Percent to the Number of Polled Persons)

	range and quality of goods and services			public cater- ing			medical treatment			service		
	total inclu- ding who who app- did lied not app- ly			total inclu- ding who who app- did lied not app- ly			total inclu- ding who who app- did lied not app- ly			total inclu- ding who who app- did lied not app- ly		
USSR	12.1	24.5	7.7	8.8	13.7	5.9	11.8	18.4	9.4	13.8	21.5	10.0
RSFSR	12.1	23.5	7.7	6.9	11.7	5.0	12.1	18.9	9.5	12.7	20.5	9.7
Ukrainian SSR	11.2	23.3	7.2	5.6	10.5	4.0	12.3	19.7	9.8	12.9	22.1	9.9
Byelorussian SSR	10.3	25.2	7.2	2.9	8.2	1.8	9.2	14.0	8.2	11.0	22.1	8.6
Uzbek SSR	11.7	25.2	6.8	15.3	25.8	11.5	11.9	19.8	9.1	14.4	19.6	12.5
Kazakh SSR	8.3	18.9	5.0	10.5	18.7	7.9	10.3	14.8	8.9	10.5	17.8	8.2
Georgian SSR	18.6	44.7	10.5	16.9	26.8	13.8	16.1	25.4	13.2	19.5	42.5	12.4
Azerbaijan SSR	17.1	33.2	12.3	19.4	29.1	16.5	10.4	13.3	9.6	17.2	19.2	16.7
Lithuanian SSR	15.8	27.4	10.3	15.6	26.0	12.2	12.2	17.4	9.8	19.8	31.9	14.1
Moldavian SSR	6.7	15.6	4.9	4.6	9.7	3.5	11.9	20.4	10.2	12.8	26.0	10.1
Latvian SSR	19.6	32.3	13.3	11.9	22.0	6.9	14.7	19.0	12.5	17.3	26.7	12.6
Kirghiz SSR	12.2	28.2	6.3	16.6	25.6	13.2	10.8	16.0	6.8	9.1	13.1	7.5
Tadjik SSR	7.4	15.7	4.4	8.9	15.9	6.0	5.4	7.7	4.6	6.8	11.2	5.3
Armenian SSR	24.3	38.8	16.1	14.3	20.1	11.0	11.8	19.3	7.6	21.7	31.0	16.4
Turkmen SSR	10.4	26.0	6.0	6.6	12.6	4.9	4.6	7.4	3.8	9.1	18.2	6.6
Estonian SSR	26.6	42.6	17.9	24.8	30.5	21.7	8.9	11.1	7.7	22.6	34.3	16.2