

Utopias of Alexander Bogdanov and Alexander Chayanov: The choice of rural-urban development and its consequences for rural human capital and social differentiation¹

A. M. Nikulin, I. V. Trotsuk

Alexander M. Nikulin, PhD (Economics), Head of the Center for Agrarian Studies, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration; Vice-Rector for Research, Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences. Vernadskogo Prosp., 82, Moscow, 119571. E-mail: harmina@yandex.ru

Irina V. Trotsuk, DSc (Sociology), Professor, Sociology Department, RUDN University; Senior Researcher, Center for Agrarian Studies, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration; Intercenter, Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences. 119571, Moscow, Vernadskogo Prosp., 82. E-mail: irina.trotsuk@yandex.ru

Abstract. A science-based conversation about the current state of rural areas, prospects for rural human capital and trends in rural differentiation is impossible without the conceptual approaches and futuristic projects of great Russian agrarian scientists. The article presents an attempt of comparing such ideas of two outstanding social thinkers of the early 20th century — Alexander Bogdanov and Alexander Chayanov, focusing on their utopias as representing the essential features (proletarian and peasant) of their social-economic and cultural-ethical views. Bogdanov and Chayanov had extensive encyclopedic knowledge and brilliant organizational skills; they wrote original works on social philosophy and political economy; both were prominent leaders of alternative social-political directions of the Russian Revolution. Moreover, Bogdanov and Chayanov wrote several famous utopias: Bogdanov's utopia develops Marxist ideas of proletarian revolution and construction of socialism not only on earth but also in space; Chayanov's utopia of moderate cooperative socialism defends the new revolutionary significance of the peasantry. The proletarian ideologist Bogdanov was skeptical about the political potential of the peasantry, arguing that opponents of proletarian revolution would use peasant conservatism against socialist revolution. The peasant ideologist Chayanov was skeptical about the creative potential of the working class, predicting that in the coming social revolution it would be used to build authoritarian-bureaucratic socialism. However, both thinkers sought prospects for rural-urban development through the analysis of possible ways of interaction between man and nature. Despite the ignorance of the positive revolutionary potential of the proletariat (Chayanov) and the peasantry (Bogdanov), both thinkers made huge contributions to the theory and practice of the Russian Revolution, and their utopian ideas still inspire the search for a new just, humane and happy world.

1. The article was prepared in the framework of a research grant funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (grant ID: 075-15-2022-326)

*"I've often wondered if I wouldn't have turned out different
if I'd took the other road".*

"Oh, I reckon you'd have ended up about the same..."

*It ain't the roads we take; it's what's inside of us
that makes us turn out the way we do".*

O. Henry. The Roads We Take

Two prophets — of the proletariat and of the peasantry

Alexander Alexandrovich Bogdanov (1873–1928) and Alexander Vasilyevich Chayanov (1888–1937) had incredible encyclopedic knowledge and combined it with the ability to be not only theorists but also practitioners in diverse areas of scientific and social activities. Bogdanov put his extensive scientific interests in the field of philosophy, political economy, technology, biology, culture, education and futurology to the service of the active (in the Marxist sense) transformation of the surrounding world and creation of a new social system based on the principles of collectivism and comradeship as inherent (according to Bogdanov) mainly in the working class — the industrial proletariat (Biggart, 1989).

Chayanov realized his diverse interests in interdisciplinary research at the intersections of economics, geography, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and not only in relation to agriculture. This highly professional agrarian was also an original urban sociologist, writer, art critic and utopian realist. Like Bogdanov, he both dreamed of and in his own active way strived to create a new social system — a diverse and comprehensive cooperativism that would overcome contradictions between the city and the village, providing opportunities for material and cultural development for all social strata. Unlike the orthodox (in his own way) communist Bogdanov, who relied in his social projects primarily on the cultural and political transformation of the young industrial class of his time — the proletariat (Bogdanov, 1924), the moderate socialist Chayanov believed that the achieved level of the technical-economic progress provided no less unique opportunities for the successful development to one of the oldest social classes on earth — the peasantry (Chayanov, 2020a; 2020b).

Both scientists, albeit at different times, tried hand at politics. At the beginning of the 20th century, Bogdanov, like Lenin, was one of the key leaders of the Bolshevik Party; he took an active part in the first Russian Revolution of 1905. However, before the World War I, due to the ideological and organizational party conflicts with Lenin, Bogdanov left politics to focus on scientific and literary activities until

the end of life (Sharapov, 1997). Chayanov's star was shining brightly on the political horizon from February to October 1917, when he became one of the founders of the League of Agrarian Reforms, which developed plans for the agricultural reorganization of revolutionary Russia, and one of the leaders of the political association of Russian cooperatives; two weeks before the October Revolution he was appointed the Comrade (Deputy) Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government. After the 1917 Revolution, Chayanov took an active part in solving many key issues of the Soviet economic policy: under the war communism, as a member of the cooperators delegation, he met with Lenin to defend (unsuccessfully for the Russian cooperative movement) a certain autonomy for cooperative finances in the centralized Soviet economy. Under the NEP, the scientific developments of Chayanov and his colleagues-agrarians formed the basis of the Soviet agricultural policy plans, while Bogdanov's ideas of socialist planning were used by politicians and scientists of the State Planning Committee and other highest government bodies of the Soviet power.

In the 1920s, Chayanov and Bogdanov proved to be talented organizers of the most advanced and productive research institutions in the USSR: Chayanov was the Head of the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics, and Bogdanov — the Head of the Research Institute of Blood Transfusion. However, since the first months of the Soviet state, both Bogdanov and Chayanov also became its insightful critics: Bogdanov's criticism of the Soviet military communism (Bogdanov, 1918; 1990) and Chayanov's criticism of the Soviet state collectivism (Chayanov, 1920) are still relevant for understanding historical and logical paths of the communist authoritarian economies.

