On the Anti-Crisis Nature of a Family Household as a Socio-Economic Unit (Based on the History of the Russian Peasantry)

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Abstract: The paper is an attempt to describe the family household as a means of strong opposition to socio-economic crises. This description is based on the statistical investigations of peasant farming in Russia in different periods of history. As a basis for configuring the model of anti-crisis behavior of family labor the historical material is taken from the history of Russian peasants in the last three centuries of its existence.

Key words: Family household • Peasant farm • Factory • Economic crisis

INTRODUCTION

The damage to society caused by economic crises is believed to have reached the critical level [1]. It makes it necessary to identify such patterns of activity [2] that are inactive in generating the waves of crises [3, 4], what is more, they actively oppose them.

A Factory Model as the Opposite of a Family Household

Model: The era of industrialism, which still captures our mass consciousness (including scientific consciousness) and manipulates our mass behavior, in organizational terms, resembles of a building, plants and factories being its bricks. A factory model as a form of economic organization can certainly be described (and has already been described) from different perspectives. We suggest one more description. It is obvious and does not need any special proof; thanks to its effects this description is the most powerful and structure-making one.

Factory as the basis of industrial system is a type of organization, that presupposes the fundamental separation of human labor from all other forms of human life and, above all, from the family. A factory is a direct antipode of a family.

According to D. Pink people became accustomed to separate work from home. Before the XXth century there had not been need in such separation [5]. This separation is manifested most clearly in the fact that the family household with its sophisticated in-house and farmstead organization has been replaced by the factory barrack - a place that aims to avoid any and all work (so that even the small grains of this work would not be taken away from the factory).

Whatever form a barrack would take in time a one-storey barrack with many bunk beds along the walls and an aisle in the middle, a communal or an isolated apartment in a big apartment house, a whole "sleeping (just think of this word!) area" – it has always and everywhere performed its primary function - to save work force for a factory.

More than 40% of working Americans say that at the end of the day they feel as if they were like squeezed lemons. 60% of them say they would like to slow down the pace of life and reduce tension [6, 79].

A factory, initially having rejected the family as something useless, subsequently picked this family up and subjugated to itself, but as an ordinary “pocket”, from which the factory products should be paid for. A household, formerly, a single and compound unit in its family-and-labor-based form, transformed into an ordinary consumer power unit. Market system, generated by the factory system, has become an instrument of such transformation.

To prove this idea, I will refer to John Kenneth Galbraith, who argues that "the belief in a market economy, in which the buyer is independent, is one of the most common forms of delusions. Nothing can be sold by anybody unless he manages and controls consumer demand" [7, 30].

Industrial system, mechanistic in nature, has made everything vivid and "logical": on one pole of a factory there is a man who is a mere workforce for producing goods, on the other pole there is a mere consumer of goods produced by the same factory. His children, his parents, his brothers and sisters, his wife, his friends and acquaintances, his thoughts and his emotions are only a
constituent part ("merely small cogs in a giant wheel") of the "consumer power", aimed to serve the needs of the production power of a factory.

The most inherent and subtle regulator of all human - the human life itself - has been withdrawn (as unnecessary) from the factory model. Here's proof: today average Americans spend seven times as much on shopping than on playing with their children [6, 78]. It is this gap situation, generated by the futility of production and consumption, in which such a particular factory phenomenon as an overproduction crisis began. This factory model has given birth to and has to constantly feeds its malicious, ever hungry offspring and it is this model that has torn a live person apart into his two dead mechanical halves.

