

'PEASANT ECONOMY', SUBORDINATE MARXISM AND
THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISED AGRICULTURE IN
THE USSR IN THE 1920s

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"The outlook of many of our comrades, particularly the younger ones, is full of images of the great organisational tasks and achievements of today's industrial economy. Their hands are itching to achieve something similar in their own province.

"Small wonder, then, if after several months' work they often reach complete despondency and despair - shivering on some rainy November evening on a peasant cart on impassable roads from Znamensky, perhaps, to Buzaevo and Uspensky, meeting everywhere tracklessness, poverty, the indifference of the peasants, who sit in their little criss-crossed allotments and fence themselves into their tiny plots with their exclusive, 'purely petty-bourgeois obtuseness'.

"... it would be of the greatest advantage to our despairing readers to recognise that exactly there, in the depths of Znamensky and Buzaevo, stagnant under the autumn rain, are hidden the greatest possibilities for the widest organisational tasks and the greatest future achievements."

(A. V. Chayanov in 1927)

The debate on 'Peasant Economy'

In this paper I should like to draw some links between a theoretical debate in which I have taken part, and the struggle for socialist agriculture in the USSR in the 1920s.

The last ten to fifteen years have seen a particular theoretical discussion in the West on the concept of 'Peasant Economy', associated particularly with the tradition of A. V. Chayanov. Chayanov was a Russian economist, born in 1888, whose most active years were the 1910s and 1920s when he led and organised an important school of study, research and practice. He was arrested in 1930 and died sometime in the thirties or forties.

The discussion with which I am concerned began in the mid-sixties with the republication and translation into English of some of Chayanov's most important works.^{1/} It ended - or at least reached a definite point - with the almost simultaneous publication of three critical essays on the concepts of 'Peasant Economy'.^{2/} A decade ago the Chayanov

tradition was dominant in many areas of rural sociology and anthropology. Today a definite theoretical critique of this tradition has been established. I feel this is a welcome, positive development, although one of my purposes is to explore its limited nature.

To do this I should like first to establish the evaluation we have reached, starting from the context of the Chayanov revival in the mid-sixties. I think that behind this revival were three major factors.

First were the Third World contradictions of the last decade: the Green Revolution, and the new development strategies for agriculture in South and South-East Asia, based predominantly on input-intensification. A great deal of interest was being generated in the possibilities of integrating progressive, small-scale technologies with the conservative, 'small is beautiful' property framework of the peasant family farm. There was also interest in reforming and adapting the peasant institutional framework through the intervention of state agencies, and the cooperative organisation of distribution. But the predominant thrust among practitioners of Western development economics was towards agricultural development on the existing peasant basis. The Chayanov tradition presented a way of theorising these aspirations.

Second, therefore, was the obvious relevance of the Soviet experience, which forces of both Left and Right were prepared to bring under review. Predominantly, however, the Soviet experience of the twenties and thirties was being interpreted in such a way as to show that collective forms of production were not suited to raising the level of agricultural development; and that within the story of the twenties was an implicit historical alternative, a peasant path of development relevant to Third World needs. A major support for this interpretation was the existence of the

Chayanov tradition, which had flowered precisely in the 1920s.

Third and last, was the nature of the Chayanov school. Chayanov and his colleagues were not just theoreticians, and their work could not have been done by ivory-tower academics. They were also practitioners and organisers. As agronomists, extension officers and cooperators they helped directly to shape the productive apparatus of Soviet peasant agriculture after the October revolution. This was an indispensable aspect of the durability of their tradition: its close relationship with practice.

To establish foundations for a theoretical critique of this tradition, a fourth ingredient had to appear in the conjuncture of ideas. This was the revival of Marxist theory. During the 1960s, simultaneous with the reassertion of the Chayanov tradition were new beginnings in academic Marxism. The Marxist dogmatism of the Stalin years and the Cold War was giving ground to more creative, innovating tendencies which could grapple on equal terms with the dynamism and movement in bourgeois theory. Primitive rejection could be raised to the level of materialist analysis. The revival of Marxism also, of course, had its limits - limits of academicism and theoretical purism - to which I shall return.

