Methodological approaches to the study of Russian cooperation and "Theory and practice of cooperation" as an academic discipline

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The article focuses on the theoretical and methodological problems encountered by the Russian scholars of cooperative organizations. The authors identify four basic methodological approaches to the cooperation phenomenon in the Russian academic tradition: (1) socio-reformist (or socio-ideological), (2) descriptive-monographic, and (3) economic-theoretical, with the first two being dominant. After a short discussion of the prospects and limitations of the theoretical studies of cooperatives as business organizations by Russian scholars, some of the distinguishing features of Russian cooperation thought are mentioned. Considering the features of the Russian cooperative thought, the authors found it useful to name the most prominent Russian researchers of cooperation who can be included in the ICA list of the world cooperative heritage. The authors pay special attention to the myth of the first Russian cooperative and the Decembrists as the first Russian cooperators. Unfortunately, this myth was officially recognized and determines the birthday of the cooperative movement in Russia. The article briefly discusses the contribution to cooperative thought made by Antsiferov, Bilimovich, Tugan-Baranovsky, Chayanov, and Totomianz. Special attention is paid to the scientific contribution of Emelianoff, almost unknown in modern Russia, and the fate of his ideas. Finally, the authors emphasize the particular importance of describing the transformations and the most important achievements of the Russian and foreign cooperative thought in the curriculum of the discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation".

Keywords: Russian cooperative thought, the history of Russian cooperation, the birth of Russian cooperative movement, economic theory of cooperation, Emelianoff, cooperation as an academic discipline.

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Introduction

Cooperation seems to be the focus of interest for many contemporary Russian researchers, although most of the works devoted to different aspects of cooperation lack reliable methodological foundations. How-

ever, only a correctly chosen and properly grounded methodological approach can provide answers to such questions as what a cooperative is and what the specific features of cooperation are. These questions are not solely scientific for they have to get precise answers and provide reliable and objective data on the nature and essence of cooperatives, their role and meaning in the social and economic development, the potential of cooperation and its chances for future success. That is why we focus on the theoretical and methodological problems encountered by the Russian scholars of cooperative organizations. Considering the features of the Russian cooperative thought, the authors found it useful to name the most prominent Russian researchers of cooperation who can be included in the ICA list of the world cooperative heritage. Finally, the authors emphasize the particular importance of describing the transformations and the most important achievements of the Russian and foreign cooperative thought in the curriculum of the discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation".

Basic methodological approaches to the cooperation phenomenon

There are three main methodological approaches to the study of cooperation: (1) socio-reformist (or socio-ideological), (2) descriptive-monographic, and (3) economic-theoretical, with the first two being dominant. The socio-ideological approach is presented by publications whose authors discuss 'moral mission of cooperation', 'models of cooperative economics', 'models of social and cooperative society', etc. in a quiet propagandistic manner. The basic ideas of this approach are rooted in the Russian and European literature on cooperation of the XIX century which argues that the cooperative movement embodied ideas of utopian socialism; that cooperation aimed to destroy the existing economic system and replace it with a new 'moral world'. Cooperation was perceived as the weapon in the struggle against capitalism for it destroyed profits and, therefore, the very exploitation of man by man. The authors believe that the cooperative movement as a struggle against the capitalist economic system should be developed by working social groups, that is why only labor collectives can form true cooperative organizations; and that cooperative movement possessed every potential to change spiritual and labor aspects of social life, therefore, fundamentally transforming the very nature of economic relations. These rather vague and controversial ideas largely predetermine the contemporary interpretations of cooperation and the ways of its implementation in the real life together with the still prevailing ideological stamps and primitive views on cooperation (such as 'cooperation—the child of poverty', 'cooperation makes sense only for the poor', etc.). Thus, the adherents of the socio-reformist approach today lack scientific objectivity in their social utopian studies (Krivoshei, Tkach, Chukin 2012; Ermakov, Seroschtan, Solovyh 2006; Valigursky 2014). Western

scholars rejected such a simplified interpretation long time ago and, certainly, there are no prospects for this archaic ideology in Russia too.

The descriptive-monographic approach to the study of cooperatives is presented in numerous publications that are too often unproductive and dependent on the social and political situation in the country (Salova 2011; Fridman 2010). Most of such works address the questions of how to increase effectiveness and improve management in the organizations called cooperatives, but usually lack analytical grounds and strong theoretical framework for the researchers focus on various problems of the specific cooperative organization trying to offer solutions for them. Moreover, representatives of the descriptive-monographic approach consider such an association as a priori 'consumer', 'cooperative' and 'non-profit' and do not explain the common structural and functional characteristics of all cooperative forms. Thus, the descriptive-monographic approach considers only external and 'surface' features of cooperative organizations and, therefore, does not provide methodological grounds to reveal the economic nature of cooperation and explain the cooperative behavior.