One of the first public scientific responses to the total triumph of the factory model were the works of Russian economists headed by A.V. Chayanov. In contrast to a factory model they put forward a model of a family household (a family economy) as a form of socio-economic unit. They proved both the stability and the prospect of such a form of business in the era of electricity, not to mention the era of steam. According to A.V. Chayanov the main features of a family household are as follows:

- Work activities are carried out by all members of the family, beginning with the age of 13, without any employed labor (at least on a regular basis). In this case when calculating the family budget, the head of a family is 1.00 (considered a full worker – 1.00), the second generation (children over 18) without distinction of sex is 0.8 of full worker; a hostess is 0.8 of full worker and children over 13 are 0.7 of full worker [8, 91].
- The purpose of a family household is "to provide subsistence of the family by applying its available means of production and work force most effectively" [8, 62].
- The nucleus of a family economy is its balance scheme. The principal elements of the balance scheme are the balance of labor between household and external types of activities (for farms the balance is between agriculture and crafts); the balance of the means of production (for farms the balance is between cattle and household equipment); budget (the balance between income and expenses).
- The main task of the organization of labor in the family household is to use efficiently labor activity of a family and prevent the laborious overtime work in certain periods" [8, 62].

According to A.V. Chayanov the idea of theory of family labor is a fundamental feature of Russian agro-economic thought and goes back to "Domestic Order" ("Domostroy") written by a Russian archpriest Silvester in the16th century, in which a family is presented as an integral economic organism within its economic, demographic and socio-cultural dimensions.

2. Anti-crisis nature of the system of family households as socio-economic units

The model of a family household, briefly described above, is of a distinct anti-crisis nature, as already noted by A.V. Chayanov, "Generally speaking, the influence of peculiarities of a peasant farm... on the nature and course of the so-called economic crises, is an exclusively interesting subject of independent research and in this
Table 1: The croppage (million pounds) of the main bread grain and forage grain in 1916 in the guberniyas of European part of Russia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Peasant Farms</th>
<th>Private Farms</th>
<th>% in Croppage of Peasant Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crops</td>
<td>3125.6</td>
<td>2688.5</td>
<td>437.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread grain</td>
<td>2043.0</td>
<td>1757.3</td>
<td>285.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forage grain</td>
<td>1082.6</td>
<td>931.2</td>
<td>151.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let's back this conclusion with the proved historical facts. Let us begin with olden times. One of the most important consequences of invasion of The Golden Horde and of its subsequent domination was significant decline of the Russian population. It is quite clear that this fact undermined the economic base of the Horde. To solve the problem it was decided to rely on peasant household (hearth, "dym"): the chevage (capitation tax) was replaced by "podymnnoy" duty (a tax imposed on a household). The result was not long in coming: the Russian population quickly restored, with its subsequent growth.

Let's continue our story by addressing the era of the Petrine Russia. It was characterized by a large-scale recruitment of a great number of people from the village. They were needed as soldiers in the Russian-Swedish war. They were recruited for building a fleet. They constructed and operated state-owned iron factories, dug water canals and, finally, put into effect the projects on constructing St. Petersburg. However, the researchers note that the peasant farm survived all these quite crisis waves. “With different land-man ratio in Podmonastyrsky spring (according to the studied data from the scribe and census books on 90 farms – G.D.), about 45% of peasants households in the seventeenth century had a labor pool to cultivate arable land or to do any other work...”

With the decline in population half as much and mobilization of able-bodied men, it is the labor pool which made it possible to retain the main indicators of peasant household: number of workers, size of plot of land, the main structural types and the number of family members. The labor pool allowed the landowner to increase the norm of corvee and make it possible for the state to recruit soldiers and workers.

E. N. Baklanova considers three main elements of the mechanism of crisis-resistant response of peasant family. The first is to develop "conservative behavior" of families, which was characterized by increasing the number of undivided families in the first quarter of the 18th century (the period of overactive, unexpected and, hence, unconventional actions of Peter the Great, that inevitably resulted in crisis). The second element was that "a rising rate of labor rent determined the most rational structure and size of the family, that is, a peasant family with the most rational number of working members".

From these long-standing Peter the Great's times, let's turn to the twentieth century, when the Russian society was at the door of two most powerful crises: the First World War, the Great October Revolution and The Civil War that followed. In these great crises a family household as an economic unit also clearly proved its crisis-resistant nature.

