

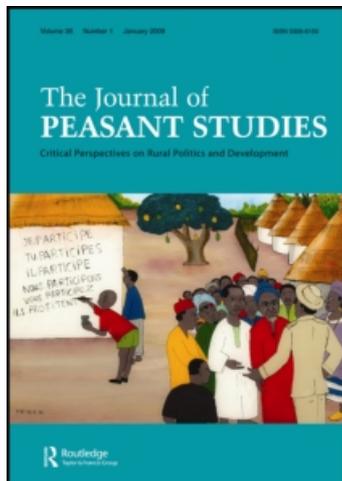
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### Chayanov's treble death and tenuous resurrection: an essay about understanding, about roots of plausibility and about rural Russia

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## **Chayanov's treble death and tenuous resurrection: an essay about understanding, about roots of plausibility and about rural Russia**

Teodor Shanin

The paper presents Chayanov's 'Theory of Vertical Cooperation' as the main conceptual alternative to Stalinist collectivisation of the 1930s. It also brings back the drama of physical and intellectual destruction of the brilliant Russian school of agrarian economists 1890–1920s who paid the price for opposition to the 1930's attack on the peasant majority of the Russian population. It then proceeds to the social and political roots of ideological blindness concerning the failures of collectivisation and of its impact on the history of contemporary Russia.

**Keywords:** vertical cooperation; collectivisation; agrarian economists

### **A Muscovite experience: September 1987**

Once in a while personal experiences matter publicly and should be put on record. In September 1987, as I arrived in Moscow, I was asked to meet Alexander Nikonov – the President of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences (the VASKhNIL). He briskly came to the point. Alexander Chayanov was officially rehabilitated a few weeks before and could I address in Russian a few colleagues about his works and his impact on Western scholarship. I agreed. Some days later, when I arrived to speak, I found an audience of 600 cramped in the Academy's main hall at the Yusupov's old palace. The President opened on the outstanding relevance of Chayanov for the country – his theory of peasant cooperation addressing the contemporary rural crisis and contributing directly to the debated strategy for transformation of agriculture under Perestroika. Chayanov's books were being urgently prepared for re-publication. On my turn, I spoke of Chayanov's life, of his studies and his novels, of peasants and scholars, of fashions and substance in analytical thought. I spoke also about contemporary agriculture and the theories of it, about collectivisation, about models of cooperation and about those who came to publish Chayanov elsewhere, while his own country had him banned. I finished speaking about the place and the price of truth in the life of societies, and about scholars as a peculiar international brotherhood of those whose chosen occupation is matters of truth. The response was as strong as my own emotions. I was speaking at a place where Chayanov was arrested to go eventually to his death. I was telling them about the man whom they now came to accept as their most talented colleague, the name of whom was spoken for generations in whispers and whose actual works were unknown to most of them. Hundreds of hands were taking copious notes. People clapped and cheered. Chayanov's son, an old man now, stood up to thank me for defending the honour of his father and I felt my tears. Questions from the floor followed thick

and fast to keep me busy, an academic colloquium was rolling on. One more day and deed of the early days of hope and excitement of Perestroika.

What followed was a wave of lectures and publications concerning Chayanov. Scholars, journalists and the 'educated public' came to talk of his biography and writings, his views concerning agriculture and his novels, his achievements and his relevance. Chayanov's first biography went rapidly into print.

Yet, the emotions by now all but forgotten, and the works of a good man, by now on the open shelves, are not the end of the matter. The very facts of re-discovery, of re-learning and even of the emotions involved, the processes of official and informal re-recognitions, are questions which should be considered in turn as an issue of knowledge within social processes, and of the trade scholars pursue. There are also the relevant questions, still fresh and unanswered, of social change and social justice in contemporary agriculture as well as broader issues of the logic of social economies which are 'expolar' – i.e. defined by neither state nor capital, both in Russia and in other lands as well. That is what may make Chayanov's resurrection different from a 'media event' or an extra picture on a wall. No doubt Chayanov himself would have approved of such fleeting cheers into further questions and possible new insights.

So what is the structure of the actual event of Chayanov's extermination and resurrection? What can be learnt from it about the mental universe of the social sciences and of Russia, rural and un-rural, at its new stages of self-recognition?

One way to answer those questions is to re-tell the story of Chayanov and his mode of analysis as one of treble death and an official resurrection. Chayanov died first, physically, executed as an enemy of the people, for making clear the true reasons for the fact and the form of Stalin's collectivisation. He was gotten rid of for a second time, however, in a 1950–70s period of the obligatory half-truth which aimed to cover up the guilty secrets of a generation of Soviet administrators and its lap-dog science. He died once more in the hands of the bulk of the Western theorists and practitioners of the large-scale business of 'development' – yes, their new advisers to Russia's government too, the 'establishment' as well as its radical critics. All of those did not simply refuse Chayanov's message but twisted it through trivialisation and, by doing so, committed it to the margins of thought. Last, after his official rehabilitation, he was promptly 'iconised' rather than utilised. This is why Chayanov's resurrection has been both significant and tenuous, and why it is a part and an index of an effort to have theories of social transformation re-thought.

### **A Muscovite scholar: 1888–1931–1937**

Considering the number of people in the Western social sciences who heard the name of Chayanov, it is remarkable how few actually read him seriously rather than browsed through his single book translated into English in the late 1980s, or else picked up a view of him 'by second hand'. Even less know something about Chayanov as a human being, except of the single fact of his murder. Yet he is well worth knowing and not as an archaeological exhibit only. His concerns, methods and solutions make him, in fact, into our contemporary par excellence.

Alexander Chayanov was a major representative of a brilliant beginning-of-a-century generation of Russian intelligentsia. A grandson of a peasant whose son went to town and made good; a graduate of the then excellent Moscow Agricultural Academy, he became already, at the age of 24, nationally known by

his works on the place of flax production in peasant economy and about the demographic determinants of it. From then on, he went from strength to strength in academic achievement and reputation. But he was much more than an agrarian master-economist of a country in which 80 percent of the population made their living in agriculture. A man of extremely rich mind, trained within the best humanist traditions of Europe, by the age of 40 he combined important analytical work, field research and methodological studies concerning peasantry with five novels, a 'utopia', a play, a book of poetry, and a half-finished guide to Western painting and a history of the city of Moscow. He spoke a number of languages, travelled extensively in Europe – before and after 1917 – and was closely knit into the cultural encounters of the educated Muscovites. He was a Moscow intellectual of the day at their best, deeply committed to the cause of improvement of the livelihood of the mass of common people, of human liberties and of his country's educational standards. Chayanov's rural focus of attention was rooted accordingly in a basic moral stand. As to his scholarly endeavour, Chayanov's thought breached disciplinary frontiers between economics, sociology, history, arts, agriculture and epistemology. His particular personal strength lay in a remarkable power of disciplined imagination and ability to put it in words, an outstanding and original models-creating ability, a capacity which bridged between his scholarly and artistic achievements and made him a theorist and leader among his peers.

