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Abstract

A popular approach to the understanding of post-Stalin Soviet society involved the concept of a "social contract. The Soviet regime, it was argued, pursued policies that increased the security and standard of living of the population. In turn, the population delivered political compliance and support. During the post-Soviet period, the state financial support for the rural sector declined, and rural living standards plunged. But, the rural population remained politically quiescent, just as it had in the last decades of Soviet rule. This paper argues that rural political quiescence was the result of the emergence of a new social contract, as the state's willingness and capacity to uphold the previous contract declined. The nature of the contract changed from an exchange of "dependency/economic collective goods for quiescence" during the Soviet period to "increased economic independence for quiescence" in the contemporary period.