Let's start with the First World War and refer to the outstanding Russian scientist N.D. Kondratyev. It is quite important to emphasize, as N.D. Kondratyev writes, "that the cultivated area at the privately- owned farms is particularly rapidly reducing. And during the first two years of the war the above-noted relative sustainability of the cultivated area was achieved exclusively due to the peasant farms". The same tendency is observed in respect of the grain harvest. "During the war the most of croppage", he writes, "was gathered in on peasant farms. The croppage (million pounds) of the main bread grain and forage grain in 1916 in the guberniyas of European part of Russia was gathered by private farms and peasant farms in proportion, presented in Table 1".

The statistics is convincing enough to prove crisis-resistant nature of a family farm. But it’s too early to write finis to all this. N.D. Kondratyev made a thorough analysis of peasant budget of two average guberniyas: Simbirskaya guberniya that grew grain and Moscowskaya guberniya, that consumed bread and made the following conclusions: "... 1) cash expenditure and revenue budget of peasant farm increased dramatically during the war".

Thinking over this stunning information we shouldn’t forget that during the war 60 able-bodied men from every 100 peasant farms were recruited, which resulted in more than half of the farms being left without breadwinners. Thus, in spite of the decrease of the main work force of peasant farms, of men of military age (from
18 to 43 years in that period), there was registered the growth of the peasant budget. It was proved by the data collected and compiled by N. D. Kondratyev.

These are the facts that clearly form a conclusion: crisis-resistant nature of a family household is the one which in times of crisis not only helps to retain its stability and keeps the main indicators of its activity on standing (area under crop, croppage, income family budget), but helps to significantly increase them.

Let’s see how firm this model is on the example of one of the most destructive wars, the fratricidal Civil War. For this purpose we turn to another very authoritative source, to the works of V. P. Danilov, an outstanding Soviet authority of the Soviet pre-collective farm village.

According to V. P. Danilov, the restoration and development of the multimillion masses of peasant farms did lay the solid foundation for the growth of agricultural production, that characterized the whole period of the 20-ies; it made it possible to complete the process of restoration by 1926 (and it was only four years from the end of the Civil war) [14, 279]. The size of areas under crop, reduced on more than 27 million hectares (25%) in 1922, exceeded the level of 1913 on 5.3 million hectares.

“The Peasantry was able not only to restore their own crops and cultivate the crops of the former landlords, but to bring into cultivation a great amount of arable lands”, writes V. P. Danilov [14, 281].

The peasantry not only developed the cultivated areas, but also gave growth to specific indexies of their productivity. «The grain productivity in the middle of the 20-ies not only caught up with the level of pre-war period, but exceeded it», writes V. P. Danilov [14]. Finally, let’s consider the croppage. In 1921 the country was provided with half as much bread as it was in 1913. But since 1922 the croppage annually increased approximately by 60-70 million t and in 1925 it exceeded the level of 1909-1913, while in 1926 it exceeded the level of 1913, the year, characterized by the peak of grain yield in the pre-revolutionary Russia [14, 285].

The examples of crisis-resistant power of the model of a family household, mentioned above, are significant and convincing indeed. However, they are not exhausting. It should be noted that all these development processes took place in the period of history when the deadweight losses of the country (mainly of peasantry) just during the First World War were 2,254,369 people [15]. During the Civil War, according to some estimates, one in ten died and 2 million people emigrated [9, 57]. Thus, the record indexes to economic progress in all respects were shown not by wealthy and even stable peasant farms, but by exhausted and small peasant families that lost their breadwinners.

Summary: In this article, the nature of the anti-crisis model of a family household and its activities are demonstrated on the examples of family peasant farms in different periods of the Russian history. However, the described model can be applied for the urban conditions, which is the subject to be considered in the coming paper.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of all properties and elements of crisis-making mechanism, considered from the point of view of the overall result of its actions, proves that the system of family households as socio-economic units is regulated by the law of the increase of family households productive forces of in crisis situations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by the grant of Southern Federal University #213-01-24/2013-173 dated 30.04.2013.

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