Certainly, in the era of political and ideological wars and revolutions (at the beginning of the 20th century), such bright and critically thinking scholars had many opponents, including very insidious and envious ones, the most influential of whom organized their political persecution — Bogdanov as an “idealist-revisionist” (Shcheglov, 1937) and Chayanov as a “petty-bourgeois neo-populist” (Proceedings..., 1930), which led to the tragic death of both. Bogdanov, being constantly criticized politically and ideologically, in the 1920s focused on medical research at the Institute of Blood Transfusion and died in 1928 during the blood self-transfusion experiment (White, 2018). In 1930, Chayanov was arrested and imprisoned on charges of the anti-Soviet counter-revolutionary activities. In the mid-1930s, he was exiled to Central Asia and in 1937 executed on charges of spying for England (Nikulin, 2011).

There are many works on the intellectual, including utopian, legacy of both thinkers (see, e.g.: Biggart, 1989; Yassour, 2017) but only one scientific comparison of Bogdanov's and Chayanov's utopias (Gloveli, 2004). In one interesting study, Bogdanov's proletarian utopia was compared with the ruralist utopia of William Morris (Ferns,

1999), and in another work Chayanov's peasant utopia was compared with the ideas of urbanism and ruralization in the populist utopias of Ignatius Donnelly and Frank Capra (Brass, 1996). Therefore, further we present an attempt to compare Bogdanov's proletarian and Chayanov's peasant utopias.

Industrial Mars and rural Moscow

Let us compare Bogdanov's utopias about industrial Mars (Bogdanov, 1908; 1912) and Chayanov's utopia about the journey to peasant Moscow (Chayanov, 1920) to identify their imagined prospects and alternatives for the possible future rural-urban development of Russia and the world. In Bogdanov's utopia, Mars has the most advanced technical and social organization in the solar system; thereby, already at the beginning of the 20th century, Martians make interplanetary flights to Earth and Venus. In his utopias, Bogdanov repeatedly argues that the laws of natural and social evolution are universal, which is why Martians' comparative studies of Earth, Mars and Venus reveal similar and consistent stages of natural and social development. On Mars, the collectivist system of the communist type has long been established and continues to improve, while on Earth capitalism still prevails, albeit shaken by workers' socialist movements, but there are also rudiments of pre-capitalist formations — various feudal, peasant and other archaic enclaves. On Venus, there are still dinosaurs and no signs of intelligent life. Bogdanov notes that once upon a time, several hundred years ago, in the era of the great Martian canals, Mars also presented a composition of labor-capital struggle, patriarchal alliances of feudal lords and peasants, and so on. But all this was left in the individualistic-chaotic past due to the steady growth of the organizational-comradely collectivism.

Today, Martians, having long discovered the possibilities of nuclear energy, use it in spaceships for interplanetary flights and observe closely the life on Earth: their representatives pretend to be people and live among earthlings to carefully study their social and human nature. Moreover, Martians succeeded in finding a "sustainably" intelligent earthling to open up to and send to Mars to study their advanced civilization. Such an earthling is presented in the novel *Red Star* as its main character and narrator Leonid, one of the imaginary leaders of Russian revolutionaries, a consistent supporter of the positivist scientific worldview and social theory of Karl Marx.

Having been brought to Mars, Leonid carefully and diligently studies the social and technical organization of this planet, observing industrial production, parenting, museum collections, and so on. This study is very difficult for Leonid as he sometimes feels himself a primitive savage forced to learn the higher civilization's science and culture. Leonid discovers (and Martian colleagues agree with

him) that the main difference between earthlings and Martians is the more spontaneous, impulsive, diverse nature of people and societies on Earth compared to the more rational and less emotional one on Mars. Bogdanov explains this difference between two planets primarily by their natural features: the cosmic body of Earth is larger than the cosmic body of Mars, and our living and inanimate natures are richer and more diverse than those of Mars. Therefore, our history is also more variable and “stubborn” compared to the more unilinear and “flexible” Martian social history — from primitiveness through feudalism and capitalism to socialism.

According to Bogdanov, once upon a time, many hundred years ago, the population of Mars was mainly peasant, but with the steady growth of capitalism and industrialization, the importance of the peasantry came to naught. In general, in utopias and social-political writings Bogdanov speaks about the peasantry (be it Martian or earthly) casually and briefly, often with hostility, strictly following the logic of orthodox Marxism which insists on the petty-bourgeois hopelessness of this archaic class that tends to gullibly support all kinds of conservative authoritarian leaders and is doomed to be only the raw material and foundation for the progress of urban civilization. Bogdanov mentions the peasantry of Mars only in the historical perspective (300 years ago, i.e., in the 1600s on Earth), during the construction of the great Martian canals that rationally transformed landscape and agriculture: this “great turning point” destroyed the remnants of the Martian peasant mentality and transformed it into the contemporary industrial mentality — in the 20th century, there is no longer any peasantry on Mars. The planet is described as a realm of the highly developed industrial-urban civilization that easily provides itself with food and raw materials — partly due to the highly mechanized cultivation of gigantic and long-socialized agricultural land, partly due to the production of chemically artificial products that were once outputs of agricultural raw materials.

Chayanov’s utopia describes a completely different situation. Its main character Ivan Kremnev, the prominent Soviet party member and administrator, living in Moscow in 1921, after the triumph of the world communist revolution (the utopia was written in 1919), suddenly finds himself in Moscow in 1984 — the capital of the triumph of the all-Russian peasant civilization. Kremnev, who suddenly found himself in the Moscow family, out of fright pretended to be American traveler Charlie Men, whom the family was expecting. Thus, the reader learns about books, conversations and views of residents not only of peasant Moscow in 1984 but also of other regions of Earth at the described time.