What is 'Peasant Economy'?

The concept of 'Peasant Economy' handed down to us by the Chayanov tradition rested on three basic foundations - conceptions of technology, of the family and of the nature of modernisation processes. ^{3/}

(i) Technology

First of all, the notion of 'Peasant Economy' rested upon a

technology dominated by diminishing returns and diseconomies of scale. The views of technology and technical progress in agriculture commonly accepted by the Chayanov school can either be regarded as very ancient (going back to Malthus) or very modern (as in today's 'small is beautiful', 'intermediate technology' ideas).

Such notions implied, clearly, that peasants' incomes could only be raised by more and more labour-absorbing, small-scale activities. But an alternative, stronger implication could also be drawn: that with rational organisation, peasant property and the family farm were the form most suited to raising the level of agricultural inputs, employment and production. To establish this view, it was necessary to develop a conception of the family, and of family property.

(ii) The family

The Chayanov tradition argued that in 'Peasant Economy' the family was 'the basic unit of production and consumption'. I choose this phrase because it is widely used as a generic definition by modern rural sociologists in the West. Of course, from one point of view, families are composed of 'basic units' - individual men, women and children. To argue that in 'Peasant Economy' the family was the basic unit meant, not to deny the existence of human individuality, but to make an analytical aggregation of family members into a single economic agent possessing a unified, inherent rationality and consciousness. It meant to encompass the conceptual dissolution of internal social relations - the domination of some family members by others on lines of age and sex.

The unitary conception of the family economy meant, also, to abstract from the national economy, and to analyse the family farm as an

enterprise unaffected by the wage category, wage labour and labour markets.

For only in the absence of both internal and external social relations was it possible to generate one of the most celebrated concepts of the Chayanov tradition : that the determination of labour inputs in 'Peasant Economy' resulted not from exploitation (of some by others) but from self-exploitation - the revealed preference of the family as a whole. This was the basis of Chayanov's construction of the utilitarian family labour-consumer balance.

Therefore the structure of 'Peasant Economy' - the nature of the family and the organisation of the family farm - generates the utility-maximising outlook of peasant enterprise. At the same time Chayanov was - and is - not alone in, at times, ascribing the reproduction of this structure of the economy to non-utilitarian elements in the peasant outlook which inhibited the emergence of trade in labour-power, weakened the drive to accumulate, and constrained peasant subsistence wants.^{4/}

(iii) Conditions of modernisation

While the Chayanov tradition emphasised that family property was both natural and efficient in the rural economy, it possessed a dynamic and elaborate conception of the labour-process in a changing world.^{5/} Chayanov and his colleagues accepted that the changing conjuncture of population pressures and market forces necessitated a constant restructuring of peasant property and production.

However they also argued that this restructuring went forward automatically and in an unconstrained way, through the normal mechanisms of peasant choice and the family labour-consumer balance. Therefore

their view of the restructuring of production was crisis-free: 'Peasant Economy' did not know structural problems or encounter general crises. There were only specific, technical problems and individual crises affecting individual farms. These problems must all be approached with specific, locally and technically adapted problem-solving agencies, not with generalised solutions or sweeping proclamations.

Of course Chayanov, for example, recognised that not everyone makes an equally effective entrepreneur. Good business acumen is composed of a number of distinct psychological qualities to which not everyone may be heir in the right proportions (he argued). An unlucky distribution of these qualities between the key petty entrepreneurs in a particular locality, he argued, may result in a temporary retardation of agricultural progress - for example, failure to adopt the crop rotation best suited to the local conjuncture.