If we face the empirical diversity of organizations and at the same time lack a scientific criterion to identify cooperatives, we cannot conduct a scientific analysis of all the existing economic forms and have to solve tactical tasks in the situation when the cooperative organizational structures and fields of activity are changing, and new associations and influencing factors are emerging. Such a situation explains the simplistic classification of cooperatives within the descriptive-monographic approach that does not correspond to the reality where even very specific features of cooperatives can easily change to the diametrically opposite. For instance, can an organization still be named a cooperative by its form or essence if under the crisis conditions its general meeting decides to scale up its business cooperation with non-members for a year? Is the fundamental principle of cooperation ('one person—one vote') absolutely immutable and unshakable or there can be another voting principle—proportional to the share of business. Thus, descriptive methods are obviously important, although today they provide more the growth of the number of publications, but not of their scientific quality.

The economic-theoretical approach emphasizes the importance of methodological foundations as determining the scientific development in the cooperation studies, but the very grounds to study cooperation here are extremely weak and simplistic. The theoretical basis of cooperation researches in nowadays Russia is contradictory: very few studies attempt to develop an economic theory of cooperation and then to use its concepts and assumptions (Deshkovskaya, 2010). Most researchers do not conduct theoretical analysis from an economic point of view preferring ideological, political, sociological, organizational, legal, historical, ethical or other position, therefore rejecting the theoretical approach—the only one in the interpretation of coop-

erative organizations that can produce a coherent theory of cooperation. We attribute the current confusion and problems in the study of cooperation to the wrong methodology and failure to understand that the economic theory of cooperation aims to explain the specifics of cooperative association. That is why we rarely find references to the economic theory of cooperation in recent publications and dissertations nominally devoted to 'the theory and methodology of cooperation studies'. Methodological problems and misconceptions mentioned above affect the understanding of the discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation" that determines the image of the cooperative universities, but lacks a logically complete and clear structure, scientific methodological grounds, comprehensible theoretical positions and clear practical guidelines.

Prospects and limitations of the theoretical studies of cooperatives as business organizations

We must admit that the very nature of cooperation complicates its theoretical study for cooperatives do not really need a 'high theory' and focus on conducting economic activity rather than trying to figure out why and how the cooperative business model works. The poor knowledge of theoretical and methodological conceptions is largely determined by the Soviet past that retains its influence and narrows the choice of research topics to the problems of Soviet collective farms and consumer cooperatives. It is quite an alarming fact that in recent years the number of competent and well-grounded cooperative studies declines as evidenced by the decreasing number of publications devoted to cooperation. For instance, the first issues (2004) of the journal "Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Cooperative Sector of the Economy" ("Fundamental'nye i prikladnye issledovaniya kooperativnogo sektora ekonomiki") published by the Russian University of Cooperation devoted more than 70% of articles to cooperation topics; in 2006 their share fell to 46%, in 2010—to 21%, in 2014—to 13%. The situation is even more sad in the journal "Herald of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law" ("Vestnik Belgorodskogo Universiteta kooperatsii, ekonomiki i prava").

Many Russian economic studies have a weak theoretical basis and ignore the contemporary western cooperative thought. We do not know scientific publications that reflect the current state of the world and European theory of cooperation especially in terms of its application to the Russian reality. For example, Russian researchers of cooperation practically do not refer to the institutional approach or principles of the institutional economics theory, that provide a complete picture of organizational phenomena (game theory, collective behavior theory, etc.), being incompetent in the essence and goals of economic theories (models).

It is necessary to distinguish the ideological interpretation of cooperation from its theory: the latter aims to develop models that help to understand how cooperatives do or potentially can work. Another problem in revealing the true nature of cooperation is the tendency to mix the theory and doctrine and not to see differences between them. The cooperation doctrine is still quite popular (e. g. the cooperation model of V. I. Lenin or cooperation theory of A. V. Chayanov), while the theory of cooperation is weakly developed although recognized as fundamental. The doctrines may offer institutional changes to improve and plan the future, but the theory must strive to explain specific features of cooperative organizational forms and the ways cooperative associations work. Thus, the theory and doctrine differ in their objectives and functions, offer different approaches, explanations and reasons for the development of scientific knowledge, but at the same time they are closely interrelated: the theory explains the reality created by people; the doctrine assesses and makes judgments about this reality.

It is obvious that cooperative organizations cannot be regarded as the simplest phenomena: there are many difficulties associated with their scientific interpretation due to the constant variability of cooperative forms, their diversity, and controversial approaches to the definition of cooperatives. The problems researchers face in the study of cooperative organizations in Russia can be combined into three groups. First, the cooperative forms of economic activity are relatively young and have not yet developed completely in the post-Soviet market economy. Second, the branch of the economics devoted to the study of cooperative forms has yet to be formed too. These are two main reasons for the insufficient knowledge of cooperation and the uncertainty of many conceptions and terms describing it together with the fact that many common interpretations of cooperatives are based on a mixture of social and economic categories. Another common methodological mistake is that cooperation is regarded as a part of economic policy rather than of economic theory (such normative approach evaluates cooperation in terms of its usefulness, some ideal future economic system, obligatory elements, etc.). Third, the cooperative movement incorporates various social strata and attracts attention as a means of social and political struggle and propaganda.

