UDMURT SOIL UPTURNED

COLLECTIVISATION IN SOVIET UDMURTIA AT THE TURN OF THE 1930s

By

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the collectivisation of agriculture in Soviet Udmurtia at the turn of the 1930s. Situated in the Urals, Udmurtia was an autonomous region, largely agricultural, and with a developing industrial center, Izhevsk, as capital. The titular nationality of the region, the Udmurts, represented slightly more than 50% of the total inhabitants, while the rest was made up by Russians and other national minorities. Udmurts were mostly peasants and concentrated in the countryside, whereas city-dwellers and factory workers were mostly Russians. Due to these and other circumstances, collectivisation in Udmurtia presented certain peculiar features. The campaign began here in 1928, one year ahead the rest of the Union, and had possibly the fastest pace in the country, with 76% of collectivised farms by 1933. The years 1928-1931 were the highest point of the campaign, when most opposition occurred and the most violence took place.

The local Party Committee put before itself the special task to carry out a revolutionary transformation of agriculture in the Udmurt countryside, which should have been a definitive solution to its "national" backwardness and to all its problems, from illiteracy to trachoma, from syphilis to the stripe system. The Party Committee failed to mobilise much support from the peasant Udmurt masses, which stayed at best inert to collectivisation propaganda, or opposed it openly. However, the back of the Udmurt peasantry was finally broken, and Udmurtia was totally collectivised by the end of the 1930s.

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Introduction

The title of Sholokhov's famous novel on Soviet collectivisation, *Virgin Soil Upturned*,[1] is an apt expression to describe the upheaval collectivisation meant for the Soviet Union. Clearly, the virgin soil in the title refers to uncultivated lands collectivisation should have made productive. "Upturned" is a metaphorical term taken from agricultural activity. Indeed, the Soviet countryside was "upturned" by the collectivisation campaign. This holds true for every region of the country, but possibly even more for the non-Russian regions. Lynne Viola showed in her book *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*[2] that collectivisation took the form of a cultural war against the traditional way of life of Russian peasants.

Relevant scholarship has shown the appalling impact collectivisation had on non-Russian regions. Kate Brown showed how the *kresy*, the western part of the Soviet Union bordering with Poland, suffered from collectivisation,[3] Adrienne Lynn Edgar described its effects on the traditional way of life in Turkmenistan,[4] whereas Sarah Cameron showed how it influenced Kazakhstan.[5] Il'dus Galimullin studied the consequences of collectivisation in the Tatar Republic.[6] Udmurtia – also known at the time as the Votiak Autonomous Region – is a relevant case. The aim of this thesis is to provide one more piece of a larger puzzle many scholars began to reconstruct in recent years. My thesis is based on archival research I

[1] Mikhail Sholokhov, *Virgin Soil Upturned* (London: Putnam, 1957).
[2] Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivisation and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[3] Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 84-117.
[4] Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 197-220.
[5] Sarah Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010).
[6] Il'dus Galimullin, "Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Tatarskoi ASSR, 1929-1932 gg.," [The Collectivisation of Agriculture in the Tatar ASSR, 1929-1932], PhD dissertation, University of Kazan, 2000.

conducted in the Central State Archive of the Udmurt Republic and in the Center of Documentation of Contemporary History of the Udmurt Republic, both located in Izhevsk. The material my thesis is based on is fundamentally of two types. The first type consists of documents, directives, reports and correspondence of the local authorities of Soviet Udmurtia related to collectivisation. Most of it comes from the Regional Party Committee of Udmurtia and its related organisations, and from power organs at a still more local level, the Selsoviets (rural soviets). Material coming from the Public Prosecutor's Office and the local section of the NKVD is also present. The second type of material consists of articles in the local newspaper *Izhevskaia Pravda* related to collectivisation.

I intend to fill a gap in the study of collectivisation in "national" regions, especially in scholarship published in English. In fact, in Russian-language historiography competent authors like Nadezhda Zamiatina, V.S. Treshchëv, Galina Nikitina and K.I. Kulikov have recently dealt with the Udmurt countryside at the turn of the 1930s. I argue, however, that collectivisation in Udmurtia with its national specificities should be placed in the context of the most recent Russian and international scholarship. The case of Udmurtia is worth observing against the background of studies on the Soviet Union in general, and of studies analysing other "national" regions. Nadezhda Zamiatina's dissertation is a well-researched economic history of the agricultural changes in Udmurtia in the 1920s and 1930s.[7] Thanks to Treshchëv[8] and Kulikov[9] we have clear general overviews on collectivisation in Udmurtia, whereas Nikitina concentrated on the role of the Udmurt peasant commune, the "kenesh."[10]

[7] Nadezhda Zamiatina, "Transformatsiia krestianskogo khoziaistva v Udmurtii v 1920-1930-e gody," [The Transformation of the Peasant Economy in Udmurtia in the 1920s-1930s], (PhD diss., University of Izhevsk, 2011).
[8] V.S. Treshchëv, "Kollektivizatsiia v Udmurtii," [Collectivisation in Udmurtia], accessed April 28, 2017, http://gasur.ru/activity/publications/pub_arh/cdni/cdni0001.php.
[9] K.I. Kulikov, ed., *Istoriia Udmurtii: XX Vek* (UIIIaL UrO RAN: Izhevsk, 2005), 177-194.
[10] Galina Nikitina, *Udmurtskaia obshchina v sovetskii period (1917-nachalo 30-ch godov)*, [The Udmurt Commune in the Soviet Period (1917-beginning of the 1930s)], (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury, 1998).

However, no full-fledged political and cultural history of collectivisation in Udmurtia exists, nor are there accounts specifically dealing with collectivisation and the national question in Udmurtia, or closely analysing the collectivisation propaganda presented in the local press of the region. My thesis aims to fill this gap, with the hope to reach a wider audience since it is written in English.

My thesis aims to assess the following research questions: why did collectivisation in Udmurtia begin earlier than in the rest of the country? How was it ideologically justified? Why was collectivisation pursued in Udmurtia at such a fast pace, notwithstanding the fact that it was a "national," backward region? Did nationality issues play a role in the way the campaign was conducted in Udmurtia? What propaganda means did the local Party authorities implement in order to convince the population that collectivisation was a rational policy to pursue?

It is impossible to explain the early outbreak of collectivisation in Udmurtia without the so called "Ludorvai case:" its significance and its consequences will be discussed in my thesis. It is remarkable that a backward, "national" region experienced such a breakneck speed collectivisation: as we shall see, the Udmurt national question had to do with the local authorities' decision to radically collectivise. It was precisely Udmurtia's backwardness that convinced the authorities of the absolute need to collectivise, and reasons of economic rationality and class struggle were also put forward.

As far as methodology is concerned, my thesis is conceived as a comparatively minded case study. This means that, although this is not a full-fledged comparative work, previous scholarship on collectivisation in the Soviet Union and in non-Russian areas in particular will be used as a background to interpret the events in Udmurtia. Similarities and differences will be analysed, with the intention to show that the case of Udmurtia was both typical and

exceptional. I will then analyse in more detail the typical and exceptional sides of collectivisation in Udmurtia, and why they arose as opposed to the Soviet Union in general and/or to other specific regions.

Udmurtia was indeed a peculiar region, for it could not be considered predominantly "Russian" nor predominantly "national." The Udmurts (or Votiaks)[11] amounted to little more than 50% of the population, and the rest was made up of Russians and smaller national minorities. In addition, some other particularities make the study of collectivisation in Udmurtia worthwhile. At the time of the "Great Break" Udmurtia was a large agricultural region with Izhevsk, a developing industrial center, as its capital. This proved important during the campaign, because workers' brigades were sent to the countryside as collectivisation cadres and were a smaller, local repetition of the nationwide 25,000-ers' movement.

Economic and class differences between the city and the countryside, and between Russians and Udmurts, also turned out to be important. Udmurts were predominantly peasants, whereas city dwellers and factory workers in particular were mostly Russians. This presented a dilemma for the Obkom, or the Regional Party Committee of Udmurtia. In fact, according to the official Soviet nationality policy, the Udmurts, as an oppressed nation before the revolution, had a theoretical right to develop culturally and economically. The Obkom of Udmurtia thought that collectivisation was going to be the sought for occasion for their economic and cultural development.

The Party Committee faced a situation in which the titular nationality was mostly peasants living in the countryside. Peasants were not factory workers, meaning that in the Bolshevik scale of values they came second in prestige and revolutionary potential. However, Soviet

[11] The two terms are basically synonyms. "Udmurt" is the self-definition of the people itself, and is the term in current use today. "Votiak" was a term used by the Russians. It had a derogatory connotation at the time of the events in analysis, and still retains it today. In the documents of the turn of the 1930s, still both terms were used alternatively.

intentions of social engineering could not leave the situation as it was, and the solution they came up with was twofold. On the one hand, in order to rise as a nation Udmurts needed to develop a factory working class. There were attempts by Udmurtia's authorities in that direction, but they clashed with prejudices and national distrust – official sources tend to present "Great Russian chauvinist" workers as culpable of not accepting their fellow Udmurt workers as equal.[12]

On the other hand, Udmurtia's peasantry had to be collectivised in order to create a modern, rational, socialist countryside. In the eyes of the authorities, collectivisation would have been a revolutionary solution of the Udmurt national question and of the many ills of the Udmurt countryside. Collectivisation was pushed in Udmurtia no less than in the rest of the Soviet Union, and with the same violence and "excesses." Due to specific reasons collectivisation began in Udmurtia approximately one year earlier than in the rest of the Soviet Union, and acquired higher paces. A few figures will suffice to give a sense of the collectivisation pace in Udmurtia: by the end of 1933 already 76% of farms were collectivised. However, the region was divided into 18 raiony, and out of them 12 had reached a percentage of 90-95%. At the end of 1935, the figure was 83%, and by the end of 1937 stood at 92%. At the end of 1938, 98.61% of collectivised farms were reported. These were the last data, which presented a minimal percentage of individual farmers.[13]

The veteran historian on collectivisation, Moshe Lewin, aptly called the November-December 1929 decision to push for mass collectivisation "the signal for the attack."[14] Indeed, it was at the end of 1929 that Stalin launched this all-out attack from the center. However, following this military metaphor, skirmishes at a local level had begun before that date in some parts of

[12] Spiridion Glavatskikh, *Ot Ludorvaia k sploshnoi kollektivizatsii* [From Ludorvai to Mass Collectivisation] (Izhevsk: Udgiz, 1931).
[13] Treshchëv, "Kollektivizatsiia v Udmurtii."
[14] "The Signal for the Attack" in: Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (New York: Norton, 1975), 446-481.

the Soviet Union. As Lynne Viola suggests, Soviet collectivisation was characterized by a peculiar form of "spontaneity." Soviet "spontaneity" in this case does not mean that it was not the center which pushed for all-out collectivisation, but rather that, especially at the beginning, local and central drives were intertwined, and that sometimes actions on a local level preceded, rather than followed drives from the center.[15] For example, Viola notes that "a patchwork of central decrees and laws in existence from the summer of 1929 had made the prosecution, expropriation, and exile of kulaks a legal possibility"[16] before the official call for attack. In this case, "spontaneity" also meant that the campaign, especially at the beginning, was characterised by incredible chaos and disorder.

Udmurtia's case precisely fits this pattern of Soviet "spontaneity." In fact, land rearrangements and collectivisation began there in 1928, one year before the rest of the Soviet Union. It was following the Ludorvai case in June 1928 that the authorities of Udmurtia pushed for collectivisation. In the village Ludorvai, "kulaks" committed an alleged "mass beating" against bedniaks. Probably, the interpretation of this event will never be clear. Were the authorities facing an episode of class violence which hinted at an exacerbation of social conflicts in the Udmurt countryside? Was it an absolutely politics-free event which the authorities blew up to have a good excuse to call for immediate collectivisation?

Be as it may, after the Ludorvai case a rushed collectivisation campaign began which, according to one author, proceeded with a tempo higher than anywhere else in the country.[17] The Obkom plenum of December 1929 decided that collectivisation should be completed in

[15] The interplay between central and local drives characterized also later collectivisation campaigns in other countries, like the Chinese Great Leap Forward. Observing this fact, David Bachman noted that "cadres had been straining at the leash" before the Great Leap Forward was officially launched. David Bachman, *Bureaucracy, Economy, and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 205.
[16] Lynne Viola, "The Campaign to Eliminate the Kulak as a Class, Winter 1929-1930: A Reevaluation of the Legislation," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 503-524, 506.
[17] Kulikov, *Istoriia Udmurtii*, 184.

a year and a half, while in February of the next year an even more extreme leap was required, demanding that collectivisation be completed in two months. The authorities of Udmurtia tried hard to mobilise the Udmurts for the collectivisation effort but, as I will show later in my thesis, no great success was achieved. Nevertheless, violent methods defeated the peasantry of Udmurtia, like everywhere else in the Soviet Union.