Under these circumstances the strategic intervention must be that of the Agricultural Officer (to whom Chayanov allotted the role of 'catalyst of change').^{6/} It was the Officer's role to select the strategic points of intervention in the rural economy - that is, the farms of the leading, most progressive petty producers, the key figures in the local community. By educating them, and transforming their productive basis, the Agricultural Officer could create examples for other peasants to follow; by organising this sequence of events, the Officer would effectively create a voluntary, mass technical movement capable of restructuring the entire agricultural system. One might say that Chayanov portrayed the Agricultural Officer as a kind of 'organic intellectual of the petty bourgeoisie'.

The production role of the Agricultural Officer was, therefore, constructed around solving the individual problems of individual farms.

As far as mass cooperation in production is concerned, Chayanov did not believe it was really necessary, apart from certain specific or isolated problems of indivisibility in particular branches of agriculture. To the extent that any further integration of the peasant farm into the national economy was considered desirable, Chayanov and his colleagues believed that this would be optimally achieved through the organisation of cooperation in the distribution of inputs, products and credit. This would cut the peasant cooperator in on commercial profits (cutting out private commercial capital, money lenders and Nepmen), and would further institutionalise the role of the Agricultural Officer. Such 'vertical' cooperative links could be counterposed to inefficient 'horizontal' producer cooperation (i.e. collective agriculture).

The critique of 'Peasant Economy'

The critique of this concept of 'Peasant Economy' originated, I think, in an outlook which was both rationalist and radical. Our outlook was rationalist in so far as we saw ourselves in revolt against a wide-spread obscurantism.

An example, trivial in itself, but expressive of a wider phenomenon: 'The peasantry ... is a way of living'.^{7/} Too often the term 'peasant' was being used as an adjective to describe economy, culture and politics, in a way which blocked (rather than advanced) scientific enquiry. Suppose one discovers some radical new fact, tendency or movement in a real, material peasant economy. To put it down to some asserted peculiarity in the structure of the peasant rationality, culture or soul closed off and made trivial the whole field of peasant studies. It was as if peasant studies was becoming a ritual, in which each fresh encounter with the material existence of real peasants evoked the response: 'The peasantry ...

is a way of living.'

As EHT suggests, this conception fetishised 'Peasant Economy' as a form.^{8/} One way of putting it is that real peasantries do not just exist, but are constructed out of specific conjunctures, involving the intersection of social and production relations which (a) are historically determined, (b) are not, in themselves, 'peasant' in nature - for example patriarchal relations, underdeveloped capitalist relations and so forth.^{9/} The term 'peasant' is a popular (not scientific) encapsulation of the peasantry's conditions of existence.

The outlook which constructed this critique was also radical, because it posed the socialisation of agricultural production as the main route to modernity.

We can make this more concrete by returning briefly to the three 'basic foundations' of 'Peasant Economy'.

(i) Technology

Agricultural technology is not static, and is not necessarily dominated by diminishing returns. Small is not always beautiful. Of course sometimes it may be - depending on the specific material conditions. But one should not make a natural law out of something that is only sometimes true.

Moreover it is wrong to argue that technology determines property forms - one of the implications of the Chayanov tradition. If anything, the reverse may be more appropriate - the limitations of small-scale family property and of underdeveloped capitalism may result in small-scale static

technology.

(ii) The family

Again, the family is not the 'basic unit of production and consumption'. If one were to take any real peasant economy anywhere in the world, this statement could be empirically refuted. For a start, real family units are internally differentiated by age and sex. Rent and wage relations result also in an external differentiation. For example Russian peasant households participated widely in labour-rent, crop-sharing, local and migrant wage-labour and so on.

It is therefore inappropriate to analyse peasant household decision processes according to the utilitarian calculus, or some notion of revealed preference. Where we observe low levels of consumption, accumulation and employment among some strata of households, these low levels were not freely chosen. At the same time other households ate well, accumulated and were becoming partially liberated from manual labour on the basis of the labour-power of others.

