



newsletter

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THE TAGANROG STUDIES OF THE RUSSIAN WELL-BEING

The radical socio-economic transformations in Russia have affected all spheres of social life and given rise to a complex of problems. Evaluation of those developments and predictions for the future call for a profound analysis of both the official statistics and the findings of independent academic studies, write Natalia Rimashevskaya and Galina Voitenkova from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

This gives a special significance to the outcome of the research conducted in Taganrog by a group of scholars from the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population at the Russian Academy of Sciences. The work is headed by Professor Natalia Rimashevskaya. The Taganrog project is a long-term research project exploring a panorama of changes in the living conditions of Russians over the period of three decades, covering the times of flourishing, stagnation and reformation of socialism in Russia. Historically, and through the complexity of issues investigated, it is a unique study.

The city of Taganrog can be considered representative of a large Russian industrial centre. The unit of observation is the family. The sample was formed by a proportional selection of families in various city districts and social groups. The research is organised

in a series of household surveys carried out with 10 year intervals. By now 4 such surveys have been undertaken. The results have been published in a number of monographs.

«Taganrog-1» was carried out in 1968-1969, after the Khrushchev «thaw». It focused on the living standards of city residents, investigating in particular the socio-economic problems of the population. At that time neither social statistics, nor household budget surveys, nor income monitoring data were available. Therefore, «Taganrog-1» marked the beginning of empirical sociology in Russia. The main subjects of the first and the subsequent studies were sociodemographic characteristics of different types of families, including income and wealth, consumption patterns, housing conditions, employment, education and factors determining family well-being.

The «Taganrog-1» findings revealed serious social problems that were not in line with the official dogmas of social homogeneity, equality and stability of the Soviet society: Family instability (high rates of one-parent families and single persons), asymmetrical gender relations, large differences in the material well-being of people, the existence of under-provisioned families, and deficiencies in the availability of some kinds of the public assistance funds, were some of the results. The survey disclosed the need for a new approach to the problem of «under-provisioning», i.e.

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poverty. The results of the study (*continues on page 2*) were not authorised for publication, but were used by official bodies in their work.

Ten years later, in 1978-1979, during the prime of the Brezhnev stagnation, «Taganrog-2» was carried out. It followed the pattern and methods of the first survey, introducing also the dynamics of family well-being. The survey included 5 sub-projects: «Living standards», «Ways of life», «Supply and demand», «Health» and «Family development over the life cycle». The survey brought to light growing contradictions in the social sphere, disorder in the consumption sector, as displayed in chronic shortages of consumer goods, disparity between the objective mechanisms of distribution and the voluntary decisions concerning work payment, pensions and social infrastructure, destabilisation of families due to workers alienation not only from the means, but also from the results of their work.

The next stage, «Taganrog-3», was undertaken in 1988-1989, at the time of the Gorbachev «perestroika». It focused on the new developments in Russia during the transition to a market economy. The transition was accompanied by a considerable decline in the economy and in the living standards of the bulk of the population and brought the country to the verge of catastrophe.

«Taganrog-3^{1/2}» was carried out five years after «Taganrog-3». The task was to analyse the impact of the reforms on the populations well-being, the behaviour of separate individuals and social groups under the new conditions and the process of their adaptation. This time the major emphasis was on health. But special attention was paid to poverty related issues such as the development of a poverty definition, the extent and profile of poverty, and factors determining entry into poverty.

The outcomes revealed a dramatic income polarisation, with a wide gap between a small group of extremely rich people and the vast strata of poor people who formerly belonged to the middle-income groups. The study also showed increased unemployment, a growing degradation of human capital, depopulation, increased criminalisation and marginalisation of people, and destabilisation of social and political life.

The necessity to revise the concept of reform and to develop a well grounded social policy in order to help the people in the process of adaptation to the new conditions and to prevent disintegration of the society, were likewise disclosed.

At present, the Institute is launching a new survey «Taganrog-4»: Russia on the threshold of the third millennium. It aims to continue the observation of the current processes and to work out recommendations for the governmental bodies in order to cope with the situation. The survey embraces 20 sub-projects that cover both the previous and new subjects characterising the developments in the Russian society. The survey is to be completed in 1998.

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SOCIAL COSTS OF POVERTY

In May 1996 the CROP Secretariat hosted a workshop on "Social Costs of Poverty". Participants from different schools of thought and disciplines, and coming from different cultural backgrounds, were invited to secure a wide variety of inputs to the project. Researchers from Japan, Nigeria, Norway, Russia, United Kingdom and U.S.A. participated in the meeting. The workshop was jointly sponsored by CROP, the UNIVERS Foundation, UNESCO and received support from the University of Bergen as well.