The term "kulak" requires a brief explanation. Originally, "kulaks" were wealthy peasants arising with the reforms of the 1860s. The best-off strata of the Soviet peasantry were encouraged to develop during the NEP, to the point that Bukharin incited them to "get rich!" However, with collectivisation "kulaks" became enemies, greedy exploiters who would squeeze the poorest peasants and hoard grain so that the bony hand of hunger would loom over the country.

To be a "kulak" became a rhetorical and political category detached from one's economic condition, a label for anyone opposing collectivisation. Underlining this fact, and also that often whole families, including women, children and old people were deported together with the "kulak" head of the household, Norman Naimark defines dekulakisation as one of *Stalin's Genocides*.[18] In fact, "kulaks" were victims of politico-moral de-specification, which sometimes went as far as naturalistic de-specification.[19] Aleksei Rakov, author of a book on collectivisation in the Urals, also points out that the term is problematic, and defines dekulakisation as a "Stalinist ideologism" (*stalinskaia ideologema*).[20]

"Kulak" and "dekulakisation" are ideologically loaded Stalinist terms related to collectivisation. Nevertheless, keeping these terms is useful because it shows the mindset of

[18] Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[19] For the concept of politico-moral and naturalistic de-specification I am indebted to: Domenico Losurdo, *War and Revolution: Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 2015), Epub edition.
[20] Aleksei Rakov, *"Derevniu opustashaiut": stalinskaia kollektivizatsiia i "raskulachivanie" na Urale v 1930-ye gody* ["They Devastate the Countryside:" Stalinist Collectivisation and "Dekulakisation" in the Urals in the 1930s] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2013): 6.

the actors analysed. Similarly to other parts of the Soviet Union, the Soviet authorities in Udmurtia had to face foot-dragging and the outspoken opposition of large sectors of the peasantry: however, in Soviet parlance the ubiquitous "kulaks" were rhetorical bogeymen that could explain all ills and justify all delays.

My thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, titled "Collectivisation in a (Quasi) Russian Province" will provide a general factual and chronological frame for the collectivisation campaign in Udmurtia at the time of the "Great Break." The second chapter will concentrate on collectivisation and the Udmurt national question. It will show that, though the local Party authorities took great pains to involve Udmurt nationals in collectivisation, their efforts gained little success. The third chapter, "Paper Collectivisation," will be an analysis of collectivisation propaganda spread by the local newspaper *Izhevskaia Pravda*. Inspired by media studies, this last chapter argues that in a highly ideologized and mobilizational state like Stalin's Soviet Union, the spread of propaganda was crucial to create the needed critical mass of support and to try to gain the cultural hegemony on the ruled. In fact, the collectivisation propaganda of the *Izhevskaia Pravda* had the goal of giving a rationale for a policy that we know was highly unpopular.

Note on the Archives

This thesis is based on archival material found in two archives, both located in Izhevsk. The Central State Archive of the Udmurt Republic (*Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Udmurtskoi Respubliki*) will be abbreviated as "TsGAUR" in the footnotes. The Center of Documentation of Contemporary History of the Udmurt Republic (*Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei Istorii Udmurtskoi Respubliki*) will be abbreviated as "TsDNIUR."

In Russian archives documents are organised according to the following units, in decreasing order:

- *Fond* = F.
- *opis'* = o.
- *delo* = d.
- *list* = l.

The *listy*, or sheets, can have a back side (*obratnoe* = ob.).

CHAPTER 1

Collectivisation in a (Quasi) Russian Province

Introduction

Collectivisation and dekulakisation in the Soviet Union went into history because of their forced character, and they are usually considered to have been centrally planned and ordered. However, veteran collectivisation scholars like Moshe Lewin [21] and Lynne Viola [22] underlined that collectivisation was often carried out in a climate of confusion, chaos, and with little central planning. Lynne Viola's concept of "spontaneity" of collectivisation is a key theoretical framework to understand how collectivisation took place in the Soviet Union in general, and in Udmurtia, more specifically. Viola actually goes as far as to say that central legislation on collectivisation was redundant, because collectivisation campaigns had been going on at a local level before being sanctioned from the center. Moreover, dekulakisation had been allowed by a "patchwork" of previous "decrees and laws" before the 1930 legislation.[23] This explains why land rearrangements and collectivisation could begin in Udmurtia in 1928, well before the "signal for the attack," as Lewin aptly described it, was centrally launched. In fact, the crucial point which marked the collectivisation campaign in Udmurtia was the Ludorvai case of June 1928.

The Background and the Ludorvai Case

The volume edited by K.I. Kulikov on 20th century history of Udmurtia[24] provides a good sketch on the background of collectivisation and of the so called Ludorvai case, the spark which ignited it. Udmurtia, too, was hit by the 1927-1928 grain crisis which would provide a

[21] Lewin, *Russian Peasants*.
[22] Viola, "The Campaign."
[23] Ibid., 505.
[24] Kulikov, *Istoriia Udmurtii*, 177-194.

rationale for nationwide collectivisation. Apart from the general procurement crisis, Udmurtia was also hit by several years of bad harvests.[25] The coercive methods which were later ordered to fulfil the procurement quotas did not spare Udmurtia. There, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the regime tried to overcome the crisis attempting to involve the lower strata of the peasantry: right of self-taxation was granted, with which the peasants could organise procurements themselves, and 25% of the confiscated grain was loaned to the peasants. The answer received from the peasantry was ambiguous: in some cases, "kulaks" were actually favoured during these procedures.[26]

Providing a description and an explanation of the beginning of the collectivisation campaign in Udmurtia would be impossible without mentioning the "Ludorvai case" (*ludorvaiskoe delo*). Together with the more general grain crisis, the Ludorvai case was to provide the rationale for the collectivisation campaign in Udmurtia. According to Kulikov, the Ludorvai case was an example of an artificially created "class struggle," which was used as an excuse to push for immediate collectivisation. In Udmurt villages, there was an ancient tradition of leaving cattle unattended within fenced areas during the good season, but single farmers were responsible for taking care of the fences' condition: a broken fence could let the cattle sneak out and might have meant loss of cattle.

Kulikov notes that the *kenesh*, an Udmurt organ of self-government, took care that rules were respected and that everyone did their duty: in case of infraction, those deemed responsible could be beaten as a punishment. Kulikov states that the activity of the kenesh and its seemingly brutal punishments were widely socially accepted and regarded as normal. However, in June 1928 mass beatings of this kind took place in three villages of the Sovetskaia volost', Izhevskii uezd: Nepremennaia Ludzia, Ludorvai and Iuski. Ludorvai, the village

[25] Ibid., 177.
[26] Ibid., 178.

which gave the name to the "case", is just some 12 kilometres away from Izhevsk. We may never know the exact circumstances of these events. In fact, the Udmurt countryside of the time was experiencing rising social conflicts, caused by the land redistributions and the grain requisitions organized by the bednota. However, according to Kulikov absolutely innocent people and even rural administrative personnel were victimised in this beating.[27] Interestingly, this fact did not receive any special attention at the beginning, but on July 11 it was reported in the *Izhevskaia Pravda*. A legal case was opened, and ten men were sentenced to forced labour from 3 to 10 years.[28]

Figure 1. The building of the Ludorvai Selsoviet (Fotofond NOA UIIIAL UrO RAN). Taken from: K.I. Kulikov, ed., *Istoriia Udmurtii: XX Vek* (Izhevsk: UIIIaL UrO RAN, 2005), 181.

[27] Ibid., 179.
[28] An official ideologised version of the facts is contained in: Kornil Il'ich Shibanov, *Sotsialisticheskoe preobrazavanie udmurtskoi derevni* [Socialist Reconstruction of the Udmurt Countryside] (Izhevsk: Udmurtskoe knizhnoe izdatels'stvo, 1963), 45-51.

Figure 2. The accused at the Ludorvai trial, 1928 (Fotofond NOA UIIIAL UrO RAN). Taken from: K.I. Kulikov, ed., *Istoriia Udmurtii: XX Vek* (Izhevsk: UIIIaL UrO RAN, 2005), 179.

In fact, the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia exploited the Ludorvai case for propaganda purposes, and on October 22 a decision was taken to stir up the struggle against "kulakdom" in Udmurtia. According to the Obkom, the Ludorvai events had social causes: it was a case of mass organised "kulak" violence against bedniaks and seredniaks who were pushing for collectivisation of the land. Kulikov states that rather than the Ludorvai events stirring up class struggle in the countryside, it was an artificially created atmosphere of class struggle which caused this event. After the Ludorvai case, more exemplary trials and arrests of "kulaks" took place in Udmurtia.

Precisely at the time of the Ludorvai case, in spring-summer 1928, the procurement campaigns did not see significant improvement, and the authorities of Udmurtia decided to push for collectivisation. In fact, collectivisation began in Udmurtia more than one year before the all-out campaign was called for Soviet Union-wide. Between 1928 and 1929, 2,500 collectivisation cadres were sent to the Udmurt countryside. Many among them were organized in workers' brigades and were meant to remain for permanent work.[29]

The Campaign Begins

Factory workers were sent to the Udmurt countryside to collectivise according to a decision taken on 22 October 1928, both for temporary and permanent work. Twenty-five brigades with a total of 184 people spent five months in the countryside. One hundred and forty-seven were workers and 20 were non-Party members. Seventy-five people were sent for permanent work, of which 29.3% were workers, 68% civil servants and 2.7% "others." Seventy-three of them were Party members or candidates, 24 were regional workers. However, not all of them demonstrated to be at the height of the assigned tasks. Some were deemed "weak," while others had to be dismissed because of "unethical acts," such as "drunkenness, sexual immorality" etc. According to the Obkom, workers' brigades "agitated" the whole countryside, and were sometimes met "with enthusiasm," sometimes with scepticism.[30] One of their tasks was to hold conferences to clarify the directives of the Central Committee. They allegedly held no less than 2,055 conferences, involving tens of thousands of peasants,[31] but somewhat neglecting women.[32] According to a report of the same body, the directives were met positively, sometimes with observations of the kind: "In 11 years of Soviet power we hear such speeches only now."[33]

[29] Ibid., 180.
[30] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 2.
[31] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 6.
[32] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 8.
[33] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 3.

However, already in November 1929 the Obkom lamented serious problems in the tax collection campaigns. In fact, individual taxes had not been collected as planned, and the directives which ordered a 35% tax discount for the poor peasants had not been respected. Moreover, the Obkom deemed weak "the agitational-clarificatory work about the advanced payment of agricultural taxes." Therefore, the Obkom deliberated that kulak farms subject to individual taxation had to be absolutely identified, and that their number had to be raised to 3% of the total. At the same time, the already completed tax-collecting campaign had to be checked to make sure that no seredniaks were taxed incorrectly, and complains had to be carefully assessed. The Obkom also made clear that the implementation of tax collections had to be "based on the poor peasants with the participation of the group of seredniak activists." [34] Clearly, the Obkom of Udmurtia intended to exert fiscal pressure on the "kulaks" through participation of poor peasants, and seredniaks had to be involved in this task.

The Obkom complained that the previous two land-rearrangement campaigns had not been carried out in a satisfactory way. Therefore, their flaws had to be a lesson on how to carry out correctly the autumn 1929 campaign.[35] In fact, the poorest strata of the peasantry had not been mobilised enough and seredniaks had sometimes been assimilated to "kulaks," and in the end the campaign had been "a simple levelling redistribution of land"[36] rather than a really revolutionary process. In the next campaign, "kulak farms and the *lishentsy*" (those deprived of their political rights) had to be exiled to "worse, further land on all fields, with such a quality so that the possibility of formation of kulak farmsteads and holdings would be excluded."[37] Moreover, the land rearrangements had to be carried out with the help of bedniaks and seredniaks, who had to profit from them receiving the best land, and were

[34] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 165.
[35] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 79.
[36] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 166.
[37] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 166 ob.

directly intended to help the development of the kolkhoz sector. New kolkhozes had to be founded, and *arteli* had to be converted into communes. The Obkom also explicitly specified that kolkhozes had to be founded uniting more villages and raiony.

The Obkom insisted that by the end of the Five-year Plan the whole Votskaia Oblast' had to be converted to the multiple-crop system, and a "minimum of agricultural knowledge"[38] had to spread in the countryside. This conversion had to happen as soon as possible, preferably during the same autumn campaign. "We absolutely have to achieve that THE VILLAGES UNDER LAND REARRANGEMENTS GO TO THE MULTIPLE-CROP SYSTEM." The Obkom also clarified that one of the goals of the land rearrangements was the elimination of stripes. The stripes' system was characteristic of the Russian *mir* and caused a great deal of inefficiency: it meant that one household could be assigned stripes of land even very far from each other. Here, we can see the rationalizing intents of the collectivisation process in general: stripes were supposed to disappear because they were considered economically irrational.

The Obkom was convinced that the planned land rearrangements could be carried out successfully only with mass participation and organisation. In fact, "Based on the experience of the first two land rearrangements the Party organisations are obliged to take all measures for maximal organisation of the batrak, bedniak and seredniak masses in the implementation of the land rearrangement campaign, and for the repression of kulak resistance."[39] Both "police and judiciary organs"[40] were to be militarily prepared to fight acts of "kulak" terror and to quickly process a potentially high number of legal cases. More precisely, the Obkom advised the organisation of a "mass series of conferences of activists' groups" not only for batraks, bedniaks, seredniaks but also for village teachers. Also "Peasant Societies of Mutual

[38] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 166.
[39] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 166 ob.
[40] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 167.