Chayanov’s utopia convinces the reader that the life on Earth is much more diverse than the phlegmatic Martian life in Bogdanov’s utopia. Moreover, Chayanov mentions that the world communist revolution, having socialized everything and everyone, won by 1921. How-

ever, when considering the past from 1984, the main character discovers that the socialist world unity did not last, and centrifugal forces destroyed the reigning social harmony (Chayanov, 1920: 5). These various forces in different regions of the world include nationalism, selfish ambitions of political leaders, oligarchy and corruption, which led to bloody wars and social upheavals. In 1984, the world consists of five fairly autonomous social-political systems (Russian, German, Anglo-French, American-Australian and Japanese-Chinese), whose cultural-economic foundations are the most historically inherent to them. In Germany, the centralized, Soviet-style socialist system continues to dominate. In the Anglo-French and American economic systems, different types of capitalism dominate, while in Japan-China — a kind of state feudalism.

It should be noted that before the World War I, Chayanov identified two polar types in world agriculture: “American agriculture is based primarily on the labor of the farmer who personally works physically on his farm together with two or three wage workers. His economy is medium in size, extensive, highly mechanized, and firmly engaged in the capitalist system of the national economy in the form of so-called vertical concentration. Various banks of land credit, elevator, land-reclamation, and trade companies tightly control this economy and extract a significant capitalist profit from it. Cheap land, expensive labor, extensive low-labor-intensive farming with large capital investments and wide mechanization are foundations of this type of economy. There are exact opposites of such American forms in the eastern countries — China, India, and some others. In these countries, excessive agrarian overpopulation with a persistent, feudal, social order determines the development of family forms of economy, exceptional labor intensity of farming, and widespread enslaving relations in the fields of rent, credit, and employment. Expensive land, cheap labor, hyper-intensive and very labor-intensive farming, lack of both cars and horses, and feudal relations instead of capitalist ones are the national, economic basis of the Chinese forms of agriculture. Paradoxically, the pre-war Russian agriculture seems to be a zonal mixture of these two types, or rather a mixture of trends of these two types. On the eve of the war, the Russian village was at the brutal turn that accompanies the transition from the feudal system to the commodity one. Only a few decades ago, the village managed to get out of true feudalism and had not yet got rid of many of its elements” (Chayanov, 2018a).

At the heart of Russia’s mixed economy, peasant cooperativism is combined with the powerful state and partly with capitalism: “In rural life, there are many cases, in which cooperation is a true helper to the working man... Great cooperative principles can help a lot in handicraft industry, in land issues, and in soil improvement. Thus, almost all aspects of life can take advantage of cooperation... There are tens of thousands of cooperatives in all regions of the Soviet Union,

which unite millions of members — peasants, workers and townspeople... Agricultural cooperation is nothing else than a form of economic organization of 1.5 million peasant economies that make up its basis. All this represents a strange and unprecedented economic power and promises a bright future to the Russian peasant... Certainly, today's cooperative undertakings will develop further and further, seizing new and new branches of agriculture to organize new forms of social cooperative production. These cooperative undertakings in the form of auxiliary enterprises will gradually and powerfully develop into the main form of agricultural production, which will introduce the large-scale production and mechanization principles wherever they can be advantages. Thus, we will see a new and unprecedented form of agriculture based on socialization, perfect technology and scientific organization of production... And this future makes us totally agree with the idea of Lenin's deathbed article that the development of cooperation in many respects coincides with the development of socialism" (Chayanov, 2019a).

One of the key features of the Russian social-economic system is the dramatic struggle and decisive victory of the village over the city in the mid-20th century and the creation of peasant society with the prevailing rural household economy. Chayanov, like other ideologists of this peasant utopia, argues that the basis of this economic system, just like the basis of ancient Rus, is the individual peasant economy as the most perfect type of economic activity: man is opposed to nature, and labor is creatively in touch with all cosmic forces, producing new forms of being — every worker is a creator, and every manifestation of his individuality is the art of labor (Chayanov, 1920: 29). Bogdanov argues that the industrial society on Mars won due to the long-term plan for the construction of canals that transformed the economy and ecology of the planet in the rational socialist way; Chayanov insists that peasant Russia was created through the total destruction of cities and their transformation into unique social nodes of the peasant-cooperative society.

Chayanov describes utopian peasant Russia as the country that overcame fundamental contradiction between the city and the village through the rural expansion. The utopian village no longer looks like usual rural settlements as the whole country for hundreds of *versts* around Moscow turned into one huge agricultural settlement interrupted by public forests, cooperative pastures and climatic parks. In areas of farming settlements with family plots of 3–4 *desiatinas*, peasant houses stand almost next to each other for many *versts*, and only dense curtains of mulberry and fruit trees block one house from another. Chayanov argues that in such a utopian future, we would abandon the old-fashioned division between the city and the village as there would be only more or less concentrated settlements of agricultural population. Certainly, there would be groups of high buildings ("hillforts") — small social hubs (local school, library, theater,

A. M. Nikulin,
I. V. Trotsuk
Utopias of
Alexander
Bogdanov and
Alexander
Chayanov

dance hall and other public facilities) that are larger than cities as the same social nodes of rural life at the beginning of the 20th century (Chayanov, 1920: 31).

