Reforming to Survive: The Bolshevik Origins of Social Policies

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The worker-led Bolshevik Revolution became a threat and symbol of revolution to ruling elites around the world. In his presentation, Rasmussen explores how elites provide policy concessions when they face credible threats of revolution. He highlights how the motivation and capacity of opposition groups influence threats, but also how elites’ absorption and interpretation of information signals matters. The Bolshevik Revolution and the formation of Comintern effectively enhanced elites’ perceptions of a credible revolutionary threat, affecting the capacity and motivation of labor movements, but also the nature and interpretation of information signals, incentivizing policy concessions from elites, including reduced working hours and expanded social transfer programs.

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