Poverty is traditionally characterised by the suffering it inflicts on the poor and what it costs the non-poor to alleviate poverty through social programs. CROP is arguing elsewhere that time has come to shift the attention from the poor to the non-poor. One such approach can be to turn the question around and ask what the net costs of poverty are imposing on the non-poor population.

Professor Else Øyen, Chair of CROP, welcomed the participants and the two Norwegian economists, Dr. Ottar Mæstad and Dr. Bertil Tungodden, presented a background-paper, "Social Costs of Poverty: An Agenda for Research", to be discussed at the workshop. The paper focused on theories about how absolute and relative poverty may affect the resource opportunity set of the non-poor. It was argued that a number of costs which widespread poverty imposes on the non-poor part of the population, can be considered public bads, and as such may justify public action in order to combat poverty.

The discussions in the workshop focused mainly on the following issues:

- The concept of social costs which has different meanings to the different disciplines./Should only the social costs to the non-poor be taken into consideration?/How to create comparisons between countries, in particular if a wide concept of social costs is to be used?/How does poverty affect the quality of the labour force and other activities, and how can such activities (also over time) be fitted into the understanding of social costs.

The participants in the workshop agreed that a few pilot studies are to be initiated in different countries, based on library studies. The first step is to explore operationalisation of concepts in different cultural settings. Two such studies will start immediately, including Russia and a country from the East Asian network. Two more studies will be commissioned. Professor Dayo Akeredolu-Ale, Nigeria, will write a paper of definitions and issues relating to "Social Costs of Poverty". His paper will have a conceptual/theoretical orientation based on the African/Nigerian reality. A paper on the sociological aspects of the project will be written by professor S.M. Miller, USA. The workshop has already brought forward several proposals to the CROP Secretariat.

Researchers in the CROP network working with questions/problems focusing on the social costs of poverty are hereby invited to submit their proposals of participation. Please contact the CROP Secretariat for further arrangements, and please be aware that at this stage no funds are available for external projects.

editorial

As part of the follow-up to the UN World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen last year a Commission for Social Development has been established. The mandate of the Commission stems from the 10 commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. For participants in the CROP network Commitment 2 is the most interesting since it calls for national and international co-operation to eradicate poverty. This goal is to be achieved through such ambitious and unrealistic measures as «reducing inequalities», «provide for the basic needs of all» «ensure that people living in poverty have access to -- credit, land, education and training, technology, knowledge and information, and to public services --», etc.

In New York I followed meetings of the Special Session of the Commission. It was not encouraging. Many of the discussions lacked a clear focus, and several of the participants had no knowledge of even elementary issues involved in poverty production. Loyalty to the Copenhagen Declaration was limited, there was little consensus on basic principles, and the confrontations were at times rough going (but being contained through the very rigid UN procedures for participation and reporting).

While conflicts could be expected and understood, poverty alleviation being a conflictual matter, there is little excuse for the ignorance about poverty causes and poverty manifestations displayed in the Commission. The composition of the Commission is geographical, as is the preferred style in the UN system. One of the major conclusions at the Special Session was to enlarge the number of members from 32 to 46, taking still more geographical areas into consideration. There is little reason to believe the expertise within the Commission will increase, unless it is explicitly drawn into the work of the Commission. The problems become exacerbated when money-saving devices force the use of local representatives in the Commission, this time from New York, in order to construct a pseudo-geographical representation.

The mandate for the Commission is too wide, of course. Its members are supposed to cover the entire field of social development, which in itself is an impossible task. For those of us working with poverty it is discouraging to see that poverty issues once again are being hidden under the broader and more diffuse issues of development. It is also easy to forget that part of the dominant paradigm of social development is directly antagonistic to poverty alleviation.

Time has come to focus sharper and more directly on poverty and make certain it moves in on the agenda of the international community. This implies that an independent World Commission on Poverty

should be established.

In 1983 the UN's established a World Commission on Environment. Without the powerful influence of the Brundtland Report it is doubtful whether environmental issues would have received as much attention as they did, both leading up to the Rio conference, and after. National committees and voluntary organisations working on environmental issues have used the report as their guide into very complex issues. Poverty needs that kind of attention and mobilisation, too, if effective poverty alleviation programmes are to be implemented in the future.