Another problem is the still existing confusion in the basic interpretations of cooperation: in the broadest sense, cooperation is ubiquitous—according to the founder of the famous doctrine K. Marx, it is 'a form of labor organization', and for the anarchist P. A. Kropotkin it generally applies to all living things on earth including poultry flocks and ants. In a more narrow sense, the word 'cooperation' refers only to the cooperative organization, therefore the most general indicators of a cooperative are as follows: (1) a group of people helping each other to meet their specific needs; (2) group members' activities being carried out on the cooperative principles; (3) group members

assisting each other by providing goods and services; (4) a cooperative enterprise. Thus, a true cooperative is a business organization whose members use its services, own a joint property and control it by distributing residual income among themselves according to the services used; the organization helps its members to conduct business in the interests of all members of the cooperative and for their benefit. This type of cooperation is called 'market cooperative organization'.

However, until now, many experts do not fully understand the importance of three conceptual positions that identify the specifics of cooperatives and motives of its members—owners and customers (in the production cooperative the latter are also employees); as a rule, members-owners-clients (workers) combine different functions. The cooperatives answer in specific ways a triad of major economic questions for every society—what to produce, how and for whom. The key questions for every cooperative and its members are how to carry on business and in whose interests. Unlike business organizations that dominate in the market economy and aim at maximizing profits and interest-rent incomes, cooperatives focus on the specific needs of particular people trying at the same time to 'optimize' the results of the economic activities for their members and guarantee them access to goods and services justly and without exploitation. As an alternative to private entrepreneurship, cooperatives have to be competitive and provide benefits to its members while realizing their economic interests. The economic efficiency is an essential goal of every cooperative trying to solve social and economic problems of its members. This is the strength and attractiveness of cooperation.

Basic features of the Russian cooperative thought

It is impossible to imagine cooperative movement without the fundamental principles that contributed to the development of cooperative organizations, which could be established only under the market economy in the XIX century as an alternative and competitor to private business. There are no cooperative associations in the early traditional and command economies for they lack the attributes and institutions of the market system: economic resources (labor, land, capital) in the command economy are not factors of production or objects of sale, and entrepreneurship does not correspond to its ideology and spirit. Otherwise, we should have regarded biblical characters, unions of prostitutes, organized crime groups, monasteries, icon-painting workshops, and other *artel* joint undertakings nothing other than cooperatives.

Subsequently, due to the principles first tested in the English cooperative established in Rochdale in 1844, cooperatives gradually developed into a special socio-economic phenomenon, enriched by the principles of F. H. Schulze-Delitzsch and F. W. Raiffeisen, growing in

number and increasing its success through practical approbation of cooperation principles, and turning into a widespread and sustainable cooperative movement. In Russia, first cooperative organizations based on the western models began to emerge since 1865 right after the abolition of serfdom (1861). At that time, in England, there were about 800 cooperatives, in Germany—200. The main reasons that launched the ubiquitous cooperative movement are well known: capitalization of the economy and emergence of the market system, political reforms and democratization of society, dissemination of cooperation ideas, and social groups willing and ready to use cooperative principles to solve their problems. Therefore, one should not think that cooperatives in Russia were implanted under the European influence, although there was an obvious impact of the western cooperation ideas for European cooperators possessed qualitative advantages and superiority and provided their Russian followers with inspirational ideas and proven principles, attractive examples and successful models, impressive practical experience and properly constituted organizational and legal forms.

In October 1915, the Russian cooperative movement celebrated its 50th anniversary: Russia became the first in the world in the number of people and organizations (mainly credit and consumer associations) involved in the cooperative movement, which was a good basis for the development of co-operative thought in the following lines.

1. Some researchers considered cooperation a partial solution of economic and social problems and cooperatives—a special type of enterprise. This line of the cooperative though is represented by F. H. Schulze-Delitzsch and F. W. Raiffeisen who offered some original ideas and put them into practice (the so-called Raiffeisen cooperatives were particularly prevalent in different countries including Russia). There were many Russian followers of this line; some of them developed cooperative ideas as inspired by Christianity. For example, A. N. Antsiferov formulated his organizational principles of cooperatives with an emphasis on ethical and moral aspects of cooperation.

2. Russian scientists and the public perceived and interpreted cooperation quite ambiguously: on the one hand, it was 'discovered' as a routine phenomenon in Russian artel and even *obshchina*; on the other hand, cooperatives were regarded as an imposed European model. In other words, Russian authors claimed that there were two sources of cooperation—everyday routine and ideology. As a result, cooperation was proclaimed a kind of compromise between two national movements—Slavophiles and Westernizers.

3. The most important feature of the Russian thought was predetermined by the fact that cooperative ideas came to Russia from the West within the framework of socialist doctrines—at first barely visible, and the end of the XIX century widely and openly. Therefore, for some authors cooperation coincided with socialism, some researchers identified cooperation with the existing economic system, others in-

terpreted it as a special economic system different from both socialism and capitalism.