(iii) Modernisation

Peasantries do sometimes experience structural or general crises which cannot be resolved solely through the efforts of Agricultural Officers - witness the great famines, migrations and revolutions of the twentieth century. Institutions such as extension services and cooperative organisations do not offer mass solutions to peasant crises. They offer only individual capitalist solutions to a minority of farmers, to whom they effectively channel resources. Agricultural officers and cooperatives do not simply solve technical difficulties, they encourage capitalist differentiation. For the mass of

peasants, the only hope lies in the collectivisation of agriculture in a socialist economy.

Or does it?

Subordinate Marxism and 'Peasant Economy'

I want now to identify the critique which I have outlined above as a subordinate form of Marxist theory. By 'subordinate' I do not primarily mean 'theoretically wrong'; I mean primarily a particular relationship to bourgeois intellectual life. Subordinate Marxism criticises bourgeois theory at the level of assumptions, conceptions and forms of knowledge. But subordinate Marxism only reacts against what already exists, and does not produce new assumptions, conceptions or knowledge. It criticises bourgeois practice by rejecting the ideas which shape it, and by rejecting the world to which bourgeois practice relates; it does not possess an alternative, socialist practice relevant to the world as it actually exists (beyond ultra-revolutionary proclamations). On the contrary it theorises the impossibility of a socialist practice in the actually existing world with its complexities, contradictions and compromises. When, as in the field of rural social and economic science, such a Marxism is confronted by a bourgeois science capable of solving at least some of the productive problems of society, its exponents must either retreat behind the siege walls of pure theory, or attempt to break by force the world to which bourgeois practice relates; consequently there is also a link between subordinate Marxism and ultra-leftism.

Several features of the critique of 'Peasant Economy' identify it as a subordinate form of Marxism.

Firstly, this critique was developed by Marxists writing primarily

about one country, the USSR (where the peasantry was collectivised almost 50 years ago) from another country, Britain (where the last peasants were cleared from the land in the last century). Therefore there has been nothing in such a situation to compel recognition of the material needs of real peasants anywhere.

Secondly, this was a critique of a tradition, that of the Chayanov school, which itself was rooted in practice. This tradition was always based on two questions, with which it addressed the social reality. The first question was: 'How should we study the peasants?'. This is the question which the critique has taken on board. The second question was: 'How should we work with the peasants?'. This latter question has been left virtually unanswered.

That is, we were involved in the traditional, subordinate position of academic Marxism: the construction of a critique, not the presentation and practice of an alternative strategy. Of course our critique had implications. But these were largely confined to:

- (a) the creation of a rigorous Marxist methodology, ^{10/} and
- (b) the accumulation of more facts about peasants in scholarly journals and seminar papers.

I should make it plain that I regard this as a positive achievement. I am in favour of rigour and knowledge, which I prefer to sloppiness and ignorance. However, the responsibilities of Marxists, in my view, do not reside only in creating longer words and more complicated sentences. This is all very well, but it is not enough.

How could we build a relationship to practice? The closest

acknowledgement of the world of practice came in my own work. There I embraced an active rejection of the possibility of 'working with the peasantry', and I specifically rejected the potential role of Agricultural Officers, of cooperative movements and of the whole New Economic Policy framework of the USSR in the 1920s.^{11/}

Where did this position come from?

Antecedents of subordinate Marxism

In my view this position can be traced back to pre-revolutionary Bolshevism; the history of Bolshevism from its inception to the Stalin era can be interpreted as a long struggle to escape from ultra-leftism in relation to the peasantry, succeeding at some key moments (for example, 1917), failing at others (for example, 1929), in the process laying down both positive and negative precepts for future generations.

EHT take this story from Lenin and Kautsky in the 1890s to Lenin in 1907.^{12/} Prior to the 1905 revolution, the Bolsheviks had won a theoretical understanding that the peasantry in Russia was not a stable economic form, but was differentiated within, and engaged in a contradictory evolution towards bourgeois social relations. But they had grasped the political implications only in a tactical sense. They would unite with the peasantry when the peasantry opposed feudalism; when the rural rich stood for capitalism, the Bolsheviks would stand against them with the rural poor.