As from 1919, under the new Soviet regime, Chayanov headed the social sciences 'Seminarium', later an Institute, in the country's Academy of Agricultural Sciences. This made him the central figure of his academic field. He never joined the new political Establishment and stayed himself, or what was then referred to as, a 'non-party expert'. His research work blossomed – most of his major studies and all his novels were written within a decade or so. In 1930, at the age of 42, Chayanov was dismissed from the directorship of his Institute to be, a year later, arrested for high treason and for the sabotage of Russian agriculture. After serving his period of imprisonment he was sent into exile, to be re-arrested and executed in 1937 (for a long time the family was misled to believe that he was shot in 1939). His wife was made to divorce him and to take another surname. This did not save her from being arrested in turn and sent into exile, from which she was to return only after Stalin's death. Of Chayanov's two sons, one died defending Moscow, having volunteered to the army despite his ill health. The second son, Vasilii, fought in the war, came back with bravery decorations and lives now, with his children and grandchildren, near Moscow in a family house built by Alexander Chayanov himself – a remarkable symbol of continuity.

To know who a scholar really is and to define his social place and significance, it is sometimes best to establish what he was killed for. Chayanov was killed for his *theory of differential optimums and vertical cooperation*. This carried a statement of theory, a programme of transformation of early Soviet agriculture as well as an indirect but clear and well substantiated condemnation of Stalin's programme of collectivisation.

### **Bolsheviks' theory of progress vis-à-vis theory of vertical cooperation: a scholar is silenced**

To place Chayanov's lethal confrontation with the powers that be, one must first step back to consider the environment he addressed: its social and political structure,

its new Establishment and the ideological vision which helped to give unity to supporters of Stalin's version of collectivisation. The newly created Soviet Union which had just emerged from civil war was sprawling, exhausted and poverty stricken, but in the process of rapid economic recovery. This came fastest in agriculture. By the mid-1920s, rural production was mostly back to its pre-war levels. But the political structure of the country had changed. The old privileged strata disappeared. The Communist Party members were, in Lenin's own words, still but a drop in the bucket of Russia's population. The strength of this new ruling stratum lay in the power of the state/party organisation and in the shortage of alternative foci of political power. The only major social organisations which survived, indeed, flourished anew outside the direct control of the new party-state, were the family farms and the peasant communes of rural Russia. Actual farming was mostly in the hands of the peasant households, whose most significant social frame were the village communes. The roughly 400,000 communes defined the daily life of the Russian countryside in the 1920s to a degree much greater than the state plenipotentiaries within the local Soviets, Party Branches and other local authorities which formerly ruled it. But the village communes' impact and power were localised and conditional. The state power was out of their direct influence – they were 'to be led' by 'the proletariat', i.e. by what stood for it. In control of practically all of Russia's land and with their customs and demands made into state law by the Land Code of 1922, the Russian peasants came to enjoy during the New Economic Policy (NEP) period of 1922–27 much of what they fought for in the 1905–07 revolution, Duma parliaments and the Civil War, why the majority of them opposed Stolypin reforms, but they understood well enough that political power was not in their hands. The tension between the monopoly of political power at the national level in the hands of the Communist hierarchy and the actual power in the rural localities, the division of the economic resources between the state-controlled industries and the rural small-holders, expressed the major political dilemmas of the Soviet Union in the 1920s (in the ideological language of the day it was referred to as 'the question of workers and peasants alliance').

In the face of the Soviet society of the NEP, its state leaders and ideologists of the 1920s shared amongst themselves (and attempted to impregnate their 'local cadres' with) a set of images defined by them as 'orthodox' Marxism. Three of its assumed social laws underlay the rural strategies adopted. These concerned progress, size, economic growth and investment and were linked to each other within a logical sequence. First, social progress towards a better future was being defined by the necessarily increasing manufacturing and energy capacities, the industrial societies as 'simply showing to the un-industrialised ones their own future' (Marx 1979, 9). Second, large size units of production were necessarily more effective but also better in their proletarian content and political symbolism. The reconstruction of production on the way to the socialist future was treated accordingly as a matter of growth of sizes, scales of technology and of capital investment. Next, the resources for this investment were to be taken from somewhere and, as Preobrazhensky pointed out, without the colonial exploitation and the international trade monopoly which the old predators had used to that purpose, only the peasants were left to pay the price of the Soviet industrialisation. Anyway, peasantry's essential characteristics, i.e. its being petit-bourgeoisie: small-sized and non-industrial and thereby reactionary and utopian, made its disappearance both inevitable and good, that is progressive. De-peasantisation offered accordingly a reliable index of

Progress, i.e. of a truly excellent world coming into being (but not before the peasantry had performed its social function in providing the industrialisation with resources within the 'primitive accumulation' of a socialist type). The breathtaking short-sightedness of this industrialisation model, which knew nothing of complexities and fully disregarded the non-economic factors as well as the long-term results (both economic and non-economic) of such a 'grab and demolish' strategy of social transformation, was made more plausible by evidence seemingly drawn from the industrial West, by war scares and, importantly, by the characteristics of the medium and lower ranks of the Bolshevik party 'cadres' – the backbone of the Soviet party-state.

There were bitter frustrations in this badly overworked and mostly underpaid group facing difficulties of daily management they were little trained for, of limited resources and of peasant stubbornness vis-à-vis the endless demands from 'the Centre'. The general mood of the Soviet lower officialdom, the police and the local party and its youth organisation's members, later the collectivisers on the march, was one of angry belief that peasants had it too good. The same was felt by them toward what was left of Russia's educated middle classes – the nicely-living perpetuators of endless doubts and of long phrases spoken with the air of self-significance. Experts' quibbles and scholars' deliberations sounded like disloyalty, if not outright sabotage, while revolutionary courage ('like in 1919') and simple choices could carry the day. Time was short, a war possible, the difficulties multiple, communism still very far away – an image of a great leap forward commended itself easily to the human products of history of mass Bolshevism in the days of Civil War and War Communism, of cavalry charges and of a New Jerusalem which seemed just around the corner.