Else Øyen, Chair of CROP

CROP PUBLICATIONS

Environment and Urbanization Vol. 7 No 1. and 2, 1995. These volumes of the IIEDjournal are dedicated to the issue of "Urban Poverty". Most of the papers were presented at the CROP workshop by the same name (October 1994). The papers include micro-case studies, and studies of urban poverty at a national or global level. They are available from the CROP Secretariat and prized at 100 NOK, per volume, including postage.

Women and Poverty - The Feminization of Poverty. The Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO and CROP, Oslo and Bergen, 1995. (Published in Norwegian only) Available from the CROP Secretariat and prized at 50 NOK, including postage.

Yes, I want to order the following:

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100NOK (~15 US\$) a piece
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WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS POSTPONED

The workshop "Human Rights as an Instrument for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty" to be held in Brazil in November 1996 has been postponed to mid-1997, and moved to Santiago, Chile. A call for papers to the workshop will appear in the next edition of the CROP Newsletter.

UNESCO SUPPORTS CROP

In its budget for 1996 - 1997 UNESCO has written in CROP as a collaborator for the follow-up of the poverty related initiatives set forth of the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen 1995. UNESCO has earmarked USD 200.000 for this purpose. USD 90.000 go directly to CROP and will be used to continue the organising of regional workshop around the world, to support research projects on poverty, and to strengthen the CROP network in the 3rd world.

USD 110.000 have been allocated to poverty research projects initiated among member organisations of the International Social Science Council. CROP has been asked to co-ordinate these projects.

CROP HANDBOOK ON POVERTY RESEARCH

Poverty: A Global Review. Handbook on International Poverty Research, edited by Else Øyen, S.M. Miller and Syed Abdus Samad, can still be ordered and is available from your bookstore, or directly from the publisher:

Scandinavian University Press,
Book Department,
P.O. Box 2959, Tøyen,
N-0608 Oslo, Norway.
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The price of the book is USD 59.00 + p&p

RESPONSE TO GLOSSARY ON POVERTY CONCEPTS

CROP decided to produce a Glossary on Poverty Concepts as a contribution to the United Nations International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.

In the previous Newsletter members of the CROPnet were invited to send in definitions of poverty to be included in the Glossary. The response has been overwhelming, and the Editorial Board of the CROP Glossary hereby wants to thank everybody who has submitted definitions. Last minute definitions are still welcome and should be sent to:

Dr. David Gordon, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol, BS8 1TN, England.

Fax: + 44 117 928 8578

email: dave.gordon@bristol.ac.uk

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 96/97

October96:
10 - 12: "Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Mediterranean Area", in Crete

December96:

5: Follow-up of UN Social Summit, Symposium, Paris, France

March97:

"Poverty in the Pacific", Project planning workshop in Suva, Fiji

May97:

21-22: "Law, Power and Poverty II", Workshop in Oñati, Spain

Mid97:

"Human Rights as an Instrument for the Eradication of Poverty", CROP Workshop in Santiago, Chile

SUPPORT FROM THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Securing funds in order to run the CROP Secretariat is a constant challenge to the people working at the Secretariat. CROP is very grateful for the generous support of NOK 375 000 (approx. USD 57.000) that the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted, early this summer, to support the administration of the many activities under the CROP umbrella.

CROP IN BRIEF

CROP is a world-wide network of researchers and experts on poverty. The aim of CROP is to establish an arena for interdisciplinary and comparative research on poverty in developed and developing countries. CROP organises regional workshops, symposia and international conferences, promotes joint research projects and publications, links poverty researchers and disseminates information about poverty research. CROP is developing an international database on poverty researchers, and documentation of ongoing research. CROP is chaired by professor Else Øyen, University of Bergen, Norway.

If you wish to have your name listed in CROPnet, you are welcome to write the CROP Secretariat and request a copy of the **CROP Questionnaire**. For further information please contact the CROP Secretariat

WEB PAGE FOR CROP

Those who have an Internet connection and a WWW browser programme installed, find the CROP web page at <http://www.uib.no/svf/helsos/crop/>. The page holds general information about CROP, news about past and ongoing activities, as well as the latest CROP newsletter.

Please note: We can no longer answer the increased demand for copies of single papers presented at CROP conferences and workshops. However, if you have the patience, most of the papers become available through the publications that follow the conferences and will be duly announced. We still supply the authors addresses, phone & fax numbers.

CROP JOINS THE MICROCREDIT SUMMIT

CROP has applied for membership in the Microcredit Summit Council of Advocates. The Microcredit Summit takes place in Washington D.C, USA, February 2-4 1997. Members of the CROP network interested in the Microcredit Summit can contact the CROP Secretariat for further arrangements.