Engineer Manny and economist Men

Let us continue the description of two utopian countries with the analysis of the images and destinies of their main characters. It should be noted that the roots of these heroes' names — Martian-Earthly Manny and Moscow-“American” Men — linguistically and semantically remind of the English word “man”, i.e., both authors seem to emphasize the humanistic traits of their main characters, focusing on their significant historical and psychological transformations.

In Bogdanov's utopias, the main characters are Manny in the *Engineer Manny* and Manny Jr., his great-great-grandson, in the *Red Star*, i.e., Bogdanov seeks to trace the psychological transformation of the Mannys, whose history presents a bizarre interweaving of aristocratic, bourgeois and working-class roots. Manny, the great-great-grandfather, is a brilliant engineer and major manager, who initiated and led the great construction of Martian canals at the peak of Martian capitalism. Manny has typical features of the authoritarian capitalist liberal, reminding of the first honest, stern, stingy early Protestant capitalist described in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2001). Having successfully started his work, stern and honest Manny became a victim of conflicts (between workers and capitalists) and intrigues of insidious and greedy capitalists, who pursue only their own benefit, use corrupt methods of enrichment, and in every possible way save on the environmental and labor safety of Martian canal builders. Being outraged by the insidious cynicism of the leading capitalist-schemer, Manny killed him and was convicted of murder. However, as a valuable and highly qualified specialist, he continued to monitor and even manage construction works from prison. Due to his strong personal principles, Manny refused to leave prison when the authorities wanted to release him. At the end of the novel, Manny committed an ideological suicide which symbolizes the decline of the era of the individualistic capitalist genius. The novel ends with his illegitimate son's coming to power to continue the great works of his father, but this no less talented engineer and organizer is guided by other, more perfect and humane collectivist-socialist ideas that inexorably-progressively replace the bourgeois individualism of the bygone era.

In the novel *Red Star*, two and a half centuries later, the distant descendant of the great individualistic engineer Manny and no less outstanding but communist engineer and scientist, great-great-grandson Manny is a leader of the Martian expeditions to Earth and Venus, who in many ways has the final say in choosing strategic di-

reactions of Martians' expansion to other planets of the solar system. In this novel, Bogdanov focuses on the threat of exhaustion of planetary resources, given the steady growth of population and the rapid development of productive forces on Mars. In fact, he admits that the future communist society may face both overpopulation and the lack of natural resources; to get out of this Malthusian trap, it would need to colonize its closest planetary neighbors (Grigoryan, 2015). Thus, one of the main final intrigues of the *Red Star* is the Martians' strategic choice — to colonize Earth or Venus to satisfy the coming hunger of their highly developed but resource-greedy industry.

In the rational choice perspective, Earth is preferable for colonization: it has more resources than Venus and is more comfortable for living than hot-humid Venus located closer to the Sun. The only serious obstacle for colonizing Earth is the species *Homo Sapiens* as impulsively emotional and ethnically diverse compared to the phlegmatic and ethnically unified (in the communist sense) Martians; thus, according to the influential Martian expert, earthlings would not want to share their resources with the highly organized Martians even on the most favorable terms. Compared with the progressively developed Martians, earthlings are wild and uncivilized, most of them are full of powerful nationalistic, patriotic and class prejudices, which makes the same expert argue that they would fiercely resist any Martians' attempts to peacefully agree on the possible redistribution of Earth's resources in the interests of Mars: wild but smart earthlings would probably try to grab formidable Martian weapons to damage Martians.

That is why the rationally consistent Martian expert finally proposed to mercilessly and quickly destroy all earthlings, justifying this plan of earthly genocide by the higher value of the scientifically, technically and socially organized Martians compared with the poorly organized "savages" — earthlings. However, the expert was in the minority as reasonable Martians preferred the more humanistic but strategically more risky and costly approach of Manny and Naty, earthling Leonid's sweetheart. They emphasized the value of the social-cultural diversity of Earth as potentially providing unexpectedly new directions of progress, certainly valuable for the further interplanetary evolution of the solar system, and mutually beneficial for Martians and earthlings. Thus, Martians decided to colonize dangerously hot Venus with its lizard kingdoms (dinosaurs living in jungles among swamps and volcanoes) and without any intelligent Venusians.

Unlike the "real Martian" Manny, Chayanov's utopia presents the experienced communist revolutionary Alexei Kremnev as fictional American Charlie Men. Unlike Bogdanov's "stone-hard" Manny, Chayanov's Kremnev-Men is reflexively dual and internally uncertain, although he comes across as a "stone-hard" political figure consistent with his surname ("Kremnev" is formed from the Russian word for flintstone — the strongest stone for striking fire). Ration-

ally Kremnev believes that centralized communism is the highest social system in which history finds its end, but emotionally he is an old Moscow intellectual, constantly remembering the fascinating cultural diversity of different styles and eras. Unexpectedly having found himself in the world of peasant utopia, Kremnev enjoyed the diversity, pluralism and tolerance of Moscow in 1984 and started to feel certain sympathy for this world. He diligently studies the history and present state of this amazing peasant civilization, which stopped the expansion of both urban capitalism and centralized socialism to combine the archaic and the modern, statehood and anarchism, and identifies diverse and whimsical opportunities in the Russian and world history. In Chayanov's utopia, Kremnev-Men and humankind are described as following more complex and varied paths than the general evolution of the living, non-living and social worlds of the interplanetary generations surrounding Manny: from Venus' "dinosaurism" through Earth's capitalism to Mars' communism.

Certainly, Bogdanov's utopia is not absolutely dominated by unilinear paths of human and social development: he mentions some disturbances and reversals in the progressive historical evolution of Earth and Mars (counter-revolutionary uprisings or opportunistic intrigues); however, these mentions intended only to emphasize the inevitable victory of communism on Mars, Earth, and anywhere else. Bogdanov also mentions some depressive doubts and suffering of earthlings and Martians, which sometimes lead them to suicide. As a rule, the main causes of suicides in Bogdanov's utopias are extreme overwork and unhappy love.