Those were not only matters of pure perception and moods, however. The dream of a great leap forward expressed and released the pent-up ambitions of a new generation of party activists who came into the ring too late to claim a revolutionary pedigree for their own leadership status. Nor had they the education needed to become 'an expert'. Stalin's marching army of supporters, admirers, executors and executioners, the party lower and middle cadres of the late 1920s, were, to a major degree, peasant sons usually recruited via army service and/or the Komsomol (Young Communist League). Village-bred lads promoted NCO and after military service unwilling to go back into the daily rot of their father's family farms, with few classes of schooling, a short vocabulary of acquired Marxist phrases, much energy and some common wit were typical of it. They were young, brash, not very literate and painfully aware of it. Such cast of mind valued above all loyalty and obedience, strict order and simple solutions which one could see and touch directly. Also, in the immensity of the country the spirit of revolutionary upheaval was only now reaching some of its faraway corners and firing its young people with new Messianic zeal and grand expectations. The deepest dislike of the new cadres was reserved for the peasants – stupid, slow, led by those who grasp most and, for the intelligentsia – seen as too clever by half. To enhance the country and to promote oneself was to bring to heel the former group and to replace by 'loyal comrades' (yourself included) the latter one. Each expert dismissed, or an 'old revolutionary' purged, was one promotion more to a top position otherwise unachievable. Stalinism in the 1930s was for many not a matter of surrender to fear, but a political stance felt intuitively true as much as personally profitable. Crude radicalism, totality of obedience and careerism combined to produce the

Communist Party's new cadres of the 1930s, a new social mobility and a new political hierarchy for the USSR to follow.

In the face of this political establishment, its ideas, cravings and moods, the core of Chayanov's general argument concerning the future of Soviet agriculture was presented in full in his 1927 book *Osnovnye idei i formy organizatsii sel'skokhozyaistvennoi kooperatsii* ('The basic ideas and forms of agricultural cooperation' but better expressed as *The Theory of Agricultural Cooperatives* and published as such). The general view offered there will be summarised shortly. Chayanov accepted that the Soviet peasant agriculture and rural society of the late 1920s were in need of massive restructuring to upgrade and to acculturate them. He accepted also the *formal* goals of Stalin's collectivisation programme: that is to increase productivity, to secure well-being and to enhance social justice in the Soviet countryside. But in Chayanov's view the methods suggested were wrong on all scores.

In the official vision, the increase in the size and the mechanisation of units of production was to guarantee the achievement of high productivity and of the rural well-being, while social justice and egalitarian democracy were to come through the destruction of the exploitive rural rich (the 'Kulaks'). Chayanov argued that it was not true that increase in size of production units necessarily enhances productivity in agriculture – different branches of farming would have different optimal unit-sizes while in rural production dis-economies of scale were as harmful as the undersize. Different optimal sizes are characteristic of the different activities which come together in farming. The advancing social division of labour takes mostly the form of some aspects and participants in farmers' occupation being singled out and specialised, with the possible selective increase in this unit's size and/or capital input, reflecting thereby the best use of resources – a 'vertical' segmentation adjusting to the *differential optimums*. At the same time, a universal increase in size of units may actually decrease the overall productivity. The 'large-scale only' is as bad as the 'small-scale only' where farming is concerned. Also, large-scale units created overnight would not in Russia find local leaders able to manage them and managers would have to be 'imported' into villages. They would lack local roots and specific knowledge of local conditions of farming. They would also be fully linked into and dependent on a state apparatus – bureaucratic, detached and necessarily repressive. There is no reason to assume that such new local managers would be less 'unequal' or less exploitive than the neighbours-exploiters of old. Basically, it is the self-management and particular eco-systems' efficiency that are linked in a peasant countryside with relative well-being. Peasants know it. Their opposition to policies and declarations which contradicted their daily experience concerning production, productivity, power and exploitation in an environment they know best would be as harsh as it would be destructive of the agricultural resources (directly as well as indirectly – through 'feet-dragging'), which the collectivisation ostensibly aimed to increase.

Chayanov's alternative programme to achieve agricultural transformation of the country was to advance composite cooperation from below by the smallholders (he used the expressions 'vertical cooperation' and 'cooperative collectivisation' for it). This was based on Chayanov's observations of Russia's actual cooperative movement in 1910–14 and 1922–28, as well as of the spontaneous processes of what he called the *vertical division of labour* within the market-related peasantry

when aspects of its most profitable economic activities (rather than the whole process of farming) are being picked out by outsiders-entrepreneurs. The cooperative movement offered, to this view, a democratic alternative to specialisation, which takes control by outsiders-entrepreneurs, to stagnation and an exploitive and productivity-limiting state-centralisation as well.

The best solution to the problem of increase in rural productivity for Russia lay, in Chayanov's view, in a flexible *combination* of large and small units, defined by the *different* optimal sizes within different branches of agricultural production, i.e. the adjustment of units to sizes best suited to production (e.g. fodder at, say, village level, multi-village units when such are justified, e.g. for forestry, family farms' production for eggs, etc.). Combined production would mean also, for example, that fodder produced most effectively on a large and mechanised cooperative farm can be used for the production of milk by the family farms, to be processed then by the cooperatively-managed local butter factory and sold in town or abroad by a region-wide marketing cooperative. To give structure to such combinations and to secure their democratic nature Chayanov supported a *multi-level cooperative movement*, a cooperative of cooperatives, organised 'from below' and facilitated but not managed by the government. A socialist government's policies and the dominant socialist perceptions within the country could have secured, to Chayanov's view, the quick advance of such rural cooperation. This farming scheme would provide an open-ended system, able to adopt new agricultural techniques, while using, rather than bulldozing-out, the existing rural social structures and spontaneous processes. It would advance productivity, enhance social equality and, at the same time, act as a school for new democratic leadership of the localities. Through an ongoing process, this system was to link to the national plans of industrialisation then considered as well as with the envisaged social reconstruction and cultural change. Corresponding with peasant experience, using peasant institutions and wide open to peasant input of initiative and of cadres it would be acceptable within rural communities and able to tap their energies for continuous reform.