Assistance, the unions, the Komsomol" and the "rural intelligentsia" had to be involved in this task. In fact, this "activists' group" was supposed to be the "acting nucleus not only for the rearrangements, but also for collectivisation and for the organisation of the multi-crop rotation."[41] The Obkom made clear that the land-rearrangements had to be an occasion to "draw our lines together even more strongly" to carry out an "even more active struggle for the socialist reconstruction of the countryside."[42] Seven Public Prosecutors were especially sent to the countryside during the contemporary grain procurement campaign, to the point that the central Public Prosecutor's Office had to complain because of lack of personnel.[43]

The Importance of the Batraks

The importance Soviet power attributed to batraks as a pillar to base collectivisation on was often underlined. The Union of Agricultural Workers stated that their material and working conditions had to be improved, illiteracy had to be eliminated, and in general the role of "agricultural and forest workers and female workers in the social life of the countryside" had to be strengthened, as well as in the Party and in the Komsomol. These workers had to be attracted into the tasks of "soviet and cooperative construction." The education of agricultural labourers "in a class spirit" was especially important given the "exacerbation of class struggle" in the countryside. The plans of the Union of Agricultural Workers for 1929 was to embed at least 40% of the batraks and many forest workers into the organisation, apart from purging from its ranks "kulaks" and other undesired elements who did not have the right to membership. In the re-elections of the lower Workers' and Agricultural Workers' Committees exclusively batraks and agricultural laborers had to be chosen for leading roles, and special preliminary courses had to be organised.

[41] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 166 ob.
[42] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 946, l. 167.
[43] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 54-54 ob.

Education of batraks had to be facilitated: Schools of Kolkhoz Young and Tekhnikums should admit 30% of batraks, Rabfaks 20%. Batraks had to be provided a minimal preparation before entering, and they should be helped in continuing their schooling. The Regional Section of the Union was supposed to provide a "timely, high-quality selection of batraks and agricultural workers to schools," and wide range of "practical initiatives" had to be organized, for example to inform the batraks about insurance laws and about their rights in "kulak" farms.[44] The medical care available to batraks and agricultural workers also had to be improved, especially where they were concentrated in large numbers, sovkhozes and wood-cutting sites. Children of batraks also had to be materially helped to enter education, with concrete measures such as providing them with clothes, shoes and food.[45]

Decision to Collectivise at Breakneck Speed

The December 1929 plenum of the Regional Party committee took "a historical decision for the Votoblast': to collectivise the whole region in 1 ½-2 years." "The work of all the apparatuses" had to be rebuilt "decisively from top to bottom in a radical way for the military accomplishment of this extremely important task."[46] In the same month the sending of 25,000-ers to collectivise the countryside was already being discussed.[47] Paradoxically, as Kulikov notes, Udmurtia belonged to the category of "backward," "national" regions, for which collectivisation deadlines were not centrally established.[48] One would think that this circumstance might have allowed the local powers to proceed with more moderation in comparison to other regions.

[44] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 947, l. 77.
[45] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 947, l. 77 ob.
[46] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 18.
[47] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 17.
[48] Kulikov, *Istoriia Udmurtii*, 182.

However, a chaotic "bet on quantity"[49] was made instead, and the coercion and "naked administrirovanie" [50] of that drive is admitted in the documents. [51] In an atmosphere characterised by hysterical frenzy and by the "rush for percentages," peasants were sometimes collectivised literally at gunpoint while churches were being closed down. Successive documents denounced the "wave of church closures"[52] which took place "spontaneously," without authorisation from the higher organs. Many blasphemous acts were reported: kolkhoz meetings were held in still open churches, bells were rung at will, priests were arrested while celebrating mass. Portraits of Lenin were hung on the iconostasis instead of religious icons. Icons were also sometimes stepped on and broken, burnt or thrown away, while Komsomol members wore religious vestments in front of old pious women. Legal cases were opened against people guilty of collecting money to renovate churches.[53]

Cattle and poultry were sometimes collectivised, together with other kinds of property from housing to food and small house items. Many markets were closed down and private commerce was limited.[54] Critical reports coming from Party organs themselves denounced that the coercive collectivisation drive caused mass protests among women, [55] who had anyway been neglected during the campaign.[56] The atmosphere reigning in Udmurtia during this collectivisation campaign can be summarised by a verbal crossfire that allegedly happened at that time. Those in charge of cajoling peasants into the kolkhozes would say:

[49] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 52.
[50] In Bolshevik parlance, the word "administrirovanie" described administrative-coercive methods to carry out a campaign without grassroots support.
[51] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 52-66.
[52] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 61.
[53] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 33.
[54] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1056, l. 148.
[55] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 53-54.
[56] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, 61.

"Enter the kolkhoz, if you are not enemies of Soviet power." To that the peasants answered: "We consider ourselves counterrevolutionaries and enemies of Soviet power."[57]

Dekulakisation, too, seemingly took place in a chaotic way, "without organisation, without planning direction," running over even poor peasants with the "rudest despotism,"[58] and without keeping any record.[59] Seven thousand and four hundred ninety-nine farms were dekulakised during this first wave.[60] "Repressive measures" and "arrests" were the order of the day: "tens of people" were arrested "daily, without excluding 70-80 year old men and women."[61] A few figures will give a sense of the pace of collectivisation in Udmurtia from late 1928 to early 1930. If in October 1928 only 1-1.5% of all farms were collectivised, the figure rose to 10% by October 1, 1929. In January 1930, the figure had reached 30%,[62] while by March 1, 1930, 83.6% of all farms had been collectivised, with the authorities boasting that this meant a 138% increase in 38 days.[63]

The Public Prosecutor's Office pointed out that collectivisation was "an extremely important issue for everyone" and for "every worker [of the Public Prosecutor's Office] in particular." "Any obstacles, inadaptability and difficulties" had to be "left behind and overcome." What was required from the Public Prosecutor's Office was to put collectivisation first in all cases, to try to eliminate all possible obstacles to its implementation. More specifically, an "intensified struggle" against kulakdom had to be carried out, against "both overt and covert kulak opposition and the infiltration of kulak agitation." The Public Prosecutor's Office claimed that a number of cases, often discovered by the GPU (like Abdulmenevo, Iatchi, Tukmachi, the commune "Youth") demonstrated that "whole kulak nests and groups" were

[57] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 53.
[58] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 54.
[59] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 55.
[60] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1056, l. 147 ob.
[61] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 55.
[62] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 2.
[63] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 52.

acting, leading a "systematic and desperate struggle with the poor peasants" and against directives coming from above.

The Public Prosecutor's Office claimed that similar cases, even when involving "open terror" – in the village Stiatchi for example kulaks carried out 6-7 arsons one after the other – were discovered "by chance." But how was it possible that so allegedly evident episodes of resistance were not detected easily? According to the Public Prosecutor Office, this was due to the "bad connections attorneys and investigators" had with the masses. On January 16, 1930, attorneys and investigators were therefore ordered to inspect – "to palpate" was the expression used – all villages in their raiony in winter and spring, especially in the quest for "fake-kolkhozes." However, other forms of resistance were also detected, from the spread of "unfounded rumours" to the "mass sale of cattle, implements, seed, fodder."[64]

Resistance to Collectivisation and "Peregiby"

On January 6, 1930, the Public Prosecutor's Office communicated to the local press and to the Obkom episodes of "kulak" resistance to collectivisation in the village of Soldyr' of the Glazovskii *eros*. Many meetings were allegedly disturbed, with the "kulak" Budin openly spreading anti-collectivisation propaganda in them and trying to impede the brigadiers to reach the bedniak-seredniak part of the population. The same Budin allegedly instigated the mass to sabotage the meetings, with the help of "kulak henchmen prepared by him" and a few women, to the point that the brigadiers "were forced to close the meeting and to retreat."[65] Resistance to collectivisation took a number of forms. The Public Prosecutor's Office reported oppositional slogans such as "12 years of chattering" – evidently alluding at the Bolsheviks' unkept promises – and "The poor peasants […] will get lead bread." [66]

[64] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 18.
[65] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 16.
[66] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 33-34.

Spread of illegal literature, acts of hooliganism, physical assaults, harassment of bedniak women, murder, and even group rapes of batrak women were reported. For example, on January 7, 1930, a collectivisation activist and Party member, named Dudyrev, was murdered, allegedly by "kulaks."[67] Dudyrev was allegedly assaulted on the street in the village of Izoshur. Three people – though nine were later arrested for this case – beat him up until he lost conscience. He was taken to the Kez hospital, where he died 5 days later.[68] As in other similar cases reported from the Udmurt countryside of those years, Dudyrev was allegedly murdered because of his active participation in the land-rearrangements and in the grain-procurement campaigns. According to information collected by the Public Prosecution Office, Dudyrev had drawn "kulaks"' hatred on himself much earlier, since on February 1929 they already tried to "settle scores" with him, unleashing a brawl during a wedding.[69]

On February 11, 1930, the Obkom Presidium issued a resolution stating that the deportation of "kulak" families had to be conducted only with the knowledge of the Regional Executive Committee, and only to destinations chosen by it. It also censored "naked administrirovanie in dekulakisation," and the targeting of seredniaks, implying that such behaviour must have been common before the issue of this resolution. It also ordered to take "preventive measures" against arson, theft and plunder of kolkhoz property, and for the correct storage of seed and cattle. The Presidium took care to organise the deportation of "kulaks" of second – without the borders of the region – and third category – within the borders of the region. This resolution ordered to "select special rooms in the c.[ity] of Izhevsk to keep the persons of first category and to take measures for the utmost unloading of the detention places." This order sounds rather sinister, because first-category "kulaks" were those regarded as most dangerous, and who were subject to deportation or execution. This resolution is possibly calling for a

[67] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 23.
[68] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 26 ob.
[69] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 26.

swift elimination of this "category," and it finally allocated 8,700 rubles from the "sector of secret expenses" to the struggle with "kulakdom."[70]

Shortly afterwards, on February 17, a resolution of the Presidium of the Regional Executive Committee cancelled all land leasing and all labour-hiring contracts: all leased land should have been annexed to kolkhozes. The hiring of outside labour was allowed only to seredniak households short of hands and in those villages with no kolkhozes yet. All measures should have been taken to attract batraks to the kolkhozes: batraks and bedniaks were also supposed to be involved in the management of property confiscated from "kulaks." Moreover, kolkhoz members regarded as "kulaks" should have been expelled without compensation.[71]

Unsurprisingly, a wave of repression followed. The local OGPU "liquidated" 5 "kulak" groups between February 23 and 28, 1930, arresting 35 people. On top of that 123 "single offenders" were arrested, of whom 115 "kulaks," 6 seredniaks (including one former White) and two priests.[72] In fact, according to the authorities, bands of "kulaks" were wandering in the countryside spreading anti-collectivisation propaganda, collecting subscriptions to leave kolkhozes, and even beating kolkhozniks and kolkhoz officials. Five such cases were reported in March 1930 in the Nygli-Zhik'inskii and Debesskii *erosy*. Many of them would allegedly flee *en masse* to be later arrested (lists of up to 116 fleeing "kulaks" organized according to *erosy* were prepared with the help of informers).[73]

Seventy-seven "hiding kulaks" were arrested on March 10 in the Grakhovskii *eros,* and 2 in the Sviatogoroskii *eros*. After this wave of arrests the authorities hoped that "spontaneous curses" on behalf of "single offenders," "whole organisations" and "kulak bands" like "arsons of forests, kolkhozes and barns, murders of activists, kolkhozniks, threats to them" would

[70] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 164.
[71] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 165.
[72] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 29.
[73] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 38-38 ob.

cease.[74] Data of the Public Prosecutor's Office compare the situation prior to the "*ludorvaishchina*" (the Ludorvai case of June 1928) to the second half of 1929, saying that there was an overall increase in criminal offences of 49%, and this increase was concentrated in the countryside.[75]

The wave of defections from kolkhozes which followed Stalin's early March 1930 article "Dizzy from success" characterized Udmurtia, too,[76] but this did not stop the deportation of "kulaks." No less than 186 were deported outside the borders of the region that same month.[77] The names and data of exiled "kulaks" were recorded in detailed lists complete with all the members of their households and their ages: entire families were deported with sometimes three generations within them, from grandparents older than 70 to one year old grandchildren.[78] A further April 5, 1930 resolution reiterated that "kulaks" exiled within the borders of the region were to be given the worst allotments and the worst implements, and that they were allowed to cultivate them only with their own forces. They could not receive seed from the kolkhoz fund and they were categorically forbidden from occupying kolkhoz land.[79]