The descriptions of personal life most clearly show differences in the worldviews of Bogdanov and Chayanov. Bogdanov's utopia is characterized by the primacy of progressive comradesly collectivism in social life, which steadily pushed individualism and traditional private family life into the background. Comradesly collectivism eliminated even the eternal gender differences: in the Martian Museum, there are many images of naked bodies; their historical transformation shows that the differences between the tender-attractive femininity of women's bodies and the brutal-expansive masculinity of men's bodies gradually combine into the averagely beautiful female-male body image. On Mars, there are no decorations in architecture or sophistication in fashion: architecture is functionally constructivist like unisex clothing in which gender differences are insignificant. Moreover, the comradesly-collectivist overcoming of gender difference led to the overcoming of the family institution: there are still families raising children, but they are considered outdated and sentimental social relationships and are massively replaced by giant kindergartens-boarding schools for children of different ages.

On the contrary, Chayanov's utopia insists on the enduring and irreducible value of the family institution: even the final decree of the utopian world communist revolution on the complete abolition

of the family household failed to destroy it. Moreover, in the spirit of moderate enlighteners, Chayanov admits that human nature may be changing for the better but at the speed of geological processes, which probably explains why cooperative-market rather than comradeship-communist collectivism dominates in his utopia.

In Chayanov's utopia, women are beautiful and charming in body and dress, like ladies of the Renaissance and unlike Bogdanov's Martian women similar to men in figure and clothes. It is no wonder that Kremnev-Men was instantly captivated by two beautiful girls — well-educated sisters who also cooked deliciously according to the recipes of the traditional Russian cuisine for their large, friendly, intelligent family.

The role of women as guardians of love and men's fate seems quite identical in the finale of both utopias. At the end of Bogdanov's utopia, Martian Natty, the sweetheart of earthling Leonid, cured him of some serious illness and inspired him to further revolutionary fight. In Chayanov's utopia, Muscovite Katerina, having fallen in love with Alexei Kremnev, warned him about doubts that he was American Charlie Men and about suspicions that he was a German spy who showed up in Moscow on the eve of the German sudden invasion. Chayanov seems to foresee the future expansionist (revanchist and colonization) plans of warlike Germany in relation to Russia and presents the future German economy as an inert, bureaucratically centralized and nationalized system of the Soviet-style socialism. In Chayanov's a utopia, Germany experiences a permanent food shortage due to inefficient state farms, invades the food-rich peasant Muscovy but immediately suffers a crushing defeat due to peasant Russia's miracle weapons — devices for the precise and powerful climate regulation for both peaceful (to get a scheduled amount of rain on fields) and military (to cause destructive tornadoes and hurricanes and send them at enemy armies) purposes.

A. M. Nikulin,
I. V. Trotsuk
Utopias of
Alexander
Bogdanov and
Alexander
Chayanov

Paradoxes of proletarian and peasant utopias

Certainly, in their utopias, both Bogdanov and Chayanov sought to present their understanding of prospects for the development of their main social heroes — the worker and the peasant. For Bogdanov, the drama was that initially, at the stage of manufacturing capitalism, the proletarian was only a fragmented piece of personality but in the further capitalist industrialization managed to develop, self-organize and self-know one's personality. Therefore, Bogdanov defines the proletariat as a partnership of collective labor, which creates a new harmonious personality. For Chayanov, the peasant is a completely different social phenomenon: unlike the young industrial proletariat, the peasantry is an ancient social class. Thereby, while Bogdanov sets the task of developing a proletarian culture, the peasant culture has ex-

isted since time immemorial: the peasant is primarily the family man in the middle of nature, and the peasantry is a community of family economies.

Bogdanov and Chayanov are prominent representatives of two powerful rival ideologies of their time — urbanism and agrarianism. At the beginning of the 20th century, urbanism was an undoubtedly dominant trend expressed in the belief that industrial urbanization would completely transform productive forces of the planet, and in the near future the city industry would finally conquer rural life. At the same time, in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Germany and Russia, agrarianism became an influential direction that defended values of the rural way of life under the ever-accelerating technological progress (Bruish, 2014). Agrarianists criticized urbanism for smoking factories, urban crowds, strong social differentiation, and emerging environmental problems. Agrarianists argued that with the development of science and technology, the rural way of life, agricultural sciences and the peasantry would find their second wind in the previously unprecedented opportunities. Chayanov was such an agrarianist.

Paradoxical as it may seem, Bogdanov, who was interested in everything in the world, remained indifferent to the agrarian question and rural development (Alexander Bogdanov., 1998), being skeptical about the cultural and revolutionary potential of the peasantry: “...in the highly capitalist country, a feudal reaction is sometimes possible, and the large peasantry, lagging behind in culture by an entire historical period, often serves for the upper classes as a weapon for suppression of the proletariat” (Bogdanov, 1924: 165). “As Bogdanov put it: the struggle for socialism is not by any means to be equated with an exclusive war against capitalism. It involves the creation of new elements of socialism in the proletariat itself, in its internal relations and in its conditions of everyday life: the development of a socialist proletarian culture. Bogdanov also paid attention to male–female relationships as problematic, as needing to be transformed by the proletariat. Consequently, a genuine revolution is not something that could be achieved by one gigantic act of will in which power is seized but is a transformative process involving many levels. Only when the proletariat can oppose the old cultural world with its own political force, its own economic plan and its new world of culture, with its new, higher methods, will genuine socialism be possible” (Gare, 2000: 347).