Importantly, Chayanov's vision was not only prescriptive but descriptive as well. During the 1920s a rich array of cooperative farms advanced and spread in the Soviet countryside. Building on pre-revolutionary organisation, rooted in local initiative and led by a remarkable generation of devotees of cooperative development, many thousands of cooperatives for supply, selling, credit, and production incorporated by 1928 over half of the Soviet rural population. Their network proceeded to increase and 'become more dense', until they were forcibly out-rooted by the collectivisation. This massive phenomenon, as well as Chayanov's status as a scholar, may explain why a version of 'chayanovian' strategy of rural reconstruction was adopted also by Bukharin's wing of the Communist Party leadership and seemingly assumed by the initial version of the first Five Year Plan (prepared under the supervision of Russia's outstanding Marxist-but-not-Bolshevik economist, V. Groman, to be set aside by Stalin and substituted by his own version and its supra-figures, fully out of touch with what was to take place). The grim tale of the demolition of Bukharin's alternative and of the physical destruction of its supporters as well as of all of the country's leading economic advisers is known enough.

Chayanov's analysis, which challenged directly the route the collectivisation was actually to take, and its official legitimisation, was based on an accumulated expertise

of Russia's outstanding rural studies literature. There was no better knowledge on offer, which may explain why both analysis and the extensive evidence gathered in the 1920s were, on the whole, simply brushed aside by those in ultimate authority. Chayanov and those who thought like himself were mostly answered by the claim that their position was hypocritical – that they did not actually wish for the rural reforms to happen. Chayanov himself was viciously attacked as the rural exploiters' defender and an organiser of a clandestine and counter-revolutionary Labouring Peasants' Party (TKP), which he never was. The true reason for this smokescreen and for the fury with which 'chayanovism' was then being condemned lay in the fact that Chayanov's argument slipped the cover from a major secret – the actual grand hypocrisy of the day. Stalin's collectivisation programme did not really aim at the goals it declared: 'for the sake of progress' it actually aimed to break the backbone of the peasants' social power and to 'pump-across' (*perekachat* was the term used then) peasant resources into industrial construction, the army and the needs of the party-state apparatus in an exercise which, vis-à-vis its own rural producers, adopted many of the features of early colonialism at its most grasping and its least effective. Beneath the claims to ultimate science of social progress lay a pirate's idea of capital accumulation through the grabbing and the consuming of the golden egg, be what may be the consequences to the existing rural economy and society. This strategy was put to use by a crafty and unscrupulous man in his rise to total power (and still in the shadow of his predecessors' call for his dismissal as being too brutal to direct their party). The decision to 'collectivise' was about that. Chayanov made this clear in the most effective of ways – through offering an alternative backed by scholarship and in no contradiction with peasants' interests and actual choices.

### **Chayanov's second death in the soviet ideological scene: 1960s–85**

What followed the 1929–30s collectivisation policy turning was much destruction, extensive rural famine, many deaths and a great silence. Guided by the brilliant insight of the immortal Stalin, Soviet agriculture was acclaimed by all within his reach to be the best in the world. Or else ...

When, in the mid-1950s, the new rulers of the USSR began to take stock of Stalin's actual inheritance, it took them little time to conclude that agriculture and rural society were the country's sore point and worst impediment. None of the formal aims of Stalin were actually achieved in the countryside – the rural population was poor, the agricultural production stagnant, the equality and democracy-at-root non-existent. Results of the 1941–45 war, bad as they were, did not explain those conditions of Russian agriculture, nor did the post-war reconstruction improve matters spontaneously or at speed. Malenkov, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, all of the follow-up leaders of the USSR, were to give much attention and many words to 'further improvement', i.e. to the continuing crisis of agriculture. Massive resources were by now being poured into it, and yet, by the 1970s, the USSR found itself importing food. With the exception of manual labour, agriculture did not, in fact, seem to provide even the expected 'capital accumulation' for the sake of the industrialisation of the 1930s. Later, and especially since the 1960s, agriculture was increasingly becoming a massive drag on country well-being and economic growth. Worse, the long-term negative results of Stalin's collectivisation began now to show: ecological decline, demographic crisis, selective migration gutting villages and depopulating whole rural areas (e.g. the north and centre of European Russia).

The over-urbanisation of the 1960s–80s ran contrary to the socially most effective solutions and produced many further ills usually associated with Third World countries.

As the failure of state policies to resolve the rural problems became more explicit, these policies increasingly became politically poignant. Khrushchev lost his job when his maize programme failed and made him look ridiculous, while bread lines were beginning to form in major towns. Brezhnev despoiled Siberia, exchanging its riches for imported grain. Gorbachev called for the restructuring of collectivised agriculture along lines fully vindicating Chayanov's criticism and suggestions. In 1987 he announced that the first steps of the economics of Perestroika must be a breakthrough in agriculture, it stands or fails on it. It failed and failed.

Yet, this is not just a sorry tale of truth prevailing and scholarship vindicated but with little made of it. For the question is: why did so little change? And before that stands the question of what made the silence concerning Chayanov's analysis of collectivisation last for a third of a century after Stalin's death, while the agrarian crisis deepened and became more and more difficult to resolve?

By the late 1950s, the terror of arbitrary arrests and executions was over. Khrushchev condemned Stalin and the city of Stalingrad became Volgograd. New leaders experimented at least twice with major efforts at economic reforms. The manufacturing industry and urban life were, for a time, on the mend, which made clearer still the disastrous state of agriculture and of the villages. The food supplies were increasingly inadequate, and a Muscovite joke of those days about an infant reporting both parents were out, the father having flown to the moon, the mother queuing for sugar, said it all. Yet, no pressure to reconsider at full depth the issues of the countryside, past and present, was generated by the Soviet scholarly community in the 1950s–70s even before the late-Brezhnev period made such a discussion, once again, barely possible. A number of remarkably successful self-generated local experiments with alternative methods of running agriculture were actually suppressed then, often with great brutality. In line with all of that, Chayanov was 'rehabilitated' but only in part, i.e. from his 1937 capital charge but not from the 1928–33 vilification and sentence. His works stayed accordingly out of bounds. His name was now being mentioned, but only negatively – as a representative of the petit-bourgeoisie utopianism proven wrong by the brilliant development of Soviet collective farming.

An Indian tradition defines the Brahmin's caste as 'born twice'. Scholars can be killed twice, through physical death but also through their heritage being wilfully forgotten. And it is the second type of death which would probably strike the greater of them as being worse than physical death. Why then, while evidence mounted as to his predictions and prescriptions being right, was Chayanov sentenced to oblivion by his professional peers and by the politicians of the first post-Stalin generation in the USSR? We can restate this question to say: why was there not until 1987 or so any signs of fundamental reconsideration of the agricultural system established by Stalin's collectivisation (rather than an endless debate as to how to make it work in the face of its persistent failures)?

