

Perhaps predictably, Ayn Rand is making a comeback on the right, with Congressmen handing out her books, and loose talk of rich people "Going Galt".

I don't think that we will see a mass exodus of productive people to secret hideouts. I look to Atlas Shrugged more for conveniently totable beach reading than an economic blueprint. What's interesting to me, though, is how many details Rand did get right--like the [markets](#) in "unfreezing" Ukrainian bank deposits, so similar to the frozen railroad bonds of Atlas Shrugged. Or the cascading and unanticipated failures, with government officials racing to slap another fix on to fix the last failing solution. If only the people in her novels had acted remotely like actual people, rather than comic book characters, I, too, would be rereading the thing now.

She was able to describe these things so well, of course, because she'd seen what an economy looked like while it was being wrecked. All of Rand's writing is dominated by the fact that she lived through the birth pangs of Soviet Russia, and saw her family's business destroyed by Lenin's ideology, and extraordinarily incompetent economic management. Her philosophy does not work, at least if by work we mean generate a framework by which a person or society can order itself. But she was actually a really very gifted observer, and she had a quite subtle understanding of how all the interconnected elements of an industrial economy fit together. It's a pity she didn't quite get how human beings worked, especially herself.