

INTRODUCTION

This book contains the proceedings of the international symposium entitled “Transformation and Diversification of Rural Societies in Eastern Europe and Russia”, which was held at Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University, Japan on 11-14 July, 2001.

Following a preparatory workshop in the Czech Republic the previous year,¹ the symposium aimed to discuss the post-communist rural developments from broader perspectives than simply economic interpretations. Thus the research center invited to the symposium not only agrarian experts but also specialists in history, sociology, and socio-economic thought of Russia and Eastern Europe. It is worth noting that, the Japanese academia has quite a rich historiography on modern rural developments in Russia and Eastern Europe.² Thus the international symposium met a lot of local interests as well.

Russian and East European modern history has been quite dramatic, especially in the case of its rural developments; emancipation of serfdom in the middle of the 19th century, land reforms and collectivization in the interwar and post-war periods, further integration of rural socio-economy in the communist era, de-collectivization or privatization in the 1990s, and now adjustment in accordance with EU *acquis communautaire*.

1 The workshop's proceedings are in; Ieda, O. ed., *The New Structure of the Rural Economy of Post-communist Countries*, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2001. Besides that, the working group published a book in Japanese; Ieda, O. ed., 『東欧ロシア地域における農村経済構造の変容 [Changes of Rural Economic Structure in Eastern Europe and Russia]』 Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2001,

2 Though most of them are accessible only in Japanese, a review article is available in German ; Hizen E., Suzuki T., & Kojima S., *Japanische Forschungen zur russischen Geschichte in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Jahrbucher Geschichte Osteuropas* 33 (1985).

The twelve papers in this book explicitly or implicitly dedicate themselves to providing a viewpoint for a consistent understanding of the century-long historical process which was full of changes. Though the style and emphasis of each paper is different, collectively the book definitely provides not only informative suggestions but also useful viewpoints for perceiving the seemingly quite intricate reality of post-communist rural transformations.

The first chapter's perspective for this aim refers to historical experiences; I. Gerasimov highlights the rapidly expanding activity of the rural intelligentsia to modernize rural societies in the last decades of Imperial Russia, against a prevalent view of a bigot and unchangeable rural Russia. This argument reflects a recent reevaluation of Zemstvo in the history of the decades immediately preceding the Bolshevik revolution.³ H. Yoshida, concentrating on legal cases at local courts in the years at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, discusses adaptability, rationality, and the uniqueness of the peasants' responses to changing socio-economic and legal circumstances. Both of the papers suggest a rethink of the stereotypical image of a backward rural Russia. This claim is equitable, since a changing environment (e.g. modernization) solely requires another standardization of people's behavior and its outcome is not necessarily the same everywhere.

Chapter two also concerns Russian rural areas but in their post-communist developments. Z. Kalugina conducts a comprehensive macro-economic analysis and suggests the eventual maintaining of the communist structure of Russian agriculture, that is, the complementary relation between a Kolkhoz and a family plot. D. O'Brien, by contrast from his field research, though agreeing with Kalugina's general view, shows the significant internal change of the structure, illustrating a

3 Matsuzato, Kimitaka "The Fate of Agronomists in Russia: Their Quantitative Dynamics from 1911 to 1916," *The Russian Review* 55 (April 1996)

shift to family farming through professional mobility, a conversion of income sources and so on. Education, career and community networks are important “household capitals” of the emerging strong Russian peasant household, *dvor*, according to O’Brien.

Chapter three discusses the possibilities for capitalist ways of individual farming in Russia. S. Kojima, through highlighting Kondrachev’s realist view on peasant farm, suggests a peasant initiative for a market economy in 1920s Russia took place. R. Yamamura describes the operation of capitalist farms among large-scale enterprises in post-communist rural Russia. One hundred years ago I.V. Lenin wrote a book during his exile to Siberia, *Capitalist development in Russia*. The book has been widely read by students of economic history in Japan,⁴ although with a lot of criticism such as; what Lenin wrote was not the reality in Russia but what he had wanted to see in Russia. Now again we might have to read it within the new context of post-communist development in Russia and East European countries.

East European issues begin the fourth chapter, though Lenin’s shadow can still be seen. E. Yoshino clearly summarizes the polarization of Polish peasantry in the second half of the 1990s on the basis of macro-statistic analyses. He reaches precisely the same conclusion as the aforementioned work on Russia by Lenin. Ironically speaking, the physical creation of the revolutionary has collapsed, leaving behind his spiritual product on post-communist capitalism. However, Yoshino’s minute analyses are themselves a part of a Polish legacy, the abundant statistical data on small farms due to their dominance in the post-war period. G. Blaas, in contrast, fairly insists on another rural legacy of Russian and East Europe-

4 A Japanese translation of the book was published in 1954 as volume three of *The complete works of Lenin* by the Otsuki Shoten publisher, Tokyo, and its 24th printing was published in 1974. The book was a best seller for a long time.

an history; these areas, except Poland and some other regions, have never experienced the dominance of small- and middle-sized farming. Slovakia is really a typical case for his argument. Implementation of EU norms in the agricultural structure would be harmful to the organic development of rural areas.

Chapter five focuses on Hungary. O. Ieda suggests an emerging dual leadership, that is, viable rural leaders who are the top management at corporate farms and at the same time leading individual farmers, capable of integrating local resources in accordance with the changing political and economic requirements of the time. This proposition may imply an additional post-communist way of rural development initiated by leading peasants preserving a collective farm as a social security net or a historical legacy. K. Kovacs, by contrast, describing the ten years' transformation of Hungarian agricultural institutions, seems to modestly conclude, despite being convinced, that the resulting poverty amongst the majority in rural areas cannot be solved by agriculture nor by the locality itself.

Chapter six, the last section, concerns EU enlargement. As suggested by Kovacs, T. Doucha focuses his attention on the broader meaning of rurality; a rural area being not only a field for agriculture but also a part of "public goods", like a site of historical memories, recreation of urban residents, a green and water zone for natural environments, etc. and, following EU norms, he re-defines agriculture as a part of such public goods. K. Froberg, in turn, displays EU instruments of pre-accession support for "rural" development in East European candidate countries, though pointing out various problems in the implementation processes. The most critical issue on the candidate side, apart from a lack of financial resources, seems to be the absence of a local subject or local institution which can carry out such EU projects. Froberg also draws our attention to the probable consequences of enlargement on the existing fifteen member nations. EU enlargement is another huge topic to be analyzed, and, as K. Froberg suggests,

perspectives of mutual influence and local initiative are essential.

This introduction has perhaps strayed somewhat from the original position of each paper. It should be noted that the original order of papers presented at the symposium is not the same as in this book. The symposium program is attached at the end of the book for reference. Any kind of remarks or criticism are most welcome for our further discussions.

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