Here was a conception of the peasantry as an object being propelled through political space by forces which neither the Bolsheviks nor the peasants could control. It could be blocked, accelerated on its way, or even exploded. But there was, as yet, no strategic conception of a stable,

enduring alliance of political forces which could bind the mass of peasants to the working class. This conception had to await the events of 1905.

By 1907 Lenin had come to the conclusion - and was winning the Bolsheviks to his view - that the peasantry (strictly, the rich peasantry) did not merely have a capitalist significance. They did not just stand for capitalist development as opposed to feudal reaction. They stood for the progressive capitalism of the free-trading petty producers, as opposed to the reactionary capitalism of the Junkers and the Tsarist bureaucracy (capitalism of the 'Prussian' type). Observing the peasants in action, the Bolsheviks came to identify the progressive capitalist road as presenting the most favourable political conjuncture for a democratic revolution led by the working class.

Therefore, the Bolsheviks came to support peasant demands for land, 'not as a defence of peasant economy, but rather as support for the conditions of capitalist development and the rapid destruction of feudal relations.'^{13/} This was the basis on which it would be possible to incorporate the peasantry into the political programme of the Bolsheviks in 1917: Peace, Land and Bread.

If we run the story forward another decade, however, the dilemmas of this position emerge. Unity with the mass of peasants had been constructed on a programmatic level and by the Bolshevik capture of the coercive governmental state. However, in the Soviet society of the 1920s, few if any organic links had yet been constructed between the working class and peasantry through civil society. The Bolshevik Party was chronically weak in the village, and lacked involvement in peasant production.

Links and involvements did not exist of course. Many urban workers still had quite deep roots in the village; many peasants had served in the

Tsarist and Red Armies, and had experience of urban life and factory work. The Bolshevik Party had many of both types in its ranks, to complement those of its intellectuals who had a very deep knowledge of the countryside, based on statistics and on first-hand experience of exile, for example. Yet these did not permit the construction of an organic relationship between town and country; that is, a relationship which was collective (rather than personal in character), based on mutuality (rather than the coercive needs of state policy) and rooted in the productive needs and aspirations of both classes, including the peasants (rather than arriving and departing with the Agit-Prop trains and the grain-procurers).

What forces structured the 'outsider' role which the Bolsheviks played out in the countryside in the 1920s? In my view it was not their failure to understand the specific character of 'Peasant Economy'.^{14/} Rather it was their failure to find an organic role within a peasant economy which they knew well. This failure of Bolshevism gave rise to constant dilemmas and crises in agrarian strategy. In the revolutionary movement the Bolsheviks had followed the road of encouragement of the petty producer. Now this road led, apparently, to a dead end. To encourage the petty producer meant to solve agricultural problems in a capitalist way. But to inhibit the revival of the petty producers meant to erode the productive basis for advance in the economy as a whole, and to alienate the mass of peasants. Between these alternatives the Bolsheviks' rural politics engaged in an unstable, purely tactical zig-zag; it became a mode of survival rather than a strategy.

How subordinate Marxism became a school of thought

In the 1920s the only school of Soviet thought which was rooted in solving practical problems of agricultural production was the Chayanov

school of 'Peasant Economy'. It was Chayanov's colleagues and adherents, not Marxists, who largely staffed the agricultural academies and planning, cooperative and agronomic agencies in the USSR at the beginning of the 1920s. At the same time Bolshevik leaders were aware of the urgent necessity of developing Marxist work.^{15/} Consequently the task of educating the new generation of Marxist intellectuals fell to the Chayanov school.^{16/}

This younger generation of 'Agrarian-Marxists' led by L. Kritsman developed their outlook in strong reaction against their mentors. As they began to organise their own independent work, they directed it against both the theoretical conceptions and the forms of knowledge produced by the Chayanov tradition. However, they were unable to match the Chayanov tradition's breadth of scientific endeavour. Consequently in their own work they sought to reduce the area of scientific controversy to one subject - the nature of 'Peasant Economy' and the capitalist differentiation processes at work within the Soviet peasantry.^{17/} They sought to expose the apologetic foundations of 'Peasant Economy', the reality of growing relations of exploitation in peasant farming, and the part played in encouraging capitalist differentiation processes by the practices of the Chayanov school.

