The Vanishing Rouble
Barter Networks and Non-Monetary Transactions in Post-Soviet Societies

A remarkable and unexpected product of the transition from central planning to the market economy in former Soviet societies has been the explosive growth of barter on an industrial scale – the exchange of all kinds of goods from aero-engines to potatoes to mining equipment, and the resort to payment in goods in settlement of debts.

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Barter Networks and Non-Monetary Transactions in Post-Soviet Societies

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The idea of building an interdisciplinary perspective on the barter phenomenon grew out of conversations in Cambridge with Caroline Humphrey and Alena Ledeneva. These two most stimulating of colleagues and friends joined me in organising a conference at the Möller Centre at Churchill College, supported financially and morally by the Centre for History and Economics at Kings College, to whose directors Emma Rothschild and Gareth Stedman-Jones we would like to acknowledge our gratitude. Amy Price was a magnificent organiser. Some of the chapters in this volume were first presented at that conference, which was also supported financially by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. We should like to thank Steven Fries, the EBRD’s research director, for his support, and also Simon Commander who has done much to make the international financial institutions aware of barter as a serious problem for post-Soviet societies. I should also like to thank Chris Harrison of Cambridge University Press for his encouragement of the project, as well as Barbara Docherty for astonishingly efficient copy-editing. The following have been at various times a source of ideas and inspiration on this complex subject: Wendy Carlin, Jayasri Dutta, Rachel Kranton, Denis Monnerie, Herakles Polemarchakis and Mark Schaffer. Finally, I should like to thank the Institut d’Anàlisi Econòmica of the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona and its Director Xavier Vives for providing me with a most pleasant and stimulating environment in which to complete editing the book.
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