4. Another characteristic feature of the Russian thought was the idea of the variety of cooperatives and ways of their economic organization. Russian researchers mentioned internal differences in a wide range of cooperatives not only in different countries, but also in various regions of one national economy. Thus, along with the openly demonstrated relativism, the Russian cooperative thought postulated the priority of the economic whole over its parts, i. e. the organic nature of cooperation.

5. Still another important feature of the pre-Soviet literature on co-operation was that nobody disputed the fact that the cooperative movement contributed to the dynamic state development, however the nature and type of this state caused endless debates, such as the question of who and on what legal basis should have the authority. Everyone wanted Russia to be strong and united, but the question was whether the country should be a nation of fellow citizens or an empire of loyal subjects, and the cooperative movement rather simply reflected than answered this question (Kotsonis, 2006).

6. Some authors considered cooperation a factor of a particular socialist system based on the supremacy of the consumer. This social philosophy of 'customer excellence' was written in German, has a British origin (John Mitchell and Beatrix Potter-Webb), but was expressed with the greatest clarity and brilliance in France, by Charles Gide and his followers. The Nîmes School in France and Hamburg School in Germany proposed a cooperativism model that was adopted by many authors, including Russian, such as V. F. Totomianz.

7. Some researchers perceived cooperation as an important factor in other socialist systems. The proponents of the socialist thought did not always agree in the interpretation of cooperative ideas, but always highly evaluated them. K. Marx and F. Engels attributed special importance and great hopes to the production cooperatives. Later, the Socialists had to acknowledge the value of consumer cooperation and independence of the cooperative movement.

Before October 1917, V. I. Lenin, like K. Marx, adhered to the in general unchanging ideas about the prospects of cooperation. However, in the country completely transformed by the dictatorship on behalf of the proletariat the cooperative movement could not develop independently. The Bolshevik Party sought to control completely all fields of national economy including cooperatives. The Bolsheviks joined the board of Centrosoyuz (Central Union) and constituted the majority in the governing body of the central organization of Russian cooperatives. Since then, the cooperative movement became totally dependent on the decisions of the Soviet state. Therefore, it is impossible to separate Lenin's cooperative ideas from the Russian social experiment as a whole; in the absence of any political democracy, the cooperative democracy had little sense.

In 1923, after a series of experiments that aimed at governmentalization and deformed cooperative ideas and movement, the head of the Soviet state V. I. Lenin in his article "On Cooperation" acknowledged the fundamental change in the Bolsheviks' interpretation of the socialism and cooperation previously disparaged and perceived without any sympathy by the Soviet government. The article declared cooperation to be socialist because the Bolsheviks held power and the state owned basic means of production; therefore, it was possible to build a socialist system with the help of 'cooperation'. Lenin expresses his ideal in the following words: "A number of economic, financial and banking privileges must be granted to the cooperatives—this is the way our socialist state must promote the new principle on which the population must be organized. But this is only the general outline of the task; it does not define and depict in detail the entire content of the practical task, i. e. we must find what form of 'bonus' to give for joining the cooperatives (and the terms on which we should give it), the form of bonus by which we shall assist the cooperative sufficiently, the form of bonus that will produce the civilized cooperator. And given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilized cooperators is the system of socialism" (Lenin, 1970: 373).

Referring to the Socialist Revolutionary Party ideas on the nature of cooperation, the head of the Soviet state regarded cooperation as a means to reconcile private interests of the small enterprise with the public interests, which would help the state to monitor and control private interests strictly from the class and party positions: "At present we have to realize that the cooperatives system is a social system we must now give more than ordinary assistance, and we must actually give that assistance. But it must be assistance in the real sense of the word, i. e. it will not be enough to interpret it to mean assistance for any kind of cooperative trade; by assistance we must mean aid to cooperative trade in which *really large masses of the population actually take part*. It is certainly a correct form of assistance to give a bonus to peasants who take part in cooperative trade; but the whole point is to verify the nature of this participation, to verify the awareness behind it, and to verify its quality" (ibid).

At the same time, the founder of the Soviet state definitely and consistently insisted on rather compulsory than voluntary membership in cooperatives—this idea was being implemented until his death. Lenin believed that after subordinating cooperation to the general requirements of the state the Soviet people will take cooperation, will get used to the new conditions of life, and such a compulsory organization would make them accept the new power and changed living conditions. Lenin argued that if the Soviet government could raise the level of culture in the country, provide financial and economic benefits for cooperatives and strongly support the new principle of social and economic organization, then after one or two decades these measures would

create a group of civilized cooperators, i. e. the system of socialism. All these ideas laid the foundation for the myth of Lenin's cooperative plan as a rationale and justification for the collectivization policy. In Soviet literature, this plan was proclaimed 'the crown of Lenin's theory of cooperation'—scientifically sound and suitable for all countries of the socialist block. Undoubtedly, today no one would seriously follow 'Lenin's cooperative plan' either in theory or in practice.