The social context, the public mood and the social carriers of the 1950s to the early 1980s great silence in the face of a systematic rural crisis differed considerably from those who offered the social and political background to Chayanov's murder. The country's political structure was now, for a time, securely monolithic. The general economic conditions seemed to improve, if very slowly. The romantic era

was over; rationalism and science were in fashion. At the top, on Lenin's tomb, standing on parade, youthful faces and half military dresses were replaced by elderly podginess, suits and epaulettes. The mood of the 'party cadres' was increasingly centred on the enhancement of personal well-being. Chauffeured cars and visits abroad spread as the new badge of authority of the middle ranks. The administrative hierarchy was increasingly manned by university graduates, professional expertise was being praised, work in the numerous research institutes well rewarded. There was also some measure of licence to argue, while those who refused to toe the line paid for it only by their promotion prospects ('like in the West'), rather than by prison or death.

Those who expected an instant explosion of rationalism and critical analysis from the better-educated and better-off new elite, made freer by government's adherence to 'socialist legality', were to be disappointed. What blocked a going-to-the-root review of Soviet agriculture and any recovery of the insights and analytical achievements of 1920s was, to begin with, the power of a political generation which reached its full maturity and majority in the 1950s–70s. The young collectivisers of the 1930s who survived the 1937 Purge and often benefited by it, were now at the top of many hierarchies of power and networks of patronage. Any view and any name which indicated that there was something badly wrong with the collectivisation was casting doubts on their political biographies and delegitimated the authority they held. This was not restricted to the political bosses only. To the scholars-in-charge the emotional investment in the explanations and justifications they had offered for decades was immense, underlining their defensive postures. For who would wish to be called a cheat by one's own students, or to face up to the fact that one's own cowardice contributed to the current crisis and possibly to the murder of the Chayanovs of one's own generation? The few colleagues who insisted on offering critical commentary could be marginalised with the help of the Party watchdog departments, the institutes' directors, journals' editors and the Glavlit censors.

The worst cases would face a total ban on publication, on working with students and on travel abroad. The young blades could be told which views earned promotions and, if necessary, be hammered into obedience. The defenders of the established truth found their countryside equivalent in those in whose interest it was for collectivised agriculture to be sustained, come what may – the little tsars of the countryside, the district Party secretaries and, in their entourage, the chairmen of collective farms and the directors of the state farms.

But there was more to it than the grip of Stalin's generation's old hands. There was also the power of intellectual inertia of endlessly repeated dead thought. While the country changed and so did its carriers of political power and organised knowledge, all of the dogmas of Stalin's generation's *Weltenschaung* concerning Progress (usually a crude rehash of Karl Kautsky's and Friedrich Engels's Darwinian historiography and positivistic epistemology) were still in place. As long as this general outlook persisted and filled all of the permitted intellectual space, the very logic and 'scientificity' of analysis dictated misconceptions where Soviet agriculture was concerned (and, of course, not only in this field).

At the centre of this *Weltenschaung* stood an assumption of hierarchy of forms of economic organisation: the State economy first as socialism's synonym, the state-controlled cooperatives next as its lesser version, the family economic units (with an invalidating term 'petit-bourgeois' attached to it), and finally, the capitalist enterprises 'exploiting wage labour for private profit'. This view fitted well the

state-bureaucratic obsessions with party/state control. Even when supra-centralisation was put in some doubt (e.g. under Khrushchev), this ideological hierarchy of preferences kept sway when agriculture was concerned. Indeed, an additional tacit hierarchy facilitated it. This extra hierarchy ordered all branches of production in terms of what can be only described as aesthetic *cum* symbolic attributes, rather than of the productivity, of social characteristics or of needs – with heavy industry (the more smoke, the more wonderful) at the very top and with farming very close to the bottom. (This extended also into farming itself, where tractors were naturally at the top of the scale of prestige and pay, while actual land husbandry was close to the bottom.) These hierarchies linked directly into the dogmas professed at the beginning of collectivisation and still very much alive. Industrialisation, understood as large-scale manufacturing, was still seen as the only way to make a country rich and powerful with ‘all else’ bound naturally to disappear or ‘to follow’. It was also made into the chief index of socialism’s progress. ‘Large’ was beautiful and necessarily more productive than ‘small’. There was still one and only road of Progress, i.e. goodness and, while some past mistakes were now being admitted, the USSR was still leading the world by showing it its future. And there was the assumption of ‘Socialist Primitive Accumulation’ necessarily preceding the industrialised glorious future – as a concept, a mood, and a moral judgment granting to the modernisers a peculiar charter to walk over humans for their own sake.

There was still more than the blocking force of this combination of men of the past and of past ideas, for the ability to perpetuate these ideas under new circumstances must be understood in relation to the actual conditions of the day. Defence of Stalin’s collectivisation (with Stalin’s own name now usually avoided) set well with a system of centralised and bureaucratised administration. In a system in which good citizenship and socialist convictions were synonymous with the execution of the orders from above, anything which smacked of decentralisation and local centres of authority was deeply suspect. The most plausible solution to the difficulties of over-centralised agriculture was not, in this context, the rethinking and resetting of its structure but a still larger dose of centralisation: the enlargement of the *kolkhoz*, its statisation, the decommissioning of the smaller villages (to be re-allocated into larger units), etc.

When in trouble, one could also ask to increase the centrally allocated industrial inputs: tractors, fertilisers, etc. ‘Not to rock the boat’ was basic intuition and a ‘need’ felt throughout a bureaucratic system. Unchallenged authority was treated as a necessary ingredient of smooth social functioning. Guilt towards those purged and fear to admit to one’s own silences, opportunistic dodges, small cruelties or large crimes gave it powerful emotional roots. It was the strength of this combination of interest and emotions, resources and controls, cynical lies and plausible common sense, which made an agrarian system survive unchallenged for 30 years after Stalin, while it was moving towards its eventual state of 80 billion roubles in subsidies, 50 million tons of grain in imports, demographic decline and ecological disaster.

### **The ‘free world’: imaginations, frontiers and limits**

Have we reached then the end of explanation, of reasons for Chayanov’s outlook and programme being ‘brushed under the carpet’? Not quite so, because some of the basic problems of agrarian policy, uncovered by the Soviet experience of

collectivisation, were being repeated also outside the realm of control by the Soviet bureaucracy and scholarship. There must have been, thereby, something more than the Soviet establishment's power and dynamics at play. Or, to have it once more personalised, Chayanov died for the third time in the Western establishment's 'development theories' of 1960s–80s concerning the Third World, as well as in alternatives offered by most of their radical critics before IMF power came to marginalise debate. Nobody there was being arrested or dismissed because of Chayanov. His major book translated into English in 1966 made quite a splash, but silence settled fast over his work. Worse still, in the West, Chayanov's views were being systematically misrepresented (or, was it misread, or was it not-quite-read?) by those who did refer to him at all.