"Kulak" terror continued to rage in April 1930, with episodes going from acts of derision to beatings to murder.[80] In May, 1930, the Presidium of the Executive Committee had to allocate 14,000 roubles for the "temporary enlargement of the Izhevsk and Mozhga prisons" which were overloaded with "kulaks."[81] Later, on August 12, 1930, the Regional Executive Committee deliberated that "kulaks" should be used for wood-cutting work and for railroad

[74] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 37.
[75] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1056, l. 146.
[76] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1056, l. 147 ob.
[77] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 173, 175.
[78] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 179-213.
[79] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 174.
[80] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 40-40 ob.
[81] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 177.

construction.[82] More "kulaks" deportations followed in November 1931,[83] and in December the official sources expressed pleasure that deportations were carried out with the collaboration of the "bedniak-seredniak masses" and that the local OGPU used the occasion to carry out effective political work. However, isolated cases of "anti-Soviet" resistance to the deportations were recorded, together with the usual "excesses."[84] Evidence of individual cases of dekulakisation go until autumn 1932.[85]

Among the reported *peregiby* ("excesses") during the collectivisation campaign, there are examples of officials – including members of Erosispolkomy, Selsoviet representatives and militiamen – not keeping any record of confiscated kulak property, seizing for themselves or cheaply selling and buying confiscated items – including objects like sewing machines, watches, etc.[86] These facts were putting the "W[orkers']-P[easants'] Government under discussion,"[87] and were happening in spite of already existing rules which theoretically forbade not only officials, but even their relatives to engage in such activities.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I have sketched the background of collectivisation in Udmurtia and its importance. It would be impossible to understand the early start of collectivisation in Udmurtia, in 1928, without taking the Ludorvai case into consideration. Whether it was a propaganda trick blown up as an excuse to push for collectivisation or a genuine symptom of social tensions in the Udmurt countryside, it served as a *casus belli* for the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia. Following this "case," the Obkom of Udmurtia pushed for reckless

[82] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 214.
[83] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 225.
[84] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 228.
[85] TsGAUR, F. R1636, o. 1, d. 2, l. 52.
[86] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 27, 36, 39; ibid., d. 1055, l. 55.
[87] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 39.

collectivisation in spite of the "national" and backward nature of the region. As we shall see later, the Obkom had very specific ideological reasons to justify this audacious move.

The "collectivisation frenzy" in Udmurtia was rich in "peregiby," to the point that the bulk of the campaign took place from 1928 until approximately 1930-1931. Collectivisation went on after that, but at a slower pace with less and less open confrontation, since the last pockets of "kulak" resistance were being eradicated and individual farmers were on the road to extinction. As noted by Treshchëv, after the grain procurement campaign of autumn 1931, the XIV Regional Party Congress celebrated that the problem of the "liquidation of the kulak as a class" could be considered solved. By the end of 1932, even the word "kulak" was disappearing from Party terminology, since the countryside had become polarized by kolkhozes on the one side, and the fading *edinolichniki* (individual farmers) on the other.[88]

[88] Treshchëv, "Kollektivizatsiia v Udmurtii."

CHAPTER 2

Collectivisation and the National Question in Soviet Udmurtia

Introduction

The collectivisation of agriculture imposed in the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1930s resembled a war between civilisations. The aims of Soviet power were clearly not only economic – to seize control of the agricultural output and of the food supply process – but also cultural, for they thought that the "backward" peasant way of life had to be wiped out to leave room for a modernised agriculture. Andrea Graziosi goes as far as to claim that the forced collectivisation of agriculture was the final blow of a longer Bolshevik-peasant war.[89]

Collectivisation was a particularly bitter cultural war in areas inhabited by non-Russian peoples. As shown by Kate Brown, the *kresy* experienced collectivisation particularly violently because they were a border region peopled by many nationalities, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews, and especially some of them were seen as dangerous. The borderlands experienced the most revolts, as many tried to escape across the border with Poland.[90] During collectivisation Turkmens actively protested against their status of "cotton colony," [91] whereas Kazakhstan was hit by a terrible famine, partly caused by the forced "sedentarisation" of the nomads.[92] The case of Tatarstan studied by Galimullin is especially relevant, since Tatarstan was an autonomous republic within the RSFSR bordering with Udmurtia. Galimullin notes that Orthodox priests and Muslim mullahs opposed collectivisation, writing complaints, declarations and letters to the press. He also says that collectivisation very negatively affected the Tatar countryside. Many Tatar peasants were sent to work to the cities,

[89] Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War: Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917-1933* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996).
[90] Brown, *A Biography*, 84-117.
[91] Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 197-220.
[92] Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe."

even out of the republic, and this way their number decreased. Those who had to migrate forgot the language, culture and tradition of their people.[93]

Soviet Udmurtia represents an interesting case. At the beginning of the 1920s, approximately 90% of its population worked in agriculture. Udmurts were the slight national majority – 52.3 per cent according to the 1926 census. However, they were more russified than the peoples of the Caucasus or Central Asia. Having been Christianised in the 1740s, they never developed a "nationalist" or "separatist" movement, either under tsarism or under Soviet rule. According to Nadezhda Zamiatina, author of a dissertation on the agricultural changes in Udmurtia in the 1920s-1930s,[94] agriculture in Udmurtia on the eve of collectivisation was primitive, and Russians and Udmurts shared the same economic and everyday life.

In this chapter I argue that the local Party authorities conducted collectivisation in a special way in Udmurtia due to its multi-ethnic character, and paying special attention to its titular nationality, the Udmurts. Collectivisation in Udmurtia was not supposed to be only a modernising, scientific and economic revolution, but was intended to be the final act of liberation of the Udmurt peasants previously oppressed by Great Russian chauvinism, their emancipation in all matters of life, from everyday agricultural work to culture to health and hygienic issues.

The aim of Udmurtia's Communists was to create a socialist Udmurt countryside, as a definitive solution of all the problems of the region, and more specifically of its Udmurt peasants. Evidence that the Party tried to mobilise the peasants of Udmurtia on ethnic as well as on class lines is widespread in the archives. In a way, my argument confirms a trend already detected in much previous research on Soviet collectivisation, which shows that this policy

[93] Galimullin, "Kollektivizatsiia."
[94] Zamiatina, "Transformatsiia."

was carried out differently in non-Russian territories. However, I will show that the mobilisation of Udmurts in collectivisation was largely unsuccessful due to reasons which went from passivity, indifference and scepticism to outward opposition and resistance, but also because of serious organisational shortcomings and the unpreparedness on part of the authorities.

National Classification, Class and Ethnicity

The authorities of Soviet Udmurtia had almost what I call a "national classification obsession" during collectivisation. This is shown by many documents and reports which specify the nationality of different groups of people – sometimes together with "class" belonging[95] – even in cases in which this would seem irrelevant to us.[96] All general reports on the "Political-economic conditions" of different districts and Selsoviets included a section about national composition.[97] The languages in which administrative services were provided were specified, kolkhoz presidents were listed by nationality, as well as simple peasant taxpayers[98] and those involved in educational-cultural activity.[99] Even the nationality of those exiled as "kulaks" or deprived of their civil rights was given.[100]

This proves that for the authorities of Udmurtia the Soviet policy and discourse on nationality were not mere talk used as a symbolic screen. Quite the reverse, the story I am telling here is one of a local government which saw itself as invested by a historical mission. This feeling of having a mission was clearly related to the more general Marxist teleology, since progress

[95] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 148.
[96] For example, the secretary of the Regional Party Committee saw fit to specify in a document he signed on October 22, 1928 that, of 75 "worker brigadiers" sent to the countryside for permanent work, 25 were Udmurt and 50 Russian (TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 2). On their part, the Raispolkomy (Executive District Committees) fulfilled the task of gathering information on the ethnic composition of different districts and different bedniak groups (TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 912, l. 32).
[97] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1068, l. 4.
[98] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 972, l. 95.
[99] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 148.
[100] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1068, l. 56 ob.

towards communism was considered a historical and inevitable law, and the duty of the Communists was to facilitate its realisation in any possible way.

The Obkom of Udmurtia governed a largely agricultural region inhabited by a small non-Russian people, the Udmurts, which nevertheless constituted the slight majority of the population. On top of that, the Udmurts were a rural people, and here the Soviet discourse on nationality intertwines with the "backwardness" discourse. The authorities ruling Udmurtia considered Udmurt farmers incredibly backward, but this backwardness should have been the base on which to build a strong socialist Udmurt nation. To a present-day reader unfamiliar with these issues, this may well seem quite a bizarre attitude. How could a political power constantly accusing a people of "backwardness" be interested in the development of this nation? This was the main contradiction in Udmurtia at the time of the events I am narrating, and this thesis is the history of this contradiction.

The authorities were indeed obsessed with the backwardness of Udmurt peasants, and they saw it as their task to "modernise" and "enlighten" them by all means. In the eyes of Udmurtia's Communists, this total revolution did not have the consent of the "peasant Udmurt masses" as a prerequisite, because their historical mission put them above these earthly details. If consent was not forthcoming from the masses supposed to be "redeemed," they saw it as their prerogative to coercively force them to follow the will of history. This produced a situation in which a power which had the claim to nationally develop a given people did not at the same time refrain from the most violent and brutal means to collectivise them.

The authorities of Soviet Udmurtia paid much attention to the interconnections between class and ethnic issues during collectivisation. Arguably, they did not want national issues to hinder the collectivisation process, and thought those putting national issues before class belonging were unmistakably "kulaks." According to the official narrative, this was done on purpose to

hinder dekulakisation, therefore a determined struggle had to be carried out against "Great Russian chauvinism" as well as against "local" (Udmurt) nationalism. The authorities were sometimes worried about struggles on national lines which took place in mixed Russian-Udmurt villages, which in the end hindered the "individuation" of "kulaks." This mantra was repeated relatively often, to the point that today the historian is reasonably convinced that the authorities of the time really saw things in such a prism and were perhaps genuinely afraid of the potential danger of the class struggle being overrun by a struggle on national terms. What is most remarkable about national collectivisation and dekulakisation in Udmurtia is that, at least twice, specifically and exclusively Russian "kulaks" were targeted for deportation, totally sparing the Udmurts. This striking finding suggests that the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia found the Udmurts, an "oppressed nation" before the revolution, less guilty.

This fear of national specificities hindering collectivisation was not a characteristic unique to Udmurtia, since it is documented that similar processes took place in other cases. For example, in the *kresy*, the already mentioned borderland region with Poland, resistance against collectivisation did sometimes overlap with national belonging. The Poles protesting against collectivisation did so claiming to belong to a different nation, which they indeed tried to reach by crossing the border, and they were also specifically targeted for repression.[101] In Turkmenistan and in Kazakhstan the national character of resistance against collectivisation was perhaps even more pronounced, because the collectivising state wanted to change the traditional way of life and agriculture of those regions. Turkmen peasants feared they could become a "cotton colony," whereas both Turkmen and Kazakh nomads suffered enormously from collectivisation. The forced elimination of nomadism, which was an integral part of Turkmen and Kazakh culture and way of life, contributed in turn to the spread of famine.

[101] Brown, *A Biography*, 84-117.

Turkmens were afraid of losing their traditional Muslim values, and in one case they even demanded "the expulsion of all Europeans from the area."[102]

The Votskii Party Committee generally accused the "kulaks" of subtly using national issues to sabotage collectivisation:

> Kulakdom uses the national question very skilfully. It often plays on the chords of national distrust, still kept among the toilers, inciting the Russian bednota against the Votiak and the other way round. In this way, they often succeed in drawing the attention and strength of the batraks, bedniaks and the best seredniaks away from the struggle against kulakdom.[103]

Therefore, it was

> indispensable to fight decisively against kulak agitation on national grounds, against their stirring of mutual mistrust among the toiling masses of [different] nationalities, to fight decisively against the appearance of Great Russian chauvinism and local nationalism.[104]

Examples like this were the consequence of the aforementioned subtle plots:

> In the village Juldyr byn […] the local kulakdom managed to divide the village into Russians and Udmurts, a struggle on national grounds came out, and as a result only one kulak was identified, notwithstanding the fact that the village is rich.[105]

Actually, these complaints about national divisions in the Udmurt countryside often went together with the usual denunciation of "kulaks" sabotaging collectivisation.