In turn, Chayanov, despite his tireless interest in the most diverse aspects of social development, was very critical of the growing factory districts. In his peasant utopia, Chayanov described the worker, his aspirations and dreams no less derogatory and superficially than Bogdanov the petty-bourgeois essence of the peasant class. According to Chayanov, in the socialist period of that utopian history, the peasant economy was considered a kind of proto-matter for some higher forms of large collective economy. Such a view was

rather genetic than logical: socialism was conceived as the antithesis of capitalism, born in the dungeons of the German capitalist factory, nurtured by the psychology of the urban proletariat exhausted by forced labor and the lack of creative work or thought; which is why the proletariat could think of the ideal system only as a negation of the existing system but also based on hired rather than creative labor (Chayanov, 1920: 45).

In addition to the social types of the worker and the peasant, Bogdanov and Chayanov developed the foundations of sociology of organizations. In his social-philosophical treatise *Tektology. The Universal Organizational Science* (2023/1925), Bogdanov anticipated many provisions of cybernetics with its systems approach. In his works, Chayanov developed a system of organizational measures and methods not only for the peasant economy and agricultural cooperation but also for many other social institutions.

Chayanov's and Bogdanov's methodological approaches to system organization are different. Bogdanov provides a comprehensive, total concept of organization to explain any of the most complex and varied phenomena (love, God, beauty, and so on). He defines the essence of social evolution and progress as the improvement of general and specific organizational principles that would achieve their unifying perfection in the future collectivism of socialist and communist societies. According to Bogdanov, "the experience and ideas of contemporary science lead us to the only integral, the only monistic understanding of the universe. It appears before us as an infinitely unfolding fabric of all types of forms and levels of organization, from the unknown elements of ether to human collectives and star systems. All these forms, in their interlacement and mutual struggle, in their constant changes, create the universal organizational process, infinitely split in its parts, but continuous and unbroken in its whole" (Gare, 2000: 349–350).

Chayanov's pluralistic understanding of the evolution and progress of institutions is fundamentally different from Bogdanov's monism as Chayanov emphasizes the fundamental diversity of organizational forms. He admits that all social institutions have some universal organizational principles, but these general principles are so abstract that cannot be used in the analysis of specific social institutions and everyday principles of their functioning. He argues that "the devil is in the details", i.e., to study specific social institutions we need specific organizational categories and concepts; in the functioning of various social institutions, some organizational categories will be the same and others will be different, and even the same concepts can be filled with different organizational content.

For Chayanov, unlike Bogdanov, the historical evolution of social institutions is not clear and unambiguous. Chayanov rejects history as an abstract, unilinear progress ladder of the orthodox Marxism, on which all pre-capitalist formations are replaced by capitalist ones and

in the end by communism, albeit at different speed, with different success and with different efforts. Such pure and isolated organizational forms exist only in theory, while in real life social institutions interact and form various conglomerates with the most incredible symbiosis of the conventional “new” and “old”, “archaic” and “modern” organizational forms, i.e., progress is not obvious and is very problematic (see, e.g.: Nikulin, Trotsuk, 2016).

Bogdanov’s favorite concept is “organization”; Chayanov does not have such a favorite term for explaining any issue, but his key concept for the analysis of social organizations is “optimum” — the most optimal solution to a certain social, economic or cultural problem (in the political perspective — a compromise). Bogdanov considered if not “optimums” as such then at least “compromises” they lead to in politics as general signs of petty-bourgeois liberalism and philistinism. As a politician, Bogdanov agreed with the need to sometimes resort to compromises but only as temporary and tactical measures. He never recognized the art of compromise as a fundamental principle of social life, referring to his main idol, Karl Marx, who was a rather uncompromising person. On the contrary, for Chayanov, finding optimal compromises (between the city and the village, between different economic and social structures, between traditional and modern worldviews, etc.) is the essence of solving social problems (Shanin, 2009).

Thus, Bogdanov’s utopia is generally uncompromising and unidirectional, while Chayanov’s utopia is rather a compromise conglomerate of possible alternatives for social and personal development. Bogdanov’s favorite social type is someone devoted to the all-encompassing technocratic-engineering idea, who can sacrifice love and glory for a great engineering goal and is indifferent to bullying and slander; all this is difficult but solely due to overwork to the point of nervous exhaustion (Bogdanov, 2017). This idea justified the creation of Bogdanov’s Institute of Blood Transfusion that was to improve the health of Soviet citizens overstrained from administrative, engineering, teaching, party, scientific and other works. Bogdanov was interested only in this type of nervous exhaustion — from excessive mental and social efforts (Klementsov, 2011). And Chayanov’s heroes often teeter on the brink of madness but not due to hard mental work, rather the opposite. As a rule, heroes of his romantic stories are young aristocratic slackers or people of free creative professions (today we would call them “the creative class”): being tormented by idleness, having a lot of free time, they become interested in some strange mystical and phantasmagoric phenomena that captivate them to the point of mental and spiritual exhaustion (Gerasimov, 1997). Both thinkers considered the relationship between social reason and social madness, especially during great social revolutions.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that despite such differing social-philosophical foundations of their scientific and utopian con-

cepts, there is something remarkably similar in Chayanov's and Bogdanov's understanding of the true social progress — as the broad and deep development of humanistic culture for and among all social classes and strata. In fact, long before the concept of human capital was introduced, both Bogdanov and Chayanov had insisted on the primacy of high culture for a comprehensive, activity-based personal development that could take either proletarian or peasant path either on Earth or on Mars but would ensure the sustainable and variable social development.