To recognise what it means we must step on in our explanations, from the sole effect of causalities of fear which dictate obedience and of self interest which silences objections into the realm of ideology, i.e. of coherent and rationally held misconception and of cognitive paralysis created by disabling words and world-views. For, in the West and its intellectual dependencies, some assumptions and policies we so often associate with Stalin's terror or the post-Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy have been, in fact, present as well. It was the Shah of Iran and his officials who set up the *Collective Boneh* in Fars and the state farms in Khuzistan, i.e. schemes practically identical to the Soviet collective farm (*kolkhoz*) and state farm (*sovkhos*), to be blessed there by the US experts and advisers. Clearly, we are not talking then of something inherently Communist or particularly Marxist when such organisations are concerned. Later, in Africa, Tunisia's state-worshipping nationalists set up their own *kolkhoz* quite on a par with the collectives of an Ethiopian military regime (which chose to describe itself then, not unlike its enemies who overthrew it, as 'Marxist-Leninist'). The so-called peasant cooperatives of Ecuador or of Egypt, which are usually neither peasant nor cooperative, but state institutions of input/output control imposed by officialdom on reluctant peasantry, showed much similarity also, and so did many actualities of the Ujamma in early 'populist' Tanzania. There was also marked consistency of failure to achieve the official goals each of these schemes set for itself. Once we rid ourselves of excessive attention to labels, we find in the contemporary 'developmentism' much of Soviet agrarian debates and their resolutions by Stalin and by Brezhnev.

Barely ever were the actual lessons of Soviet collectivisation and its critique by Chayanov taken on board in the 'developing societies' section of the 'Free World'. When Chayanov was cited in the 'developmentist' literature he was usually used as a synonym of the 'small is beautiful' outlook and of programmes which were actually never his, i.e. he was treated as a defender of small-holders *per se*. This caricature was very often employed as an anti-model, and a punch-bag by brash defenders of capitalist progress and/or state intervention, 'Socialist' or non-'Socialist'. In fact, Chayanov was no defender of 'small' versus 'large', he only objected to the 'large is beautiful' formula (and sounds remarkably up-to-date thereby when we look at the 1990s social and economic analysis). His was the 'combined is beautiful' strategy of development, based not on dreams but on thorough knowledge of agriculture and rural social organisations all through Europe. He was no 'populist' either insofar as party allegiances and the substantive political views of Russia's populists were concerned (e.g. their belief in the exclusive virtues of the Russian peasant commune). The label of 'neopopulism' attached to him by his foes and his murderers remains that of a Caribbean peasant saying: 'you call a man "a dog" to hang him'. Yet, his

actual message could have saved the rural objects of 'agriculture's development policies' in many countries in the world over much destruction and grief.

Let us turn, once again, a persistent miscomprehension into questions and ask what made for such a broadly shared yet misleading view of Chayanov, followed by his *de facto* rejection? There have been at least four elements facilitating the continuous misreading-for-purpose-of-rejection of Chayanov's works within the academic communities of the 'First' and the 'Third' Worlds.

First, there has been the assumption of the archaic nature and thereby of the necessary disappearance of family economies. This was inbuilt into a general 'theory of progress' taken as given by most contemporary social scientists. Family economy was seen as belonging to the past on the strength of an extrapolation from the nineteenth-century industrialisation, with all else (inclusive of the late twentieth-century evidence of so-called 'informal' or 'expolary' economies as well as of the actual prevalence of small-unit farming in Europe) brushed aside. Peasant farming was being 'talked out' of reality with particular zeal by the Third World's versions of 'orthodox' Marxists through the uses of the term 'petty-bourgeoisie' (which carried the double negative of being capitalist and being backward as well). Rather than face Chayanov's analytical conclusion that family farming was neither capitalist nor necessarily inefficient, it was simpler to attach to him an invalidating label of 'smallholders-lover'.

Second, there has long been the monopoly of state-wide models of political economy, their deductive logic-from-above expanded to every unit operating in its context and used as ultimate explanation of all and sundry. Chayanov's particular point of epistemological brilliancy – his effort to build economic models 'from below' (via the diverse logic of specific enterprises and their complex combinations) was too much to comprehend for too many.

Third, any reduction of rural realities to an economicistic model clashes with the way Chayanov and his allies challenged the recognised disciplinary frontiers. History, sociology, agronomy, economics were to them one where the actual life of farmers was concerned. Chayanov called it 'social agronomy'. Once again, to many of the contemporary experts, knowing more and more about less and less, it was too much to handle.

Finally, those to whom state planning and free market, alternatively or as a combination, are the only possible forms in which social economy can function, find unacceptable Chayanov's outlook, which treated family-economy strategies in agriculture as showing a discreet operational logic. Consequently, they usually fail to see that Chayanov never assumed in actual reality a total autonomy of peasant economies with economies at large (models are, of course, a different matter). It was they who disregarded his insights, he never disregarded the substance of theirs – be it the market economy context, the new technological advances, or the place of capital and wage labour in peasant life.

### **The peasant agenda and a 'post-modern' epistemology**

The lessons of Chayanov's treble death can be now summarised before turning to the issue of the contemporaneity of his message.

First, repressive dictatorships masquerading as a socialist paradise showed their true colour through policies and ideologies of state centralisation and the de-humanising of social sciences by their total bureaucratisation and claims of their

total objectivity. Those who challenged this were treated as enemies. The most perceptive of critics paid with their lives. Scholarship and a dictatorship do not coincide well, at least in the long term. To be effective, dictatorships need not only the use of force and fear but also the demolition of alternatives from which opposition and hope can grow.

Second, repressive politicians who wish to control and exploit their people are never the sole agent of oppression. Its ideologisation by official intellectuals and the institutions of organised science has its own logic, power and momentum, its own ways of control and exploitation. These must be considered when issues of understanding and misunderstanding are involved. There are, as Kuhn asserted, conservative paradigms and set agendas of perception within the communities of scholars, but one must remember as well the determinant of corruption by privileges and the power hierarchies at roots of scholarly lies and self-deceptions.