As I stressed before, the connection between class and ethnicity during collectivisation in Udmurtia is best exemplified by the fact that, at least on two occasions, exclusively Russian "kulaks" were singled out for deportation, sparing Udmurt "kulaks." In fact, the "Regional

[102] Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 205.
[103] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 97.
[104] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 18.
[105] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1003, l. 108.

troika for the exile of kulak families" emitted a resolution on March 6, 1930 stating: "Exclusively the RUSSIAN kulakdom is subject to exile (the Udmurt-kulaks are NOT SUBJECT to exile) and anyway only the richest part."[106] Similarly, a top secret Regional Party Committee meeting held on November 28, 1931, headed by secretary Berezkin, sanctioned that "the exile of kulakdom from the Russian part of the population of the U.A.O. [Udmurtskaia Avtonomnaia Oblast': Udmurt Autonomous Region] must be carried out on March 15."[107] Evidently Udmurt "kulaks" were deemed to be, so to speak, "less guilty" than Russian "kulaks," because they were an "oppressed nation" in the Russian Empire. I argue that this may be defined as an extreme example of Soviet "affirmative action" towards a non-Russian people. Interestingly, a comparison with the Mari Autonomous Republic – another national autonomous republic within the RSFSR – shows that there the local authorities were also reluctant to exile the members of the titular nationality, the Maris, outside of the region, at least initially (exile outside of the region was considered harsher than exile within the borders of the region). In fact, Ivan Ialtaev notes that "kulak-nationals" (that is, Mari kulaks) were exiled outside the borders of the republic only beginning with spring-summer 1931, contradicting the previous March 1930 decision to spare them.[108]

Promotion of the Udmurts, Nation Building, and Collectivisation

The Regional Party Committee showed a clear intention to promote the Udmurts in any possible way, and paradoxically saw collectivisation as a means of nation building. The Udmurts were primarily targeted, in spite of the fact that "class unity" was called for among all nationalities.[109] The general theoretical approach of the Obkom was that since the days of

[106] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 33, l. 174.
[107] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 6, d. 19, l. 225.
[108] Ivan Ialtaev, "Kollektivizatsiia v Mariiskoi Avtonomnoi Oblosti: nachalo 'korennogo pereloma,'" [Collectivisation in the Mari Autonomous Region: The Beginning of the "Radical Break"], *Vestnik Mariiskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Seriia "Istoricheskie nauki. Iuridicheskie nauki," №. 2. *Istoricheskie nauki* (2015): 37-40.
[109] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 12.

tsarist national oppression were over, the task of the Bolsheviks was, "considering the economic backwardness" of many non-Russian peoples, to "help them in any way to stand on their own feet," to "develop their national culture on a Soviet base, their local language, school, literature, theatre etc." In 1929 the Party Committee celebrated the progress the Votiak Autonomous Region had made in the eight years of its existence, especially for the Udmurt toilers. "The sown land grew larger and larger every year, reaching in 1926 the pre-war dimensions."[110] It also boasted a "general cultural and political growth" among the Udmurts, especially in their education, but underlining that the situation remained problematic: "The percentage of Udmurts studying in secondary schools, 7-year schools, schools of the peasant youth grew from 18.6% in 1925/26 to 23% in [19]27/28. Nevertheless, we have a very low level of literacy within the Udmurt population."[111]

The pillars of the national policy towards the Udmurts during collectivisation were economic, educational, and cultural help. The "expansion of work for the realisation of the national policy" was considered indispensable.

> Economic aid to Udmurt farms, promotion of Udmurts, the training of working cadres from the Udmurts, cultural aid – in no case may this be relaxed, on the contrary it requires even more effort, however […] these initiatives must be realised with respect for the class line, directing these initiatives towards the batrak-bedniak and seredniak part of the population.[112]

"Udmurt bedniaks and kolkhozniks"[113] were supposed to have privileged access to education, and instructors writing reports on enlightenment campaigns in different districts always pointed out how many Udmurts were involved.[114] However, this policy of "affirmative action"

[110] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 95.
[111] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 96.
[112] From a resolution of a conference of a regional section of the Obispolkom, or Regional Executive Committee (TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 634, l. 85).
[113] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 141.
[114] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 148.

towards the Udmurts could not be conducted indiscriminately, but towards the bottom classes of the Udmurt peasant society.[115]

The members of Udmurtia's political apparatus advocated the necessity of a specific national policy towards the Udmurts, and this is evident looking at their internal correspondence. For example, the secretary of the Regional Party Committee I. Egorov stressed that the Udmurts must be "promoted" into the village soviets, together with workers, batraks, bedniaks and the best seredniaks. "We must clearly and strongly learn that the task of udmurtisation of the apparatus, of attracting into Soviet construction the Udmurt toiling masses is one of the most important."[116] Moreover, in the Selsoviets' elections enough Udmurt candidates had to be present, and the elected Udmurts had to be more numerous than before.

The Regional Party Committee considered the policy of "udmurtisation" crucial, because this policy was supposed to bring "the apparatus close to the population" and to allow "the implementation of the class line."[117] In a similar tone, the President-Secretary of the Regional Executive Committee Medvedev reiterated that the Udmurts and other national minorities were those to be involved most in collectivisation among batraks, bedniaks and seredniaks.[118] Moreover, the mobilisation of the "native part of the population of the region of the Udmurts"[119] was necessary to have a successful grain procurement campaign. Paradoxically, the "struggle against the kenesh, for the nativisation of the apparatus and the transition to Udmurt records management"[120] were seen as related and compatible goals.

[115] For the term "affirmative action" referring to Soviet nationalities' policy I am indebted to: Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
[116] From a 1929 letter (TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 2).
[117] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 97.
[118] From a December 9, 1929 letter (TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 8-9).
[119] From a letter sent by the Deputy Director of the Organisational section of the Obik (Executive Regional Committee) Kunavin and the secretary Ivshina, October 30, 1930 (TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 162).
[120] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 164.

According to the Party Committee of the Votskaia Oblast', the issue of "nation building" was necessarily connected with collectivisation. Collectivisation was no less than "a new stripe, a new stage in nation building." "The new stage, the new stripe in nation building is the transformation of the Votskaia Oblast' into a school of collectivisation, into an experienced camp of socialist construction."[121] Moreover,

> the organisation and the implementation of mass collectivisation in the Votskaia oblast' is in reality a revolutionary solution of the national question, exactly because now we transfer the questions of nation building to a next, new stage, we radically begin to transform Udmurt farming in a socialist way […] we have just unfolded the socialist transformation of this backward Udmurt national farming.[122]

The aim was the creation of a socialist Udmurt nation. Possibly, knowing that the Udmurts were predominantly peasants, the authorities assumed that eliminating their old "backward" ways of farming would allow them to better develop as a nation. In fact, the backwardness of traditional Udmurt farming was thought to be a motivation for the "poor, weak seredniaks" to join the kolkhozes.[123]

Since the Udmurts were an

> oppressed nation before the revolution in the conditions of the correct application of the Leninist national policy new possibilities for a very active struggle of the backward Udmurt masses arise. This condition and the general weakness of the work for the realisation of the national questions put a very big responsibility on the Party organisation to catch up in the near future.[124]

Moreover, collectivisation, the elimination of the "kulaks," nation building and doing away with backwardness in the Udmurt countryside were seen as connected:

[121] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 15.
[122] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 16.
[123] From a 1929 appeal (TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 96).
[124] TsDNIUR, F. 721, o. 1, d. 1068, l. 43 ob.

> to fulfil more successfully the plan of kolkhoz construction in the countryside, to unfold more successfully the liquidation of the kulak, trachoma, syphilis, illiteracy and everything else in the old Udmurt village, the questions of the nativisation and udmurtisation of the apparatus, of its approximation and adaptation to the service of Udmurt toiling masses […], of the realisation of a cultural revolution and expansion of cultural construction […] of the foundation of national kolkhoz cadres of the workers and of attracting Udmurts batraks bedniaks to production arise with particular force and particular sharpness.[125]

Therefore, collectivisation was an economic and cultural revolution that should have eliminated many backward characteristics of the old Udmurt way of life, from illiteracy to syphilis, possibly with the collaboration and the simultaneous "redemption" of some Udmurt toilers.

The urban proletariat was supposed to have an important role in mobilising the "Udmurt masses" for collectivisation. "Worker brigadiers" were told that the "Udmurt toilers most oppressed and humiliated by the capitalists and the landowners"[126] should be involved in the first place. The Party Committee thought that without the

> direction and direct help in the form of thousands of brigadiers […], the bedniak-seredniak Udmurt masses could not have had such success in the kolkhoz construction and in the struggle with kulakdom.[127]

The Obkom also made it clear that "reporting-controlling campaigns" were supposed to be a "breaking point in the issue of strengthening even more the pace of realising the national policy, of strengthening the udmurtisation of the apparatus through workers, batraks-bedniaks and the best part of the seredniak masses."[128]

[125] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 958, l. 16-17.
[126] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 2.
[127] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 29.
[128] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 18.

Among the potentially "friendly classes" which could have helped collectivisation, the Obkom listed the "toiling intelligentsia." In fact, they were supposed to conduct a "struggle against the social-everyday illnesses of the Udmurt toiling masses." "Doctors and enlighteners" faced the task of dealing with "trachoma, syphilis and other social-everyday illnesses of the Udmurt toiling masses" which could be a serious "hindrance in further transition to collectivisation in its highest form – the commune." Therefore, "to liquidate this scourge of the Udmurt toiling masses in the shortest time, mobilising all creative forces, initiatives and means" was considered a crucial task.[129] Special care had to be taken of "the expansion of the medical network […] especially in the Udmurt Selsoviets."[130] As already underlined before, the Party leadership saw the traditional Udmurt way of life as a cause of social as well as of physical diseases because of its backwardness and its low sanitary standards.

A Hard Nut to Collectivise

As we have seen, the Party Committee of Soviet Udmurtia was keen to promote any kind of affirmative action policies towards the Udmurts during collectivisation. However, Party organisations complained about problems in the implementation of these policies more often than celebrating their success. This could be interpreted either as canonical self-criticism, or as recognition of real shortcomings. I argue that the second interpretation is more convincing. The mobilisation of Udmurt peasants during collectivisation seems to have been a rhetorical watchword and a desired goal, rather than an effective accomplishment.

The Regional Party Committee encountered difficulties in the udmurtisation policy already in 1929, when the Obkom listed at least four points in which the work with Udmurts was not giving the expected results. Firstly, the "pace of udmurtisation of the apparatus" was "still weak." Secondly, "the training of new workers' cadres among the Udmurt toilers" was

[129] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1060, l. 5.
[130] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 144.

absolutely insufficient. Thirdly, "the growth of proletarian Udmurt national cadres" was "insufficient." Finally, the "pace of attracting Udmurt workers, batraks and bedniaks" was also "slow."[131]

We know that by late 1930 the number of collectivised Udmurts was lower than their absolute number in the region. In fact,

> concerning the national composition the percentage of Udmurts is also on paper, there is an increase in comparison with the previous years, but not at all enough, having the native Udmurt population of the region – 52% whereas their specific weight [in the kolkhozes] is 35.4%.[132]

Furthermore, the Regional Party Committee criticised in 1930 the collectivisation methods implemented by saying that "the national and customary characteristics of the populations living in the region were not taken into consideration."[133]

However, the most revealing piece of evidence about the difficulties in the implementation of the Udmurt national policy is a long handwritten letter sent on February 24, 1930 personally to the secretary of the local Party Committee Egorov. This letter is so telling that it is worth quoting a few excerpts from it:

> all this work [collectivisation and dekulakisation] I think is not so strongly linked with national politics. All our plans are built in such a way that the national policy is not coordinated. So far about the national question I think that in our region we work especially to udmurtise the apparatus, to put Udmurt literacy and the study of Udmurt language and that's it.
>
> I think that now we should coordinate all our work plans with the national particularity, with their daily life and with the foundation of national cadres especially among the young.

[131] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 957, l. 96.
[132] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 660, l. 4 ob.
[133] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 52.

> For this I think that first of all we need to make the village young brave and active, so that they be the base of the strengthening of our cadres.[134]

Apart from the above cited general problems, the author also seemed to think that political work among the Udmurts was hindered because of their psychological makeup:[135]

> Among the Udmurts there are a lot of active useful people, but they keep silent because of lack of courage. For example if we hold a meeting in a Russian village, they will not keep silent, they will ask questions, express their opinions, but try to hold a meeting in an Udmurt village, speak in Udmurt, you will not be done quickly.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the author of the letter also regrets that among the Udmurts "kulaks" seem to be the most enterprising: "even if they begin to talk, the more developed among them are of course the kulaks."[136] This confirms the point already made in much previous literature about the fact that many peasants saw collectivisation as a revolution turning the world upside-down, expropriating and deporting the most educated, competent and prosperous farmers and putting the drunk and lazy in power.[137] Moreover, in traditional Udmurt society, age seemed to be an important factor of respect and subordination, since the author complained that "the young will keep silent in the presence of the old."[138]

The author concluded that measures had to be taken to improve work among the Udmurts:

> Taking this into consideration I think that in order to found an activists' group in the Udmurt countryside we should first gather the young and divide them into groups of 10-15 people and lead discussions with them, the talks must be conducted to coordinate the Udmurt daily activities and life and organise the talk

[134] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1014, l. 53 ob.
[135] The general reserved and timid nature of Udmurts has always been a commonplace belief in the region, including among the Udmurts themselves.
[136] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1014, l. 53 ob.-54.
[137] This grotesque feeling of Soviet collectivisation being a cataclysm turning the world upside-down is aptly described in: James Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province: A Study of Collectivisation and Dekulakization in Siberia* (New York: Palgrave, 1996).
[138] Collectivisation as an issue radically dividing Soviet peasantry between the young and the old is a motive predominantly present in the account of the Belarus-born American journalist Maurice Hindus. See: Maurice Hindus, *Red Bread: Collectivisation in a Russian Village* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

> so that the listener will be interested and will want to ask questions and to express themselves. In this gradual way they must be taught to be brave and forced to think and be active.