The myth of the first Russian cooperative and the Decembrists as the first Russian cooperators

Recently, the last great myth of cooperation was created quite easily: at the end of the 1990s, someone 'from above' made an arbitrary decision to announce (!) the so-called 'Big Artel' established in Siberia by the Decembrists (state criminals exiled for the armed rebellion) the first consumer society in Russia. In other words, without broad and open discussion of experts from the scientific community someone 'from above' 'made' an amazing historical discovery that cooperation in Russia emerged among the exiles and convicts much earlier than anywhere else in the generally recognized western forms.

Meanwhile, the date of the beginning of the cooperative movement in Russia is well known: on October 22, 1865 the charter of "Rozhdestvensky (Christmas) credit union" (Kostroma Province) was approved (this credit cooperative was founded by brothers Svyatoslav and Vladimir Luginin). On October 23, 1865 "First Riga consumer society" established by the Germans living in Riga was registered. The charters of these cooperatives were mainly based on the theoretical principles and practical experience of F. H. Schulze-Delitzsch—the father of the cooperative movement in Germany. This fact largely explains why the first consumer societies in 1865–1866 were founded by Germans in Riga, Reval (Tallinn), Dorpat (Tartu), and Saint Petersburg. Since 1866, first Russian consumer societies were established by members of intelligentsia and gave rise to many imitations. Only in the next decade, sporadically emerging cooperatives gave way to the true consumer cooperative movement spreading all over the country and preferring the world-known Rochdale principles (Sobolev, 2000a).

Certainly, there are no scientific grounds to start the history of Russian consumer cooperatives with the prison artel of Decembrists exiled to Siberia, who were receiving tremendous financial and other resources from their relatives. Well, this cooperation could be regarded as a form of labor organization rather conventionally, but by no means as a business organization based on the well-known cooperative principles. That is why it could not and did not provide an example to follow for either Russian or western cooperative movements, therefore, they are in no way connected with the Decembrists. They were receiving considerable sums of money from their relatives (some

exiles received about 40–60 thousand rubles while the salaries of soldiers from the invalid command guarding them was only 3 rubles), but were spending the money on their own needs (many hundreds of thousands of ruble banknotes a year), and these easy money were of a dubious benefit to local communities and employees. In 1831, imprisoned Decembrists founded an association called 'Big Artel' with the written charter and the only purpose—to guarantee to all an additional mutual assistance ensured by the agreements. The reason was that the state provided prisoners only with the daily necessities; some of them often needed money, while others received from their relatives huge sums of money significantly exceeding the legally permitted. Prisoners in dire need of money could not earn it working, so they had to ask their more wealthy fellow-prisoners for help (Sobolev, 2000b).

The Decembrists found the solution in collecting a guaranteed amount of money later distributed between members of the association in a certain proportion. Such a decision guaranteed all members of the artel the necessary financial support and independence from uneven flows of money, and freed the poorest from the humiliating necessity to ask for money from those who received and had more money—that was the essence of the 'Big Artel' cooperative activity. The Decembrists clearly and unambiguously defined the purpose of their contractual relations in the charter of the artel (§ 1): "The several years of experience has convinced us of the necessity to always have in stock a certain amount of money that could serve both to ensure the social costs and to meet the needs of each person. The positive purpose of the sum allocated for the coming year is as follows: first, its owner gets an opportunity to dispose of it, and to make annual and urgent purchases with great benefit to the artel; second, this sum can in some way save a person and the whole artel from getting into a difficult situation if there is a delay in receiving money from relatives" (op. cit. Sobolev, 2000a: 127–135).

Unlike the Decembrists' 'cooperation', a true cooperative satisfies the specific needs of its members; if it is possible, cooperative payments are allocated and fairly distributed between all members and invested in the development of the joint enterprise and cooperative as a whole. Thus, we see the self-development of cooperatives that help their members to improve well-being, and, on the other hand, contribute to the strengthening of the market economy through competition at the markets of specific products and services. We believe that the myth of the Decembrists as the first cooperators and their prison artel as the first Russian consumer society would not spread so widely, if there were sufficient scientific debates, concern and adherence to the scientific principles among researchers and in the public opinion. It is the genesis of Russian cooperation that reflected some current common interpretations of cooperative organization in the Russian society: this myth indicates how little people know about cooperatives, principles of cooperation and economic mechanisms of such organizations.

It must be recognized that the Russian cooperation does not need any mythmaking at all. The Russian cooperative thought possesses a remarkable scientific heritage to be proud of, although, due to the historical destiny of Russia and cooperation researchers not everyone knows the outstanding representatives of the Russian emigrant thought. We believe that their works should be included in the ICA list of world cooperative heritage together with the works of A. V. Chayanov, M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky and some other prominent scientists whose contribution to the cooperation theory cannot be overestimated and is impossible to ignore. Therefore, if we assess objectively the scientific heritage of Russian authors on the background of the world cooperative thought, then half a dozen outstanding Russian scientists will line up in the following sequence according to their contribution to the theory of cooperation.