Third, an implicit bridge of an ideological nature exists between the murderous crudities of Stalinism and much of the well-meaning advice of Western specialists concerning worlds unlike their own. The ideological substance of this bridge in analysis, emotions and trained intuitions, has been the contemporary versions of evolutionism expressed as the 'theory of progress' and/or 'modernisation'. Even when stripped of Stalin's hooliganism and Brezhnev's corruption it remains a charter for arrogant inhumanity to which peasants have been one of the major victims – 'for their own good', of course.

All of this explains the role Chayanov's work came to play in the 'peasantological' breakthrough within the Anglo-Saxon academic literature of the 1960s–70s, as an analytical approach one can describe as a Peasant Agenda came into its own. A considerable measure of conceptual continuity can be shown between Chayanov's and his friends' insights and the analytical achievements of the 1960s–70s and farther on. At the core of this continuity lay the refusal of deconceptualisation of peasantry and/or its reduction to footnotes. Attention was focused on the particularities of family farms as socio-economic entities, on the specific characteristics of rural societies and their modes of transformation. This approach has also assumed the need for some discreet analytical structures for their comprehension. The Peasant Agenda broad tradition addressed in a way new to the 1960s social conditions of the countryside, while at the same time generating as the time proceeded, important insights into some broader epistemological issues. Chayanov's view was followed and developed (and often rediscovered) as to the particular, discreet and parallel, yet related, economic modes, which do not demolish each other but combine in a continuous manner. The same can be said about the from-the-bottom-up perception of social economy, the fundamental multi-disciplinarity involved in the notion of 'social agronomy', and a particularly non-deterministic comprehension of social structures which, paradoxically, links directly into the current debate of post-modernism and of mathematical theories of chaos. General theory apart, this approach offers also important analytical input into the analysis of contemporary industrial and 'post-industrial' society such as issues of 'informal' (or 'expolary') economies, of the particular place of labour in family economies, of the decentralised yet integrated organisation of production, etc. Within the field of political ideology Chayanov put at its strongest a vision of cooperative movement as an alternative 'socialism

from below', decentralised and communalised yet highly effective in its economic results.

This is why one could sum up, in the days when Chayanov was still Russia's 'un-person' but on the threshold of becoming its favourite son, not long ago and yet in what seems like the archaic past, to say: in fact there are still hundreds of millions of peasants and as many may exist in the year 2000 but, paradoxically, Chayanov's fundamental methods and insights may prove particularly enriching for worlds of fewer peasants as well as of fewer 'classical' industrial proletarians, while the subject of his actual concern, the Russian peasantry, has all but disappeared, which will make a good epitaph for a memorial of a great scholar when his countrymen remember to build him one.

All of it holds true.

### **The current debate about agriculture in the USSR: Chayanov's iconisation, Chayanov's use**

Considering the extent of Chayanov's contemporaneity, what was the actual impact of his recovery in the USSR as from 1987? Most immediately, how did it link into the 'agrarian debate'? To answer this, one must move from the sole considerations of the rational choices of policies to that of the political and ideological struggles of the day.

The most direct way by which a Soviet citizen had been introduced daily to the current economic crisis was through the food supplies – the shortages, the price-inflation, the inadequate quality, the over-use of nitrates, etc. There had been also a widespread feeling that agriculture could do much better and that improvements in it could have been actually achieved faster than in the industry. At the 1988 Communist Party Conference – the beginning of what was billed as the new radical stage – Gorbachev declared rapid improvement of agriculture to be the first material change that must signal the general economic successes of Perestroika and to bring it to every household. This is where Perestroika was to pass or to fail a test everybody in the USSR could recognise, establishing public confidence in its authors. It failed and, in direct consequence, so did they.

There were six general lessons initially drawn by Perestroika's radical reformers of the 1980s from the sorry state of Soviet agriculture and of the past efforts to overcome it. First, the increase in the size of the units of production undertaken under Stalin and, once again, under Brezhnev, did not result in increase in productivity. Second, the steep rise in chemical inputs and mechanisation in the post-Stalin era did not secure it either, for after some improvement stagnation set it. No simple formula of 'the more you put in, the more you get out' seemed to work. Third, the extension of services offered 'from above' by the state organisations (and usually paid for by the producers and through state subsidies, e.g. the so-called Agro Industrial Complexes) did not improve matters either. It seemed rather that to become more effective agriculture had to be de-bureaucratised. Fourth, it was agreed generally that in the provision of food supplies the personal interests of a farmer must go hand-in-hand with national needs. But a single farmer is clearly no match for the local bureaucracy controlling services and supplies. Matters of production and supply are also matters of authority and control (hence the growing demands for privatisation of lands and the efforts to set up rural small-holders' associations or

even a Peasant Party). Fifth, the farmers' ability to deliver the goods had been deteriorating also because of extensive ecological decline. Sixth, the drop in quality of rural populations and labour via selective migration into towns, which had been taking away the younger, the brighter and the better educated, made the countryside into the country's slum. To deliver foodstuff effectively the whole nature of rural social life had to change.

The severe problems of stagnant production, extensive waste, failure to deliver produce to the right place and in right conditions, as well as the long term deterioration of rural environment and population, have been increasingly said to be solvable only insofar as 'the human factor' would come to play a new and different role within agriculture. New technology, new skills, and a direct link through fair remuneration of the individual's and the nation's economic interests had been important, it was being said, but insufficient on their own. The rural population would need to recover its 'feeling of being a master' (or should we say, using Western terminology, becoming a subject rather than only an object of social and production processes and policies). To Perestroika radicals the recovery by actual farmers of authority and responsibility vis-à-vis the bureaucratic machine and its little local tsars, has been increasingly seen as the one way to save what needs saving, to advance what needs advancing and to invest what needs investing, and thereby to secure the long term qualitative improvement of communal welfare, while providing the country with the food supplies needed.

For a time this general view seemed to sweep all before it. Vis-à-vis the old scale of preferred forms of production: state ownership at the top, the state-directed cooperatives next, then the family farms and a capitalist economy, Gorbachev had declared the first three equal in their socialist credentials, i.e. legitimate, and only the fourth contrary to it. Re-peasantisation (*'okrest'yanivanie'*) became, after 1987, the Soviet government's official goal and media's pet. Curtailment of bureaucratic management, genuine re-cooperativisation and freedom of family farming, were declared to be the major state targets of the rural transformation of Russia.