Finally, the author pointed out that special attention had to be given to "Udmurt girls," since "at present they are still really half savages."[139] This last statement is only partially surprising, as the gender side of collectivisation and resistance to it has already been analysed historically.[140] Nevertheless, it is remarkable that this assertion by the author of the letter is directed specifically towards Udmurt women.

One more aspect of the problems the local authorities of Soviet Udmurtia encountered in mobilising the Udmurts was language issues:

> The nativisation of the apparatus and the IMPLEMENTATION of the Udmurt language in the institutions is going extremely weakly, as a rule, the lower apparatus keeps the records management in Russian, the exceptions are very rare, on the day of the ninth anniversary of the Votskaia Oblast' in the center of the oblast', in Izhevsk, in the solemn meeting with the final report on the 9-year work there was not even one slogan in the native Udmurt language, not even one speech in the language of the majority of the population of the region was delivered.
> % [sic] of Udmurts in the institutions is extremely insufficient less than 30%, we can speak with great limitation about special initiatives for the training of Udmurts in the Soviet apparatuses as exceptions.[141]

According to a decision of the Party congresses and conference from September 1, 1930, records management in Udmurt should have been introduced in the Udmurt Selsoviets,[142] but "very unfortunately beginning from the regional institutions and organisations and ending with the Selsoviets" not enough was being done. "In the apparatus of the regional institutions

[139] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1014, l. 54.
[140] See Lynne Viola, "'We Let the Women Do the Talking:' *Bab'i Bunty* and the Anatomy of Peasant Revolt," in *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivisation and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[141] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1055, l. 66.
[142] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 149.

only 20%"[143] of the records management was done in Udmurt, and often the records were not translated properly.[144]

The insistence the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia put on the importance of the Udmurt language was not rhetorical, because the local rural population wanted to be addressed in their native language. This is not a sign of "language resistance" on the part of the Udmurts, but is more related with the very concrete reason that most Udmurts at the time spoke little or no Russian, especially if they lived in predominantly Udmurt districts or villages.[145] Possibly, they internalised the Soviet nationality discourse and demanded what they thought to be their right. However, often their demands could not be met because there were not enough Udmurt-speaking personnel. In fact, Udmurt peasants

> do not want to speak Russian, they demand that we speak with them in their native language, but quite often we cannot satisfy them because of the absence of trained people […] and enough Udmurts.[146]

However, the authorities feared "kulaks" could exploit this state of dissatisfaction, so "the question of the training of national proletarian batrak-bedniak cadres"[147] had to be faced at once. The problems about the implementation of this policy were of different kinds. Firstly, the percentage "of Udmurts in the institutional apparatuses" was deemed "insufficient." Secondly, "the work of the institutions among the mass of Udmurts" was not excellent. Thirdly, schools and kindergartens for Udmurts were lacking. Finally, the "promotion of Udmurt literature" was "weak."[148]

[143] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 74 ob.
[144] See also: TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 91 ob., 147.
[145] As an interesting yardstick for comparison, and being relatively familiar with the present-day Udmurt countryside, I can say that even today Russian is only the second language among rural Udmurts, especially in those districts and villages which are peopled exclusively or almost exclusively by Udmurts. As a rule, the older the person is, the more likely that he or she speaks poor Russian.
[146] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 74 ob.
[147] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 74 ob.
[148] TsGAUR, F. R-195, o. 1, d. 715, l. 95 ob.

Batrak and bedniak groups in Udmurtia showed a strong interest in the development of the Udmurt language and culture, of the press and literature in Udmurt. Their task was not only to mobilise peasants along class lines, but their being Udmurt represented an added value. An Udmurt batrak or bedniak was more valuable for these organisations, and that is why they insisted so much on the policies for their "enlightenment." For example, the "Udkniga" publishing house was supposed to "publish cheap batrak literature in Udmurt for the batraks and the agricultural labourers."[149]

No Country for Collectivisation: Outward Resistance

As we have seen, the implementation of the Udmurt national policy during collectivisation experienced a number of problems. However, Udmurtia did not experience merely "technical" problems during collectivisation, but also outward *national* resistance to collectivisation, similarly to many other Soviet regions. James Scott's concepts of "weapons of the weak," everyday forms of peasant resistance and moral economy are crucial to theoretically frame the various forms of peasant resistance which took place during Soviet collectivisation.[150] Briefly, Scott argues that throughout history peasants have often resisted the powers to be through unconventional, "everyday" forms of resistance, characterised by their lack of formal organisation and avoidance of direct confrontation with the enemy. Foot-dragging and noncompliance with state laws would be two classic examples.

Not unlikely what was happening in other areas of the Soviet Union, collectivisers in Udmurtia had to face women's opposition. In fact, the authorities complained that "kulakdom

[149] TsDNIUR, F 16, o. 1, d. 947, l. 77 ob.

[150] See: James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); James C. Scott, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13, 2 (1986): 5-35; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

using the dark[151] mass of Udmurt women to its advantage and the mistakes committed obtained the fact that Udmurt women began to protest against the kolkhoz movement in an organised way."[152] Note worthily, these kinds of judgements of the Soviet authorities, which underline the lack of agency attributed to women, are not unique to Udmurtia, especially if we look at other non-Russian peoples. For example, the already cited Edgar point out that women in Turkmenistan protested actively against collectivisation, participating in many demonstrations. Edgar even reports one case when they even beat up local officials and destroyed a village school as a sign of protest.[153]

A Soviet official investigating "kulak" murders and thefts committed in Udmurtia had to personally face women's opposition. "Having 50 women surrounding the Chief of the District Administrative Section, they said that there had been no murder, that no one had stolen anything, therefore the militiaman has nothing to do here." But beyond words, they let understand that they could do more. "Apart from this they secretly said: if you think to arrest anyone, we won't in any case let you do that." The reporters of this story were afraid that "in such a situation the administrative workers" had to be "on the alert for the defence of revolutionary legality and at the same time there" was "danger of assault on the administrative workers."[154]

Opposition to collectivisation in Udmurtia went as far as murder, as shown by this example of the murder of a collectivisation activist in 1930:

> on April 31 […] on the second day of the Easter religious holiday, in the Sharkanskii district at a distance of 1,300 meters from the village Chuzhegovo […] a brutally killed cadaver was found, according to the preliminary investigation of

[151] Here an explanation of the term *tëmnyi* ("dark") is in order. When used in this context, its meaning is somewhat close to "backward," "ignorant," and "uneducated."
[152] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 37.
[153] Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 206.
[154] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 37

> the local militia it was established, that the cadaver is […] Nagovitsii […] a batrak [and] the only activist of the Selsoviet for the liquidation of kulakdom and a social activist.

This activist was "by nationality an Udmurt (with a poor knowledge of Russian and a self-taught person)."[155] I argue that by saying this, the report wanted to underline the importance of Udmurt activists, and implied that he was trapped and murdered by "kulaks," who after shooting him even acted cruelly on the cadaver. Relevantly, the murder of this Udmurt activist happened in the Sharkanskii district, which is today and probably was at the time the purest Udmurt district in the region, with almost no Russians in the countryside.

The "Kulak Kenesh"

The "kenesh" was a traditional Udmurt organ of peasant self-government which collectivisation tried to counter. The major expert on the kenesh and on traditional Udmurt self-governance is Galina Nikitina, who points out in one of her works that the kenesh was indeed a democratic organ of self-governance, in many respects not so dissimilar from the Russian *mir*, and which did not even necessarily oppose Soviet power. On the contrary, it could support or oppose it according to the situation.[156] However, the evidence presented here clearly shows that the period of collectivisation saw a radical deterioration of relations between the kenesh and Soviet power. In the documents I found, it is impossible to find any reference to the kenesh which does not label it as a "kulak" and "counterrevolutionary" organ.

According to the available evidence, the Regional Party Committee tried to counter the kenesh with all possible means, not refraining from promoting "exemplary trials." The kenesh was accused of no less than sending "its own delegates to the soviet" thus trying to influence the "public opinion of the bednota and of the seredniaks." The kenesh was equated with kulakdom,

[155] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 948, l. 40.
[156] Nikitina, *Udmurtskaia obshchina*, 9-10.

as it was sometimes defined as a "strong […] group of well-off peasants, directed by the deported kulakdom."[157]

Here are some more accusations the Obkom launched against the kenesh:

> a series of manifestations of class struggle, the work of the 'kenesh' under the form of the penetration of kulakdom into the kolkhozes with the goal of […] their disintegration, beatings, formation of national antagonism within the kolkhozes, drunkenness, wrecking of agricultural campaigns, sowing, harvest, construction etc.

As a concrete example, "in the s[el]/sovet Vishurskii in the period of preparation for the spring sowing the 'kenesh'" began

> mad agitation for the wrecking of the sowing, of collectivisation [and of the] agricultural transformations as a result the sowing plans were not accepted entirely not even in one village / out of four / it is impossible to conduct the contracting of the sowing plans for technical cultures were torn off.[158]

The "counterrevolutionary" kenesh was feared to exert "influence on the population," and as late as 1932 fifteen Selsoviets in a given district were allegedly "infested" by the kenesh. "These villages under the direction of the 'kenesh' exert resistance to sov.[iet] initiatives and in the past were active in the struggle against sov.[iet] power, they actively participated in revolts, in help of desertion etc." [159] Evidently, the authorities insinuated that the contemporary resistance of the kenesh was rooted in older subversive activities.

Conclusion

During collectivisation the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia, and in particular the Regional Party Committee, thought that the Udmurt national question was crucial for the success of the campaign. Local Party authorities made great efforts to involve and mobilise the Udmurts for

[157] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1075, l. 45 ob.
[158] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1068, l. 101.
[159] TsDNIUR, F. 16, o. 1, d. 1068, l. 30.

this task, because they were the majority in the region and because they were its titular nationality. The tone and motives of the national policy towards the Udmurts during collectivisation are a repetition of the "affirmative action" policy endorsed in the Soviet Union in general. The fact that this policy of promotion was often contemporary to repressive acts like the forced collectivisation of agriculture and the war against the kenesh is one of its many contradictions.

However, the authorities did not have an easy way in mobilising Udmurts for collectivisation: Udmurts often remained passive and apathetic towards collectivisation, when they did not resist it openly. Evidence of their active collaboration with collectivisation is sporadic and would need to be supported by further research in order to be more compelling. Nevertheless, on the mere quantitative level the authorities of Soviet Udmurtia did achieve respectable results, as 80% of all peasant households of the region were collectivised by 1934, that is slightly more than the all-country average.[160] In the end the coercive methods of the state defeated whatever resistance was in place against collectivisation. One more contradiction worth underlining is that the local authorities clearly saw collectivisation as a struggle against the oft-cited economic, cultural and sanitary "backwardness" of the Udmurt countryside. Collectivisation was meant to be a revolutionary solution to all the problems, almost equalling a "redemption" of sorts for the Udmurts, hinting at the big brother-small brother relations between Russians and other nationalities.

[160] Zamiatina, "Transformatsiia," 175.

CHAPTER 3

Paper Collectivisation

Collectivisation Propaganda in the Press of Soviet Udmurtia

Introduction

In his classical 1985 study the historian Peter Kenez defined the Soviet Union a "propaganda state."[161] No definition could be apter to describe the Soviet Union in general, and the Stalin era in particular. Since the USSR was such an ideologized state, propaganda institutions were indispensable to convey political messages to the larger masses, and the press was crucial among them. After all, Lenin clearly said: "The printing press is our strongest weapon."[162] As Matthew Lenoe argues, with the shift from the NEP to the Great Break, the main goal of the Soviet press shifted from "enlightenment" to "mobilisation."[163] In fact, the titanic tasks of collectivising agriculture and industrialising the country would have been impossible without an efficient mobilizational and propaganda network. However, Soviet power relied not only on a network of central, nationwide newspapers, but also on a local press-network.

In this chapter, I will delve precisely into a small part of that local press network, the newspaper published in Udmurtia *Izhevskaia Pravda*. I argue that an analysis of the local press propaganda and reporting is indispensable to write a local history of collectivisation. In fact, Party documents give a sense of the inner workings and plans of the central apparatus, while the press is necessary to understand the propaganda the authorities wanted to convey about the issues of collectivisation and dekulakisation. Obviously, like any sources, they

[161] Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1927-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[162] Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.
[163] Matthew E. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 2.

cannot be considered objective, even if compared with each other. However, used together they can provide valuable insights.

To theoretically frame this chapter, I argue that the local newspaper *Izhevskaia Pravda* had the task to gather cultural hegemony on the issue of collectivisation, by presenting it as an absolutely rational and necessary policy.[164] Therefore, anti-collectivisation strategies of resistance like the spread of rumours were attacked, and real or imaginary enemies of collectivisation denounced. The category of the "enemies" of collectivisation obviously included the "kulaks" and the "kenesh," the traditional Udmurt organ of self-government. However, a national policy of *udmurtizatsiia* ("udmurtisation") was conducted parallel to, and as if aiding the collectivisation campaign.