1. Emelianoff Ivan Vasilyevich (1880, village Zavodouspenskoe, Tobolsk province—1945, Washington)—the founder of the economic theory of cooperation (Emelianoff, 1942, 1923, 1924a, 1924b, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929).
2. Antsiferov Alexei Nikolaevich (1867, Voronezh—1943, Paris)—a representative of the comparative cooperative studies and a proponent of the conception of the moral nature of cooperation (Antsiferov, 1930, 1922, 1926, 1929a, 1929b).
3. Chayanov Alexander Vasilyevich (1888, Moscow—1937,?)—the founder of the theory of agricultural cooperative as a form of vertical integration (Chayanov, 1919, 1925).
4. Bilimovich Alexander Dmitrievich (1876, Zhytomyr—1963, Monterey)—an author of the economic history of Russian cooperation (Bilimovich, 1955, 1956).
5. Tugan-Baranovsky Mikhail Ivanovich (1865, Kharkov province—1919, Odessa)—a representative of the economic sociology of cooperation (Tugan-Baranovsky, 1916).
6. Totomianz Vagan Fomich (1875, Astrakhan—1964, Cormeilles-en-Parisis)—an author of the history of cooperative movement, a member of the ICA, a so-called 'Russian Owen' as a brightest and tireless promoter of cooperation (Totomianz, 1921, 1922a, 1922b, 1923a, 1923b, 1923c, 1960, 1961).

Very few people know that cooperative ideas of the Russian emigrant thought in the 1920s developed in the form of a scientific and educational school; in particular, we refer to the Russian Institute of Agricultural Cooperation in Prague. It was a true center of the higher cooperative education in Europe; it attracted students not only from Russia, but also from Slavic countries of Eastern Europe; it developed a unique (for the annals of cooperative science) practice of oral impact

on the students' minds. After the Prague center of the cooperative science was closed the key representatives of the Russian cooperative thought scattered in different countries and continued until the end of their lives to seek ways to develop Russia primarily with the help of cooperative movement. We managed to find archival documents and publications in Russian and Eastern European languages proving that the brightest representatives of the Russian scientific and educational school of cooperation (A. N. Antsiferov, I. V. Emelianoff and V. F. Totomianz) in the interwar period had a great influence (through publications, students and personally) on the development of the cooperative science in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and other countries (Sobolev, 2011). Furthermore, these scientists definitely had an important influence on the western thought too: very few other Russian or Soviet authors had an equally strong impact on the cooperative thought—integrating the Russian and western experience of the cooperative development, affecting the world cooperative thought, revealing the essence of the Russian cooperative organizations transformations. Thus, they developed a number of ideas that integrated and deposited in the bank of the European and world cooperative thought.

One of the outstanding achievements of the Russian emigrant thought was that they predicted the possible transformations of cooperation in the future given that the social conditions in the country change in the way they expected. Moreover, their forecasts of the development of cooperation in the country took into account its traditions and peculiarities; they hoped their analysis would be understandable and demanded by the descendants. We believe that today it is very important to refer not only to the ideas of western schools, but also to the heritage of the Russian scientific emigration that conducted such a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the social and economic life in Russia (Sobolev, 2012). For instance, you can find the following modifications of the definitions of happiness in the scientific journal published by the Russian researchers of cooperation in Prague: unity in the important—freedom in the disputed—benevolence in all and always. This philosophical motto actually contains a whole list of contemporary international cooperative principles recognized by the ICA: democratic control and economic participation of all members express the idea of equality (i. e. unity in the important); open and voluntary membership, autonomy and independence—the ideal of freedom (i. e. freedom in the disputed); education, training, information, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for the welfare of society—the idea of brotherhood, the very spirit of cooperation (i. e. benevolence in all and always). Outstanding Russian scientists knew all these principles perfectly and always adhered to such a cooperative philosophy (Sobolev, 2006).

The scientific contribution of I. V. Emelianoff and the fate of his ideas

Very few experts know the scientific works of the Russian professor I. V. Emelianoff—the founder of the economic theory of cooperation. Almost no one knows that he developed methodological foundations of his theory in the Russian Institute of Agricultural Cooperation in 1920s in Prague, but published his famous monograph much later—in the United States in 1942 (the book was reprinted in 1948 and 1995). Emelianoff's ideas are constantly cited so far, but his book was never published in Europe. Recently in Russia, there were two attempts to publish his "Economic Theory of Cooperation", but both failed due to the difficulties of translating the text from English into Russian. In 2015, we once again will publish "Economic Theory of Cooperation" in Russian with the biography of Emelianoff.