At the same time they could not construct an alternative, socialist mode of rural intervention. Caught between a world which was not going their way, and a dominant practice which accentuated class divisions, they abandoned the search for the Marxist intellectual function combining theory with practice, and became mere theoreticians.

How could such a school encompass the destruction of Chayanov's 'Peasant Economy' school in 1929? The victory was only superficial. It was not won by the 'Agrarian Marxists' on their own account, but by the

intervention of the Stalinist political state. The state put an end to the Chayanov school primarily because the state was also finishing with the world of peasant smallholding economy to which the school's theory and practice related. But the Agrarian-Marxists had no relationship to practice at all; they had as little to say about solving the problems of collective farm organisation as they had found to meet the needs of peasant production. There was no room for them in the new world either, and they did not survive their 'victory' for long.

The modern critique of 'Peasant Economy' has relived much of the experience of the 'Agrarian-Marxists'. It carries within itself the possibility of becoming dangerously irrelevant to the material problems of the actually existing world, and a similar vulnerability to demands for 'relevance' which are coercive at heart.

Roots of a Marxist practice in the 1920s

In the course of Bolshevism's struggle to escape some of the limitations of its origins, it also threw out many fresh and creative impulses. In relation to the peasantry we find these expressed firstly by Lenin, who wrote just before his death of the possibility of establishing direct links between the town and country in order to serve the 'cultural needs' of the latter, the possibilities of a cultural revolution and of a cooperative path to socialism.^{18/} These incomplete and frag-^{19/}mentary themes were further developed by Bukharin in the middle 1920s. They remained primitive and underdeveloped, especially because the political conditions did not exist for their practice to take root. However, we can identify a series of points relevant to intervention in the actually existing world of the Soviet peasantry in order to advance it towards socialism. Bukharin conceived of this advance as necessitating the

construction, with the peasantry, of a new Soviet village culture, rooted in new civil institutions, embracing ideas, technologies and economic practices.

Neither Lenin nor Bukharin saw the actually existing village as culture-less. Lenin emphasised the dangers inherent in the traditional 'bureaucratic culture or serf culture'; ^{20/} Bukharin added to this the element of the existing 'kulak culture': literate, technically progressive, rooted in the productiveness of kulak farming, capable of bringing large sections of the village (including the under-financed Soviet institutions) into dependence upon the rural bourgeoisie. Consequently Bukharin saw the development of cooperatives, and of other democratic voluntary organisations, as potential arenas of struggle against both capitalist and serf-bureaucratic practices.

Bukharin saw the organisers of this struggle not as armed men in jackboots but as 'cultural invaders' (kulturtregery) working with the peasantry to construct a culture capable of meeting the productive and social needs of the whole peasantry, not just of the richer sections, and capable of developing the civil community to a point where it could bring under control the coercive, centralising and bureaucratic forces within the Soviet ^{21/} state.

This distinguishes the Bukharin tradition from other approaches. Unlike the Chayanov school of 'Peasant Economy' he recognised the existence of different classes and class perspectives within the peasantry. Consequently he saw the role of cooperative, agronomic and extension officers as organising class struggle, as well as organising production. Unlike the Kritsman school of 'subordinate Marxism', he recognised the possibility of participating in this struggle, and rejected the certainty of losing.