An Analysis of the Press

One of the first impressions one has analysing the *Izhevskaia Pravda* is that collectivisation and dekulakisation were grassroots campaigns. This would confirm the thesis already maintained by the Canadian historian Lynne Viola in one of her articles, that collectivisation did indeed have a "spontaneous" (*stichinnyi*) character.[165] However, Soviet "spontaneity" was a particular one, since it involved an input and participation from the centre. The issues of the *Izhevskaia Pravda* are full of short articles allegedly written by rank-and-file local activists and correspondents, sometimes with pseudonyms, who seemingly wanted to demonstrate to the Soviet reader the spontaneity and grassroots character of the campaign. Obviously, we

[164] I borrowed the concept of "cultural hegemony" from the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. The major theoretical contributions of Gramsci are collected in his famous "notebooks": Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). On the concept of hegemony, see: Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).
[165] Viola, "The Campaign."

have no way to ascertain to what extent this spontaneity was authentic, but even the mere propaganda effort to make it look so on behalf of Soviet power is very telling.

Winter 1929

As discussed elsewhere, collectivisation in Udmurtia began already in 1928, therefore by 1929 it was already at a relative advanced stage. In fact, by November 1929 the *Izhevskaia Pravda* called to "Kick the kulaks out of the kolkhozes" and to "Disperse them before it's too late" (*Razognat' poka ne pozdno*): the already founded kolkhozes needed to be disinfested by "kulaks." According to the Soviet propaganda version of the facts, "kulaks" could sabotage collectivisation in a number of ways. One way was to establish a kolkhoz only "formally," that is admitting anyone who wished to enter, including "kulaks." Kolkhozes were denounced which were allegedly formed by "kulaks" themselves, some of them even being former Communists. Moreover, "kulaks" who had established "fake" kolkhozes would just not admit bedniak and seredniak families into them. There are many examples in which the "accused" are given names and surnames, and are described with a number of negative characteristics, like a merchant past, or the ownership of houses and livestock.

Sometimes the anti-"kulak" propaganda in the press sketched pictures of high symbolic value: for example, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* denounced the president of a local machine cooperative who vexed the local population and "openly drinks with kulaks." Soviet readers could therefore see that the arrogance and the abuses of power committed by this person were accompanied by drinking bouts with the class enemy. In another example, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* denounced a local rural organ which was a "nest of aliens" where a leader showed "rude behaviour towards the peasants." What is more, among these leaders there were even a former officer of the tsarist police and a former monk, while another was accused of being

"corrupt and a bureaucrat," who even "lost his working clothes and his revolver playing cards." [166]

Already in November 1929 the first traces of a motive can be found which was going to be quite widespread in the years to come, that is "kulaks" hiding in cities and working in factories to ruin their work.[167] According to this version of the facts, "kulaks" could not only be dangerous in the countryside, but they would hide in the cities to escape dekulakisation. There, they could be hired in factories representing a further danger. In fact, a continuous mobility from the countryside to the cities was going to be a reality even in the years to come, as it is also confirmed by Mark Tauger and Sheila Fitzpatrick.[168] The reasons were multiple. Some of those fleeing to the cities might have really been farmers escaping dekulakisation – though it is hard to determine whether they really did so with the intention of wrecking the Soviet industrial effort. Many others were simply peasants pushed to the cities by poverty and by the harsh kolkhoz life, when not by outright hunger. Moreover, in those years the Soviet Union was going through its industrialisation programme, which required large numbers of workers who could not be found in the cities. The sometimes conflicting interests of the factories and kolkhozes led even to open controversy. Tauger moreover points out that inner migration from the village to the city was a reality even after the passport law, because it proved to be highly ineffective.[169]

The *Izhevskaia Pravda* clearly singled out on many occasions one of the most powerful weapons peasants used against collectivisation: the spread of rumours. In fact, this trend has

[166] *Izhevskaia Pravda*, November 16, 1929.
[167] See for exmple: ibid., November 22, 1929.
[168] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mark B. Tauger, Review of *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933* by R.W. Davis and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *EH.NET*, November 2004, http://eh.net/book_reviews/the-years-of-hunger-soviet-agriculture-1931-1933/.
[169] Tauger, Review.

already been widely analysed in the precedent literature, [170] but what is remarkable comparing the accounts on other regions of the Soviet Union and Udmurtia is the striking similarities of the patterns used. Not only the weapon of rumour was widespread everywhere, but even the rumours themselves presented a striking similarity among regions of the Soviet Union very far from each other. This indicates that peasants in very different regions of the Soviet Union resisted collectivisation in a similar way. In fact, "kulak rumours"[171] were denounced which were used to sabotage the economic tasks in the countryside. These rumours were presented as coming specifically from the "kulaks" to go against poor and middle peasants and to wreck Soviet power: through the press the Soviet government wanted to present itself as the defender of one class of peasants against others.

"Don't believe kulak rumours" was a typical warning in the *Izhevskaia Pravda*. The article here under examination concentrated on denouncing rumours spread to sabotage wood-cutting work, saying that it was heavily taxed. "Who spreads these rumours?" the newspaper rhetorically asked. "Clearly, the kulaks, who try in this way to undermine the confidence of the bednota and of the seredniaks in the initiatives of Soviet power." The "kulaks" sabotaging the timber procurement campaigns were clearly doing so for their own gain. In fact, "[f]or the kulak it is profitable when the bedniak and seredniak" refuse to work, "so it is easier for him to oppress them." The article analysed here tried to assure its readers by saying: "Therefore, there is absolutely nothing to fear."[172]

As we will see throughout the exposition, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* took great care in speaking a language of class and class struggle, pointing out that Soviet power always sided with the

[170] See Lynne Viola, *Peasants Rebels under Stalin: Collectivisation and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), especially chapter 2, "The Mark of Anti-Christ: Rumors and the Ideology of Peasant Resistance," 45-68.
[171] See for example *Izhevskaia Pravda*, November 22, 1929.
[172] Ibid., November 27, 1929

"agricultural proletariat," made of poor peasants and agricultural wage labourers, against the "blood-sucking kulaks." In fact, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* especially invited the batraks – agricultural wage labourers – to take an active part in the re-elections of the organs of the Union of Agricultural and Woodcutting Workers. "Batraks, to the re-elections!" the *Izhevskaia Pravda* triumphantly headlined, adding that the situation was going "Towards a further offensive." According to the newspaper, these re-elections were needed to check and make sure that everything was going in the interests of the batraks, and obviously to counter "kulakdom." The success of this campaign, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* argued, depended on how much the struggle was going to be monopolised by the batrak-bedniak part of the countryside. Unfair batrak contracts were denounced in a similar tone: "in 12 contracts […] it is written: 'The workday of the batrak cannot be more than 24 hours a day' (?!)" Moreover, "they were not given proper clothing, they were paid late, in some cases they had no insurance, they were paid in nature etc."[173] Finally, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* somewhat threateningly concluded that all these issues were going to be present in the re-elections.

The policy of "promotion" of members of the supposedly "friendly classes" was part of the more general language of class struggle. For example, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* titled that "the purge in the countryside" had to be related "with the recruitment of the best batraks and bedniak-farmers," adding as a warning: "Do not let class-alien elements into the control meetings." These "control meetings" were supposed to reveal the "class face of every communist." The *Izhevskaia Pravda* made clear that the places left vacant by class enemies had to be filled with more reliable elements. Following the usual pattern, Party cells which did not show to be very active in the collectivisation campaign were exposed to the public scorn.

[173] Ibid.

As one would expect, "kulaks" did not let the procedures of these meetings go smoothly. In fact, 10 of them were expelled from a meeting which they had tried to penetrate, according to the *Izhevskaia Pravda*. Clearly, these meetings were a means of public denunciation of unreliable elements and, as usual, low morals were associated with class unreliability. For example, the member of the local committee Batuev "drinks with a kulak" and had a "decadent mood, he even threw away his party card." But the precise case of comrade Batuev was not hopeless: in fact, "those present underlined that Batuev must be educated, involved in creative work, and helped to liquidate his lack of education." "He is not an alien person, he was in the Red Army, it is just necessary to deal with him in a bit stronger way."[174] These last comments are really telling because they show the educative – or re-educative – intentions of Soviet power: this comrade was not lost to the cause, but deserved to be helped to improve himself, as if Soviet power wanted to create new subjectivity.

According to the *Izhevskaia Pravda*, in their opposition to collectivisation "kulaks" would go as far as to persecute to death pro-collectivisation activists. An article titled "A victim of kulak persecution – Bloodsuckers tormented a model kolkhoz worker"[175] reports the suicide of Gibaidullin, the kolkhoz president on the village of Abdul'menevo. The article claims that local "kulaks" tormented Gibaidullin until he committed suicide, and says that a special correspondent of the *Izhpravda* was on his way to the place of the events.

As December went on, "kulaks" did not stop their anti-collectivisation activities. In fact, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* invited to "Tear the webs of kulak intrigues!" warning: "The kulaks attack from 'the rear.'" "Kulaks" were allegedly sabotaging the wood transport and the *Izhevskaia Pravda* insinuated that this was possible thanks to their connections with the Selsoviet

[174] Ibid., December 7, 1929.
[175] Ibid., December 10, 1929.

president: “The Selsoviet president Plotnikov has a close relation with kulakdom, [...] and protects the tenant of the mill Vladykin from self-taxation.”[176]

According to the *Izhevskaia Pravda*, wood-cutting campaigns were hindered by “kulak” sabotage. The newspaper in December invited to “Weep away from the way kulak barriers,” since “The kulak tries to tear up our work with malicious agitation.” The *Izhevskaia Pravda* alleged that “The kulak began a struggle against the wood-cutting campaigns in full ‘armour,’” and linked their successful sabotage with the spread of rumours. “In the village ‘they say’ a lot of things. They say that China needs wood and that it, allegedly, demands from us a wood contribution, they talk about taxes, about the war and even about confiscation of horses.” As shown elsewhere, rumours were a quite common way of resisting the Soviet state during collectivisation, and the blame for them was usually put on “kulaks.” The *Izhevskaia Pravda* finally appealed to brigadiers, who “must tear the bedniak-seredniak masses away from kulak paws.”[177] Bedniaks and seredniaks were thought to be naturally well intended towards Soviet power, therefore their lack of cooperation could only be blamed on the class enemy.

1930

The year 1930 began in the *Izhevskaia Pravda* with an article dated January 12 with the all-page title “The liquidation of the kulaks as a class is on the agenda.” This article reflected the all-Union trend to escalate collectivisation. In fact, the article was accompanied by a clear quote by Stalin, who said: “we passed from a policy of limitation of the exploitative tendencies of kulakdom to a policy of liquidation of the kulak as a class.” The January 12 issue is the first where the word “dekulakisation” can be found, with a description of what it should be: “the attack on the kulak and the liquidation of the kulak is tightly linked with the socialisation of the little […] property, the attack on the kulak, and the de facto direct

[176] Ibid., December 11, 1929.
[177] Ibid., December 13, 1929.

dekulakisation of the kulak [must be] led by the bedniak and seredniak masses under the guidance of the Party." Stalin himself was quoted to explain the dekulakisation policy: "Now in the districts of mass collectivisation dekulakisation is already not a simple administrative measure. Now dekulakisation presents itself as an 'integral part' of the formation and development of the kolkhozes." As Stalin made clear, collectivisation had to be tightly linked with dekulakisation. The *Izhevskaia Pravda* clarified that "[m]ass collectivisation cannot develop successfully without the attack on the kulak under the form of dekulakisation" and went on in an almost pedagogic manner repeating and exemplifying Stalin's words.

Remarkably, the *Izhevskaia Pravda,* and for that matter the Soviet press in general, regarded their readers almost as children to whom the Party line must be clearly and patiently explained. In fact, the already mentioned Peter Kenez pointed out that the Bolsheviks had "a great deal of condescension toward the Russian people in general and toward the proletariat in particular," adding that "in this respect [they] were no different from the majority of the Russian intellectuals."[178] According to the aforementioned issue of the *Izhpravda,* the collectivisation campaign had its effects immediately, since "many kulaks and alien elements were thrown out from the kolkhozes." "However," the newspaper continued, "there are no bases to even suggest the absence of the intensification of class struggle in the countryside." On the contrary, the kolkhoz "intensifies it more and more." These lines exemplify a crucial part of the Stalinist theory of the time, according to which class struggle intensifies while the last capitalist classes are eliminated, and evidently this was the theoretical underpinning to demand a tough hand on the "kulaks." The campaign had to be brought "To a higher level," adding that, apart from the "kulaks," other elements opposing kolkhoz formation like "priests and sectarians" had to

[178] Kenez, *The Birth*, 6.

be neutralised. Therefore, the formation of "bedniak-batrak groups in all kolkhozes" was of primary importance.

This issue of January 12 also gave an example of the links between the industrial Izhevsk and the countryside of Udmurtia. An article titled "Three hundred" went:

> Today is a holiday for the metal workers. Today they are sending their best comrades to the countryside in the last decisive battle [a quotation from the Russian text of the Internationale] against the kulak. The cinema 'Gigant' is full of workers. Everyone wants to see those chosen to go to the collectivisation front.