References

- Alexander Bogdanov and the Origins of Systems Thinking in Russia (1998) (Ed. by J. Biggart, P. Dudley, F. King), Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Banaji J. (1976) Chayanov, Kautsky, Lenin: Considerations towards a synthesis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, no 11, pp. 1594–1607.
- Bernstein H. (2009) V. I. Lenin and A. V. Chayanov: Looking back, looking forward. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 36, no 1, pp. 55–81.
- Biggart J. (1989) *Alexander Bogdanov, left Bolshevism and the Proletkult 1904–1932*, University of East Anglia.
- Bogdanov A. (1914) *The Science of Social Consciousness*, Moscow: Publishing House of Writers. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. (1918) Fates of the Workers' Party in the current revolution. Part 1. *New Life*, no 19. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. (2017) *The Philosophy of Living Experience: Popular Outlines*, Haymarket Books. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A.A. (1911) *Cultural Tasks of Our Time*, Moscow: S. Dorovatovsky and A. Charushnikov Publishing House. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A.A. (1987) *A Short Course on Economics*, Moscow: Publishing House of A. M. Murinova. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. A. (1908) *Red Star*, Saint Petersburg. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. A. (1912) *Engineer Manny*, Moscow. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. A. (1924) *On Proletarian Culture. 1904–1924*, Moscow–Leningrad: Kniga. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. A. (1990) War communism and state capitalism. *Issues of Socialism*, Moscow: Politizdat, pp. 311–320. (In Russian)
- Bogdanov A. A. (2023) *Tektology: The Universal Organizational Science*, Moscow: URSS. (In Russian)
- Brass T. (1996) Popular culture, populist fiction(s): The agrarian utopias of A. V. Chayanov, Ignatius Donnelly and Frank Capra. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 24, no 1–2, pp. 153–190.
- Bruish K. (2014) *Als Das Dorf noch Zukunft war Agrarismus und Expertise zwischen Zarenreich und Sowjetunion*, Köln.
- Chayanov A. V. (2019a) A Short Course on Cooperation. *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 4, no 2, pp. 8–56.
- Chayanov A. V. (1920) State collectivism and peasant cooperation. *Cooperative Life*, no. 1–2, pp. 6–12. (In Russian)
- Chayanov A. V. (2018a) Letter from A. V. Chayanov to V. M. Molotov on the current state of agriculture in the USSR compared with its pre-war state and the situation in agriculture of capitalist countries (October 6, 1927). *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 3, no 3, pp. 6–18.

- Chayanov A. V. (2018b) What is the Agrarian Question? *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 3, no 2, pp. 6–33.
- Chayanov A. V. (2019b) On differentiation of the peasant economy. *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 4, no 4, pp. 6–21.
- Chayanov A. V. (2020a) Main Ideas and Methods of Social Agronomy (Part 1). *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 5, no 1, pp. 6–30.
- Chayanov A. V. (2020b) Main Ideas and Methods of Social Agronomy (Part 2). *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 5, no 2, pp. 6–55.
- Chayanov A. V. (2021) What will our national economy be like after the war? *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 6, no 1, pp. 6–12. (In Russian)
- Chayanov A. V. (Kremnev Ivan) (1920) *The Journey of My Brother Alexei to the Land of Peasant Utopia*, Moscow. (In Russian)
- Chayanov's School: Between Past and Future* (2020) Collection of Materials of the International Scientific Conference of the Chayanov Research Center on October 22–23, 2020 / Ed. by A. M. Nikulin, M. G. Pugacheva, Moscow: Ekon-Inform. (In Russian)
- Chibnik M. (1984) A cross-cultural examination of Chayanov's theory. *Current Anthropology*, vol. 25, no 3, pp. 335–340. (In Russian)
- Durrenberger P. E. (1984) *Chayanov, Peasants, and Economic Anthropology*, Orlando: Harcourt Brace.
- Ferns C. (1999) *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature*, Liverpool University Press.
- Gare A. (2000) Aleksandr Bogdanov and systems theory. *Democracy & Nature*, vol. 6, no 3, pp. 341–359.
- George L. (2021) Interpreting Alexander Chayanov's peasant utopia since 1991. *History and Politics*, vol. 38, pp. 9–34.
- Gerasimov I. V. (1997) *Human Soul in the Transitional Time: The Case of A. Chayanov*, Kazan: ANNA. (In Russian)
- Gloveli G. D. (2004) *Red Star and Red Rose: From the history of Russian utopia*. *Bulletin of the International Institute of Alexander Bogdanov*, no 3, pp. 71–95.
- Grigoryan N. (2015) Revolution on Earth and on Mars: Malthusian thought experiments in the novels *Red Star* by A. Bogdanov and *Aelita* by A. N. Tolstoy. *New Literary Observer*, no 2, pp. 141–160. (In Russian)
- Harrison M. (1975) Chayanov and the economics of the Russian peasantry. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 2, no 4, pp. 389–417.
- Harrison M. (1979) Chayanov and the Marxists. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 7, no 1, pp. 86–100.
- Klementsov N. (2011) *A Martian Stranded on Earth: Alexander Bogdanov, Blood Transfusions, and Proletarian Science*, Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press.
- Merl S. (2022) Was Chayanov's concept of peasant agriculture under the Soviet rule realistic? The emerging of the *kulturniki* in answer to the *Litsom k derevne* policy. *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 7, no 2, pp. 6–37.
- Nikulin A. (2011) Tragedy of a Soviet Faust: Chayanov and Central Asia 1917–1937. *Soviet Era in Anthropology of Eurasia. Halle Studies*, vol. 4, pp. 211–219.
- Nikulin A., Trotsuk I. (2016) Utopian visions of contemporary rural-urban Russia. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, vol. 1, no 5, pp. 673–690.
- Nikulin A. M., Trotsuk I. V. (2023) Two and a half undeservedly forgotten conceptual foundations of rural sociology. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, no 3, pp. 468–484. (In Russian)
- Proceedings of the First All-Union Conference of Marxist Agrarians* (1930), Moscow, vol. 1. (In Russian)
- Raskov D. (2014) Socialist agrarian utopia in the 1920s: Chayanov. *Oeconomia: History, Methodology, Philosophy*, vol. 4, no 2, pp. 123–146. (In Russian)
- Roberts R., Mutersbaugh T. (1996) On rereading Chayanov: Understanding agrarian transitions in the industrialized world. *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 28, pp. 951–956.