Consequently he saw the role of cooperative, agronomic and extension officers as potential organisers of new elements of socialist productive forms, not just as unconscious agents of capitalist differentiation.

What light does this throw upon rural practice in the actually existing countryside of the USSR in the 1920s? In reality, to have been an agronomist, cooperator or extension officer could not have meant a purely technical, apolitical role free of contradictions or of political choice.

An agronomist confronted by a locality where tens of thousands of farms are experiencing mass economic problems must learn to distinguish between problems. On one farm, the problem is not enough to eat; this is a poor peasant farm. Without enough to eat, the family cannot even stay in the neighbourhood, let alone improve the household economy. Its members must go and work for others, or even sell up and leave. On another farm, the problem is that the soil shows signs of exhaustion, and with the changing pattern of prices the existing pattern of activities has resulted in declining incomes. Should the farmer adopt a fresh rotation, or rent additional land? What about new outbuildings, and additional livestock and what about additional workers? This is a rich peasant farm. The problem is completely different.

Yet both these different types of problem required solution, not only to secure agricultural prosperity but also to secure the basis for socialist industrialisation. Solving these problems simultaneously was not - and could not have been - merely a technical responsibility. The set of solutions involved a political choice, between the different individual and cooperative frameworks for the application of new technologies and resources. In slightly different words, the resolution of such problems required the introduction of elements of new social relations of production.

But of what kind, and who (of our dramatis personae) will play the determining role?

Again, an agronomist confronted by a locality where tens of thousands of farms are experiencing mass economic problems must make decisions over the channelling of resources. One can organise resources in such a way that a minority of farms (the minority best placed to benefit) can be visited, reorganised and improved. This creates only individual, capitalist solutions. Alternatively one can innovate means of organising resources to make them accessible to the mass of households. In this case there may be no solutions because the organisation is too rickety and inadequately staffed, the resources cannot meet the demands placed upon them, and the servicing operation breaks down. The only strategic response to such a situation is a political response which seeks to change the system of control over the allocation of resources, and the criteria which decide who is to benefit. In this process the agronomist's relationship to his clients must be transformed.

The stratum of intellectuals whose role was to intervene in peasant production had, therefore, a role which was both political and technical. The politics of this role was bound up with the possible paths of agrarian development and roads to socialism. It was a wide-open politics not mechanically identified with any one strategy or social class interest. It would be an important historical project, therefore, to examine the exercise of this role, the forces to which it responded, and the different options exercised in the field. Such a project is located in the terrain which is bounded by social democratic practices on one side, and subordinate Marxist theoreticism on the other.

In thinking why we should trace out the alternative practices and strategies of the twenties, I am not trying to rewrite history, or to construct some better alternative with which reality may be unfavourably compared. In reality the political options of the twenties were not particularly wide open, and the political and technical resources with which a more consensual cultural revolution might have been pursued were extremely limited. In the Stalinist collectivisation of agriculture at the end of the 1920s, it was the old serf-bureaucratic culture which actually prevailed, and which decided the form of socialisation. This too had been predicted by Bukharin when he had described how a politically victorious working class which lacks culture may in turn be defeated by the culture of the politically vanquished class enemy.^{22/} However this was not the only potential outcome present in the 1920s. From this point of view the historian's task is to present the options which were discarded - in all their incompleteness and lack of finish - as well as the one actually undertaken.

In conclusion I hope this will contribute to a less theoreticist, more strategic discussion of the concepts of 'Peasant Economy' and the problems of peasant agriculture.