Chayanov's return into the world of the living has to be seen (also) as part of debate over the alternative agricultural strategies. This was linked to a new historiography of the Soviet countryside which came to see Stalin's collectivisation as a major disaster to Soviet agriculture and the major reason for its many failures. It bore out fully Chayanov's criticism and gave new substance to the alternatives he offered. The assumption that, while inputs and prices matter, the socio-economic structures of farming must be also put right to enable effective and flexible response to the changing nature of agriculture and to the market demand, went well with Chayanov's major insights. Concepts of 'differential optimums', 'vertical differentiation' and the basic preference for *combinations* of large and small units within a self-governing cooperative structure, spoke directly to the needs as perceived and were able to give them substance and specificity. It also fitted well into what was substantively a 'third way' being suggested, one of a socialist alternative to the Bolshevik party-state which was neither the return of the pre-1917 past nor simply a move to become 'Western'.

It was in that spirit that Alexander Yakovlev, who for a time appeared as Gorbachev's alter ego, offered a fair index of the basic ideas which to him underpinned Perestroika of 1987-88. He spoke about the need to leave behind the

'dogma of total obedience of individual to the state', the necessity to achieve social changes 'not by all means', the duty to treat humans as the subject of change rather than its object. He accentuated the idea that the main division lies not between the supporters of the different forms of economy, but between social and economic systems of production directed towards the solution of human needs and those in which humans are used for somebody else's economic profit. He also described the Communist Party's attitude to peasants as the worst of its 'failures and crimes', and defined his own general programme as returning to general human values and as 'ethical socialism'. In line with it the term used then by Gorbachev for agricultural reform was that of 'cooperative collectivisation', i.e. the one actually introduced by Chayanov. Now, however, it was the collective and state agriculture which were to be 're-cooperativised', i.e. decentralised and made democratic, rather than the family farms of the 1920s helped to combine in new ways.

But clearly, ideas on their own, even the most sensible, do not singly make for a better world. The failure of the Soviet economic reforms in general and especially so in agriculture, and the shortage of daily supplies, was resulting in growing popular fury and in the decline of hope at 'the top' and at 'the bottom'.

Ironically, for an environment which tries hard to forget its past ideological masters, to understand what happened to the Soviet reforms of 1987–90 one must take here a leaf from Marx. The views of Chayanov as much as those of Yakovlev challenged basic interests and triggered deep fears in the holders of the Soviet 'forces of production', of power and of privilege. In matters concerning agriculture a powerful lobby of the chairmen and the directors of the collective and the state farms expressed its interest in a powerful, conservative backlash. Here was the very group of neo-controllers, neo-exploiters and new go-betweens, whose rise and character Chayanov actually predicted and made into a major reason for his objections to Stalin's collectivisation. By now in the Russian countryside they controlled the land and the equipment, housing and transportation, and through these dominated humans and goods. Gorbachevian weakening of the party-state made them even stronger and they were not going to give up their positions lightly. While Moscow talked reforms, their defensive response was sufficient to have those blocked. By the end of 1989, as 'nothing much happened' while food supplies proceeded to dwindle, the chairmen and directors' lobby moved over to an attack. They established powerful presence in the Supreme Soviet and took over the newly created 'Peasant Union'. Delivered by its leader, Starodubtsev – the junta's member-to-be in August 1990, their message was clear: if the Government wanted more food it should invest more in agriculture, leaving resources there in the hands of those who already controlled it. Also, the only acceptable way to introduce family farming was to do so under full control and as part of operations of the large production units. Or else ... (a food-delivery strike was even mentioned). The empty shelves during an excellent agricultural year 1990–91 gave it all a peculiarly phantasmagorical background. Within a short while, the government was giving way.

In the face of the food-supply crisis an important ideological shift was taking place on the other side of the political divide. Perestroika's radicals – its 'Left' by self-definition, straddled in fact two different strands of interpretation. On the one hand stood those who had seen the country's future as some type of integration of its Soviet and non-Soviet past and present, goals and deeds, while on the other hand were those who aimed to out-route the regime which failed lock, stock and barrel.

The first spoke of a change due to bring out for once the humanist potentials of socialism, while the second group took its cues from 'the West', especially the USA. Be what may its reasons – conservative spanner in the wheels, ethnic strife, Gorbachev's personal weakness, or inadequacies of their own programmes, after 1988 Perestroika's radicals were facing the decline of hope for the rapid transformation of the Soviet society. The severity of the economic crisis gave new strength to their enemies in the conservatives' lobbies. Within the radicals' ranks it gave strength to visions of a totally free market, i.e. to what was perceived as 'learning from the West', but was badly informed to the point of sounding bizarre to Western observers. This view embraced such symbols of popular well-being as Thatcher of the UK and Pinochet of Chile. Yet Perestroika's defeats gave it power of argument along the lines of 'if not us, it must be them who got it right. Look at their shops!'

The political battle, in which the alliance of conservative communists and the lobbyists for those who control bureaucratic structures and major enterprises of the old regime have been fighting what is mostly a nineteenth-century-sounding freemarketeers' position, has left precariously little space for the 'third way' political programmes and/or original solutions. During 1989–91 the USSR had been moving in this sense along lines not unlike those of the other countries of Eastern Europe.

This is the context in which, in matters of agriculture and rural society, Chayanov's contemporaneity and professional brilliancy failed to breach the ramparts of establishment's interests as well as of its critiques' simplistic perceptions. What was to be done thereby with one of Russia's brightest sons, whose martyrdom and newly discovered personal qualities was giving him the halo of a saint? The answer: Chayanov was rapidly 'iconised'. Increasingly his name came to be mentioned respectfully and put aside, bowed to and fast forgotten, hung on walls but never considered in depth. Or else he was mentioned offhand as supportive of views he would not even recognise. Or else again, he was assigned to a symbolic history-play of goodies and baddies, to be now the goody that was 'for the Russian peasants' against Bolshevik baddies and 'their' Karl Marx who were 'against the Russian peasants'.

Is it to be Chayanov's fourth and final death through veneration? This will depend on his motherland's future history, in which rural population and agriculture are necessarily but a part. Chayanov was no utopian; indeed, his analytical tools and even his prescription make still better sense than anything else on offer within the contemporary commonwealth of ex-Soviet states. What makes Chayanov into utopia is the power of the old regime with its interests, privileges and fetishes, while an ideology of Soviet Thatcherism forms its only alternative. Should this binarity of choices hold fast, there will be indeed no place for Chayanov but as an icon? But the mole of history digs deep and, as shown time and time again, it is the power of original and realistic thought, as well as those who carry it, which make the world turn. This is where Chayanov's analytical impact is set to outlive his enemies and his venerator and to play on its role as a fertile, conceptual input into the world's future shapes. This is the stuff the social world is made of, for better and worse.

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