I. V. Emelianoff made an important contribution to the development of the conception of cooperatives as forms of vertical integration. He argued that the process of economic socialization takes place in three ways, and one of them is vertical integration that allows to safe family farm as the primary unit of production, therefore vertical integration is the basic way of concentration in the agricultural sector. Unfortunately, the Soviet government chose another way—to establish giant collective farms without providing storage, transportation, processing and marketing of products, but with a high level of manufacturing and transactional costs and unacceptably high losses of production. Emelianoff proved that the very character and nature of cooperatives help farmers to remain independent and increase their freedom through the development of effective collective marketing strategies. Another alternative is an accelerated formation of vertically integrated industrial corporate structures characterized by a unitary ownership and unified management of the agricultural raw materials and food production. These forms turn independent agricultural producers into 'employees' working on a contract or into a unit of industrial production. Thus, there is an urgent need to preserve cooperative policy and institutional structures that allow farmers to remain independent and to use cooperatives as a means to maintain the market growth (Deshkovskaya, 2009).

All the above proves the critical scientific importance of Emelianoff's contribution to the development of concepts showing the distinctive features common to all cooperatives without exception. Even if you do not agree with some of his ideas, you must admit that he was an innovator in the economic theory of cooperation; he outlined important directions for further research, and formulated some key questions of the cooperation theory better than anyone else before. Thus, Emelianoff's scientific contribution is undisputable, and his study of the economic nature of cooperatives gives some researchers every reason to believe he was actually the first to analyze cooperatives from the economic point of view as forms of vertical integration and to lay the foundations

for the interpretation of cooperatives as pure agencies with participants (principals) as members-leaders.

Certainly, the methodology of neoclassical analysis has vulnerabilities, and the standard neoclassical model does not imply a particular institutional structure. Ivan Emelianoff and his followers R. Phillips and F. Robotka believed that not the cooperative but its members, individual producers, make business decisions and privately allocate their own resources between private and cooperative farms according to their actions and goals. One may disagree with Emelianoff in the degree of independence of the cooperative from its units—individual members. However, this disagreement is not fundamental and concerns rather the degree of dependence than differences in the nature of cooperation. We admit that Emelianoff somewhat exaggerated the degree of members' independence for some types of cooperatives; moreover, he did not consider production cooperatives viable and able to survive in the future; he was not interested in studying internal and external relationships within complex cooperative structures, and did not pay attention to the discrepancies between the objectives pursued by the cooperative and the units that created it.

In other words, the neoclassical approach of Emelianoff has significant limitations in explaining cooperative behavior and internal structure of the cooperative organization that can be overcome by the institutional approach consisting of game theory, principal-agent relationships theory, transactional costs analysis and other theoretical models. Nevertheless, today the works of Emelianoff form the basis of the economic analysis of cooperation, and his theoretical and methodological approaches can be applied to the main fields of the economic theory of cooperation represented by both the traditional microeconomic theory of cooperative organizations and alternative approaches (new institutionalism, social economics, evolutionary economics, behavioral economics, etc.).

Is Ivan Emelianoff a so-called 'at home among strangers, a stranger among his own'? He is a significant figure in the history of the cooperative thought and became its classic because of his creativity and constructive ideas; European cooperators did not publish his works and quoted his ideas from the book "Economic Theory of Cooperation" reprinted in the United States, while American researchers were not aware of the scientific heritage of his European period of life. The fate of Emelianoff's ideas in his historic homeland is paradoxical—they were not recognized and were unjustly forgotten. The fact that he spent the last years of his life in Washington, where his fundamental work was published in English, cannot be considered a sufficient ground to proclaim him a 'representative of the American school of cooperation'. His works are of international importance, but, as we have shown, Russia has every reason to lay claim to him. We hope that scientists and compatriots of Emelianoff will understand and appreciate his scientific contribution, and express gratitude to this Russian researcher of cooperation.

Recently, foreign scholars and practitioners have conducted a number of studies (for example, within the institutional approach) that helped them better understand the nature of cooperatives and their role in the social economy. However, they regard cooperatives as the world third force and an alternative balancing the power of both the business (large and other) and the strong state. Despite the fact that there is still no consensus in interpretation and positioning cooperatives among the forms of economic organization, some Russian scientists do work on the theoretical foundations for the development of cooperation in the country. Nowadays an interest in the theory of cooperation has revived due to the recognition that the existing theories failed to solve many of the current problems cooperatives face. In order to understand clearly the nature, evolution and positions of cooperation in the market economy, as well as the challenges cooperatives encounter in the contemporary society we need an adequate educational system no less than research. Some authors suggest as an effective form of teaching the basic ways of organizing and conducting cooperative business the specialized courses on the "Theory and practice of cooperation" summarizing the main content of cooperative problems.

For example, there is an educational system in the Russian University of Cooperation with the discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation". In order to keep it from turning into a motley picture entitled 'cooperation' and not amenable to the economic analysis we need a theoretical criterion clarifying the nature and essence of cooperation, and identifying the key characteristics of the cooperative organization. Furthermore, this discipline should provide an exact answer to the main question: what makes an association a cooperative, what forces it to become a cooperative, to acquire specific cooperative features and traits? However, this is not enough: the discipline consists of too few hours; there are very few professionals capable of explaining cooperative issues; and most importantly, this discipline is not particularly demanded by employers and students. Therefore, in the numerous agricultural universities there is no such discipline in the curriculum.

The discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation" should analyze cooperation in the developed market economies should to reveal the differences of cooperatives from other forms of business activities, and the ways cooperation emerges, develops, etc.; should describe various approaches to defining the place of cooperative organizations and ownership in the nowadays business system; should pay special attention to the identification of the competitive potential of cooperative organizations in the Russian economy, and acquire a clear practical orientation seeking to answer questions about how to organize and conduct business in the cooperative. This discipline should re-

flect the transformations of scientific studies, and the most important achievements of the Russian and foreign university economic thought crucially important for the complete training of specialists for both top and middle management positions. This discipline should primarily help students to develop skills of the practical application of the neoclassical and institutional theories' tools in decision-making in cooperative organizations. The study of this discipline will help to understand goals of the cooperative organization in the decision-making process, and eventually to predict the behavior of cooperatives in different market situations. Moreover, the study of the "Theory and practice of cooperation" is essential for the development of an economically justified state cooperative policy.

Conclusion

Russian scientists studying cooperative organizations rely mainly on the descriptive-monographic approach, which results in the quantitative growth of publications but not in the high-quality scientific development in the field not equipped with a solid theoretical and methodological foundation. The interpretation of cooperation from an economic point of view (called 'theory of cooperation') does not prove 'cooperativity', but obscures the true understanding of the nature of cooperatives. As a result, we encounter difficulties in the development of the scientifically grounded theory of cooperation, in pursuing an effective state cooperative policy and introduction of an adequate cooperative legislation. Such an interpretation does not allow most Russian cooperative organizations, unlike foreign companies, to become truly socially and economically attractive, to create an influential cooperative movement, and to form a single cooperative sector of the economy.

Methodological problems and misconceptions affect the interpretation of the discipline "Theory and practice of cooperation" that is supposed to determine the image of cooperative universities and to be an essential part of agricultural universities curricula. Even if there is such a discipline in the curriculum, it lacks a logically complete and clear structure, fundamental methodological grounds, correct theoretical positions, and practical orientation. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Russian scientists to take serious steps towards integration with the western cooperative thought, and to seek and adapt new approaches of the cooperation theory to the contemporary Russian social and economic conditions. Only the integration of theory and practice can create an effective cooperative model with the potential of successful practical implementation.

We believe that the ICA list of world cooperative heritage should include outstanding Russian researchers of cooperation of different nationalities—Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Armenian, Jewish,

etc., which once again confirms that true cooperation, as both science and education, is supranational. Some of the Russian scientists' ideas have already been integrated with the western thought and deposited in the bank of European and global cooperative theories. Even now, almost a hundred years later, these ideas often predetermine the ways the theory and practice of cooperation develop, for instance in Russia, where the time for ideas of I. V. Emelianoff has come. We hope the cooperation models of Emelianoff will become the real force, and will give an impetus to the development of both theory and practice of cooperation in his historic homeland.

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Методологические подходы к исследованию российской кооперации и «Теория и практика кооперации» как учебная дисциплина

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Статья посвящена теоретическим и методологическим проблемам, с которыми сталкиваются российские исследователи кооперативных организаций. Авторы выделяют три основных методологических подхода к феномену кооперации в российской академической традиции: (1) социально-реформистский (или социально-идеологический), (2) описательно-монографический и (3) экономико-теоретический. Причем первые два подхода являются доминирующими. После краткого обсуждения перспектив и ограничений в исследованиях кооперативов как бизнес-организаций российскими учеными были выделены некоторые отличительные черты российской кооперативной мысли. Рассматривая особенности российской кооперативной мысли, авторы упоминают наиболее известных российских исследователях кооперации, которые заслуживают того, чтобы их включили в список кооперативного наследия МКА. Отдельное внимание авторы уделяют мифу о первом русском кооперативе и декабристах как первых кооператорах. К сожалению, этот миф стал общепризнанным и определяет теперь официальную дату рождения российской кооперации. Показательно, что именно в вопросе генезиса российской кооперации отразилось современное представление определенной части общества о том, что такое кооператив и как трактовать кооперативную организацию. Кратко обсуждается вклад в кооперативную мысль, сделанный А. Н. Анцыферовым, А. Д. Билимовичем, М. И. Туган-Барановским, А. В. Чаяновым и В. Ф. Тотомианцем. Особое внимание уделено значению научного вклада И. В. Емельянова, почти забытого в современной России, и судьбе его идей. Наконец, авторы подчеркивают особое значение учебных программ «Теория и практика кооперации», позволяющих описать трансформации наиболее важных достижений российской и зарубежной кооперативной мысли.

Ключевые слова: российская кооперативная мысль, история российской кооперации, рождение кооперативного движения в России, экономическая теория кооперации, Емельянов, кооперация как учебная дисциплина.

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