Footnotes

- 1/ See A.V. Chayanov, The Theory of Peasant Economy, Homewood, Ill. 1966; A.V. Chayanov, Oeuvres choisies, Vols I - VIII, Paris-The Hague 1967.
- 2/ Gary Littlejohn, 'Chayanov and the Theory of Peasant Economy', in B. Hindess, ed., Sociological Theories of the Economy, London 1977; Judith Ennew, Paul Hirst and Keith Tribe (abbreviated elsewhere as EHT), '"Peasantry" as an Economic Category', and Mark Harrison, 'The Peasant Mode of Production in the Work of A.V. Chayanov', both in Journal of Peasant Studies, July 1977.
- 3/ This section is revised and abbreviated from Mark Harrison, op.cit.
- 4/ Gary Littlejohn, op.cit., has also made an important contribution to understanding this problem.
- 5/ The summary which follows is based on two major works of Chayanov and one of his colleague Makarov. See N.P. Makarov, Krest'yanskoe khozyaistvo i ego interesy, Moscow 1917; A.V. Chayanov, Osnovnye idei i metody raboty obshchestvennoi agronomii, Moscow 1918; A.V. Chayanov, Osnovnye idei i formy organizatsii sel'sko-khozyaistvennoi kooperatsii, Moscow 1927. A very incomplete summary of his ideas on cooperation is found in A.V. Chayanov, The Theory of Peasant Economy, pp. 255-269. A fairly detailed analysis of these and other works is to be found in R.M. Harrison, Theories of Peasant Economy, D.Phil thesis, Oxford University 1974, Chapter 7.
- 6/ A.V. Chayanov, Len i drugie kul'tury v organizatsionnom plane krest'yanskogo khozyaistva nechernozemnoi Rossii, Vol. I, Moscow 1912, p. X.
- 7/ The phrase is that of Fei Hsiu Tung, quoted by Teodor Shanin, The Awkward Class, Oxford 1972, pp. 28 and 207. As a response to Shanin's historical sociology see Gary Littlejohn, 'The Peasantry and the Russian Revolution' in Economy and Society, February 1973 (and ensuing correspondence); and Mark Harrison, 'Resource Allocation and Agrarian Class Formation', in Journal of Peasant Studies, January 1977.
- 8/ EHT, op.cit., pp. 306-309.
- 9/ Mark Harrison, 'The Peasant Mode of Production in the Work of A.V. Chayanov', p. 335.
- 10/ Both Littlejohn, op.cit., p. 118 and EHT, op.cit., pp. 295-296 see this as the primary significance of their work.
- 11/ Mark Harrison, op.cit., pp.333-335. This position was advanced in more detail - and with more vigour - in my thesis, to which reference is made above.
- 12/ EHT, op.cit., pp. 296-306. The main works to which they refer are Lenin's early works of 1893-1894 on the peasantry, his The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899 and 1908) and The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution (1907); and Kautsky's Die Agrarfrage (1899).

- 13/ EHT, op.cit., p.300.
- 14/ This was argued, for example, by Teodor Shanin ., op.cit.
- 15/ N. Bukharin, 'O nekotorykh zadachakh nashei raboty v derevne', Bol'shevik 1924 No. 7-8, pp. 21-22.
- 16/ What followed is described in a new and valuable account to which this paper owes a great deal: Susan Gross Solomon, The Soviet Agrarian Debate: A Controversy in Social Science, 1923-1929, Boulder, Colorado 1977.
- 17/ Ibid., pp. 110, 122-125, 132-134.
- 18/ Reference is made to Lenin's Last Letters and Articles, Moscow 1964, written in the spring of 1923. I have avoided some potentially useful comparisons, for example with China on which see Peter Nolan, 'Collectivisation in China : Some Comparisons with the USSR' in Journal of Peasant Studies, January 1976. I am also grateful for attempts to steer me towards Poland; these I have resisted too, but see Boguslaw Galeski, Basic Concepts of Rural Sociology, Manchester 1972. One element of effective comparison must be a proper evaluation of the Soviet experience.
- 19/ See Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, New York 1974, Chs. VI and VIII.
- 20/ V.I. Lenin, op.cit., p.47.
- 21/ N. Bukharin, op.cit., pp. 22-23.
- 22/ N. Bukharin, Ataka: Sbornik teoreticheskikh statei, Moscow 1924, pp. 237-238.