- Schmitt G. (1992) The rediscovery of Alexander Chayanov. *History of Political Economy*, vol. 24, no 4, pp. 925–965.
- Shanin T. (1986) Chayanov's message: Illuminations, misconceptions, and the contemporary 'development theory'. Chayanov A. V. *The Theory of Peasant Economy* / Ed. by D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, R. E. F. Smith, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Shanin T., Nikulin A., Trotsuk I., van der Ploeg J. D. (2023) *Peasants: Chayanov's Recovered Essays*, Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.
- Shanin T. (2009) Chayanov's treble death and tenuous resurrection: An essay about understanding, about roots of plausibility and about rural Russia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 36, no 1, pp. 83–101.
- Sharapov Yu. P. (1997) Lenin and Bogdanov: From cooperation to confrontation. *Russian History*, no 5, pp. 55–67. (In Russian)
- Shcheglov A. (1937) *Lenin's Fight against Bogdanov's Revision of Marxism*, Moscow. (In Russian)
- Trotsuk I. V. (2023) Rural human capital in the conceptual optics: Continuum and/or post-ism? *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, no 2, pp. 338–354. (In Russian)
- Trotsuk I. V., Subbotina M. V. (2019) Happiness and heroism, personal and collective as main elements of the 'bright future' in the Soviet (non)utopia. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, vol. 19, no 4, pp. 835–848. (In Russian)
- Uleri F. (2019) Capitalism and the peasant mode of production: A Chayanovian analysis. *Russian Peasant Studies*, vol. 6, no 3, pp. 43–60.
- van der Ploeg J. D. (2013) *Peasants and the Art of Farming: A Chayanovian Manifesto*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Weber M. (1930) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Routledge.
- White J. D. (2018) *Red Hamlet. The Life and Ideas of Alexander Bogdanov*, Leiden–Boston: Brill.
- Yassour A. A. (2017) *Bogdanov and His Work: A Guide to the Published and Unpublished Works of Alexander A. Bogdanov (Malinovsky) 1873–1928*, London: Taylor & Francis.

Утопии Александра Богданова и Александра Чаюнова: выбор пути сельско-городского развития и его последствия для сельского человеческого капитала и социальной дифференциации²

Александр Михайлович Никулин, кандидат экономических наук, директор Центра аграрных исследований Российской академии народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте Российской Федерации; проректор по научной работе МВШСЭН. 119571, Москва, просп. Вернадского, 82. E-mail: harmina@yandex.ru

Ирина Владимировна Троцук, доктор социологических наук, профессор кафедры социологии Российского университета дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы; ведущий научный сотрудник Центра аграрных исследований Российской академии народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте Российской Федерации и Интерцентра МВШСЭН. 119571, Москва, просп. Вернадского, 82. E-mail: irina.trotsuk@yandex.ru

Аннотация. Научно фундированный разговор о нынешнем состоянии сельских территорий, перспективах сельского человеческого капитала и тенденциях сельской

2. Статья подготовлена в рамках гранта, предоставленного Министерством науки и высшего образования Российской Федерации (№ соглашения о предоставлении гранта: 075-15-2022-326)

дифференциации невозможен без опоры на концептуальные разработки и футуристические проекты великих российских аграрников. Статья посвящена сравнению футуристических воззрений двух замечательных социальных мыслителей начала XX века — Александра Богданова и Александра Чаянова, выраженных в их утопических произведениях, которые в художественной форме запечатлели особенности (пролетарские и крестьянские) их социально-экономических и культурно-этических взглядов. Богданов и Чаянов отличались энциклопедическими познаниями и блестящими организаторскими способностями, опубликовали оригинальные работы в области социальной философии и политической экономии, были яркими социально-политическими лидерами альтернативных направлений русской революции, а также писателями-футурологами. Богданов в своих утопиях развивал марксистские идеи пролетарской революции и построения социализма не только на земле, но и в космосе. Чаянов в своей утопии умеренного кооперативного социализма отстаивал новое революционное значение крестьянства. Пролетарский идеолог Богданов скептически относился к политическому потенциалу крестьянства, опасаясь, что противники пролетарской революции могут использовать крестьянский консерватизм против социалистической революции. Крестьянский идеолог Чаянов скептически оценивал творческий потенциал рабочего класса, полагая, что в грядущем социальном перевороте рабочий класс может быть использован для построения авторитарно-бюрократического социализма. Оба мыслителя стремились через анализ альтернатив взаимодействия человека и природы оценить перспективы глобального сельско-городского развития. Несмотря на игнорирование положительно-го революционного потенциала пролетариата (Чаянов) и крестьянства (Богданов), оба внесли огромный вклад в теорию и практику русской революции, а их утопические идеи по-прежнему вдохновляют на поиски нового справедливого, гуманного и счастливого мира.

Ключевые слова: Чаянов, Богданов, утопия, пролетариат, крестьянство, марксизм, корпоративизм, колониализм, человеческий капитал