Moreover, "a difficult work awaits [these] comrades," since these "knights of our grandiose epoch" were going to "the collectivisation front," which was indeed "a battle front." This article describes in fact a local, smaller version of the 25,000-ers who were sent from the factories to the countryside to collectivise.[179] The *Izhevskaia Pravda* wished that "the progressive vanguard of the Izhevsk metal workers will come out of the battle with honour," and reported that a "representative of the foreign proletariat" was present at the meeting to greet them. It was "c.[omrade] Rzisse, just recently got away from the paws of the Polish bourgeoisie." "It is not possible to express with words the constructive pathway of the USSR proletariat. You do not find words. Glory to you, going on the path of Lenin!" he allegedly said, and this was the answer he received from the volunteers-kolkhozniks: "We are going to justify the trust of the Izhevsk metal workers. We will put a backward agriculture onto socialist rails."

However, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* began to report difficulties in the collectivisation campaign from mid-January 1930. A full-page January 15 article titled: "The victorious march of socialism meets the mad resistance of the kulak." The authorities intended to use the working

[179] Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

class to boost the collectivisation campaign, but this strategy was not working as efficiently as desired, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* said:

> Despite the secretariat of the reg[ional]com[mittee] of the VKP(b) [All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] passing the decision about the mobilisation of the working class for the problems of the class struggle in the countryside, the factory organisations have not lifted a finger yet to fulfil this directive.

Moreover, "special correspondents" of the *Izhpravda* claimed that pre-existing "underground counterrevolutionary" organisations were contributing to the wreckage of the collectivisation effort, one of them allegedly being active since 1918! – possibly not by chance uncovered in the heyday of collectivisation. "Who was the organisation composed of?" the newspaper rhetorically asked. "Of kulakdom and other elements alien to us." What is more, according to the *Izhpravda* "for 12 years bedniaks and batraks were terrorised by this group of counterrevolutionaries" and, "Notwithstanding the fact that in 1925 the bednota signalled" this organisation to the authorities, "the alarm signals were not heard."[180]

Paper Kenesh?

The analysis of the local press of the time shows that the authorities opposed the kenesh because it was a form of alternative power, and because the kenesh evidently opposed the collectivisation process. This is why the *Izhevskaia Pravda* often referred to it as the "counterrevolutionary kulak kenesh," with an attempt to equate kenesh and the "kulaks."[181] This equation was stressed for example in an article dated October 9, 1931, where "kulaks" and the kenesh were both accused of intentionally sabotaging the procurement plans. In some articles, the kenesh was portrayed as developed and organised enough to carry on sabotage

[180] *Izhevskaia Pravda*, January 15.
[181] See for example: ibid., October 10, 1931, 3; ibid., October 16, 1931, 2; ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.

work even in neighbouring villages, and its alleged members were reported with names and surnames.[182]

The importance of the kenesh was sometimes underlined criticising those who thought otherwise. For example, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* rhetorically asked, how could you say that the influence of the kenesh is not significant, when murders and attempted murders happened against our Party officials? This rhetorical question evidently implied that the kenesh could not but be responsible for these acts.[183] Other articles also show that those local cadres who were thought not to be harsh enough or even on friendly terms with the kulaks were seen as enemies,[184] as well as those bedniaks and seredniaks who said: "we have no kulaks and well-off peasants."[185]

The *Izhevskaia Pravda* sometimes took great pains to provide credible official explanations of problems and failures in collectivisation and related campaigns. For example, the wood-procurement campaigns were organised in a "merely formal" way, "The kolkhoz masses and the middle peasants-independent farmers did not receive sufficient political explanation" about their importance. What is more, "there is no political-educative work among the woodcutters," nor were there any "red corners" in the barracks where they lived (in the Soviet Union "red corners" were places dedicated to enlightenment and political education).

Class Language: "Kulaks," Bedniaks and Batraks

The *Izhevskaia Pravda* relentlessly bludgeoned its readers with a sort of "class language." A good Soviet citizen was supposed to interpret reality within the frame of class and class struggle. It is therefore no wonder that terms like "kulak," "bedniak," "batrak" were so

[182]Ibid., October 18, 1931, 2
[183] See article of the *Izhevskaia Pravda* "Kulak Yes-men" [Kulaktskie podpevaly], October 3, 1931, 3.
[184] *Izhevskaia Pravda*, October 10, 1931, 3.
[185] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.

incessantly repeated, as if readers were supposed to internalise them. In reality, the task of the *Izhevskaia Pravda* was to draw a comprehensible picture out of seemingly dry, abstract terms and categories. In his book about Stalinist propaganda, David Brandenberger showed the importance of giving life to distant and abstract categories so that wider masses of people could embrace them,[186] and Stephen Kotkin also underlined the importance of "speaking Bolshevik."[187] As mentioned already, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* tried hard to portray the "kulaks" as radically and irreconcilably opposed to the bedniaks: "kulaks" would find out always different methods to persecute poor peasants. Obviously, having a Party newspaper as a source, we cannot tell how much this enmity was real and how much a propaganda construction. For example, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* denounced a kolkhoz where a zealous bedniak woman who always over-fulfilled her plan by 110-120% was not rewarded in any way for her outstanding performance, and where a batrak woman was not admitted because she had no horse and no cow.[188]

In fact, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* presented itself as a megaphone for bedniaks and activists who had something to protest against: for example, the bedniak Maksimov complained about the fact that the district authorities were virtually absent from his district,[189] but a series of articles published in December 1929 article presented a perfect example of this motive from the very title. In the first article, published on December 7, the newspaper denounced nothing less than an "Unheard of derision of bedniak women," since "the kulaks bound women to a plough." Following a familiar pattern, the article referred to a fact that happened in the spring of 1928 – around the time of the Ludorvai case – and which remained "hidden and unpunished" until

[186] David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[187] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[188] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.
[189] Ibid.

December 1929 – the midst of the collectivisation campaign. According to the author, 10 bedniak women were bound to a plough and in this way forced to go for "almost three kilometres." However, in this precise village "kulaks" were otherwise very active, since they founded the local kolkhoz and "received loans more than once,"[190] meanwhile terrorising and persecuting the bednota. The *Izhpravda* finally reported that following these facts legal prosecution began and three "kulaks" were arrested. Moreover, the special correspondent of the *Izhpravda* A. Juzhnyi was sent to the location: evidently, the newspaper wanted to show its readers that it cared much about reporting this case.

On December 10 the *Izhevskaia Pravda* reported much more extensively on this episode of "kulak" oppression. A special correspondent repeated the basic facts and now called for "an exemplary trial for the organisers of the '*tukmachevshchina*'" (from Tukmachi, the name of the village) and for their "being held for the highest responsibility." The *Izhpravda* warned that "all necessary lessons" had to be learnt from this fact and that those offended by the "kulaks" deserved help. More details were presented: the victimisation of the bedniak women was accompanied by shouting and laughing, and even a pregnant woman was not spared. The "kulaks"' horses quietly ate in the fields while the women were forced to plough the land. According to the newspaper, the offence was motivated by the land redistributions which were taking place at the time: the "kulaks" felt they would lose land in favour of the bedniaks, and that is why they organised this offensive bout. The "kulak" organisation in this precise village was also described in great detail.

On December 13, 1929, the newspaper came back once again to the issue of the derision of bedniak women by the "kulaks," this time presenting the background of "kulak" vexations in that zone. According to the *Izhevskaia Pravda* "seasoned kulaks" abused local bedniaks since

[190] Ibid., December 7, 1929.

1921. The bedniak Pushin was victim of a *samosud*: a sort of traditional popular derision which could end up in lynching.[191] In this case, Pushin was unjustly accused of sheep theft and brought to a public meeting when he was booed and shouted at: "Beat him!" and hit him with stones. The *Izhpravda* claimed that Pushin was still ill because of the episode, and that another bedniak died because of a similar treatment. Possibly, these old examples were not taken by chance: 1921 was the beginning of the NEP, which was subsequently reversed to collectivisation. This story might have been a propaganda strategy to justify *ex post facto* the abandonment of the NEP: it had to be abandoned, because it led to the development of the "kulak" class and to its injustices. Moreover, the *Izhpravda* warned that the attitude of the "kulaks" had grown worse since the previous year: now they would get drunk every Sunday and beat bedniak activists, sometimes to death, and sometimes they would use weapons. However, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* noted that "women workers" gave a "deign answer to the raid of the class enemy," since a meeting of 156 women was held who denounced the facts and demanded the most severe punishment for those guilty. Moreover, the *Izhpravda* asked for a sign of loyalty to the alliance between city and countryside urging the workers to work on December 25, "Christmas," and to give the money to "the fund of collectivisation of the Votskaia Oblast'."

The analysis of the press of the time is also useful to locate some recurrent motives in the campaign against the "kulaks." While the *Izhevskaia Pravda* contained a lot of reporting on current events, it hosted more theoretical articles, too. Evidently the Soviet press needed not only to present an event or a policy, but also to lay out its theoretical background. For example,

[191] Interestingly, James Hughes described the use of the *samosud* during collectivisation in Siberia against the supposed kulaks. See: Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province*, 47, 96.

an October 1931 article explained that, though the USSR was headed towards socialism, class struggle was not over, because exploiting classes still existed: for example, the "kulaks."[192]

Another significant motive in the anti-"kulak" propaganda was to depict the kulaks as very wealthy, egotist exploiters[193] who would rather hoard their crops and let them rot than handing it over to the state. Thus, we can read in an article about 10 rotting centners[194] of rye hidden by a "kulak."[195] The *Izhevskaia Pravda* also claimed that they would intentionally sabotage procurement campaigns[196] and the kolkhozes, for example with the thoughtless slaughter of livestock[197] and trying to wreck kolkhoz discipline.[198] Resistance against collectivisation sometimes had a more economic character: one of the new features of the kolkhozes that "kulaks" were said to sabotage was, for example, the principle of piecework in agricultural labour, which is to be paid according to the effective quantity of work done, as well as the socialisation of livestock.[199]

The motive of the poor peasants "terrorised" by the kulaks and defended by Soviet power was well present in the *Izhevskaia Pravda*. In a theoretical article explaining the reasons to oppose the kulaks and the means they resorted to in their struggle, murder and attempted murder are also mentioned,[200] though elsewhere beatings of three bedniaks-activists on the "procurement front" are also reported.[201]

Arson against kolkhoz buildings and wrecking of agricultural machines are other signs of "kulak terror" often mentioned in the sources.[202] In an October 1931 article, three cases of

[192] Ibid., October 3, 1931.
[193] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.
[194] One centner is approximately 50.8 kilos.
[195] *Izhevskaia Pravda*, October 10, 1931, 3.
[196] Ibid., October 16, 1931, 2.
[197] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.
[198] Ibid., October 31, 1931, 2.
[199] Ibid., October 19, 1931, 2 and ibid., October 31, 2.
[200] Ibid., 3 October 1931, 3.
[201] Ibid., 18 October 1931, 3.
[202] See ibid. and ibid., October 31, 1931, 2.

arson are reported, and in two kolkhozes bread was burnt as well, as if the "kulaks" had been consciously carrying out a strategy of starvation.[203] A December 1929 article reported the burning of the house of Selsoviet president Leskov in the village of Varnaevo, Muromskii okrug. According to the article, evidently the "kulaks" did not forgive Leskov his "hard application of the class line in all the economic-political campaigns,"[204] and did not refrain from burning his house down, thus destroying even the house of Leskov's neighbour, a bedniak. As we can see, acts of active resistance against the authorities begin to be reported in the *Izhevskaia Pravda* quite early in the campaign, and are invariably attributed to the hostile "kulaks."

Speaking the usual class language, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* never lost occasions to underline the necessity of political work within the bednota, the poor peasants, which theoretically ought to have been the backbone of the collectivisation campaign. Why shall there be work among the bednota, the newspaper rhetorically asked, "Since we have a high collectivisation percentage and more than a half of the poor-middle farms are in the kolkhozes"?[205] The *Izhpravda* claimed that this behaviour allegedly pushed the bedniaks (poor peasants) to become *podkulachniki* (henchman of the "kulak," another common label at the time), and slowed down the entrance of the bednota into the kolkhozes.

On the other hand, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* contrasted a supposedly unconcerned attitude to efficient work, which on the contrary helped the bednota defeat the "kulaks." According a successful mobilisation which happened in October 1931, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* claimed that out of 20 villages which initially refused to adopt the proposed plan, eventually only 8 remained, and these 8 were later forced to fulfil the plan first. Victory was achieved, according

[203] Ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.
[204] Ibid., December 7, 1929.
[205] *Izhevskaia Pravda*, n. 270, 2, article "Po novomu rabotat' s bednotoi" [To work anew with the poor peasants].

to the newspaper, thanks to a "wide mass work" which mobilised "women, the bednota, the activists' group."[206]

Sometimes the batraks were given specific attention: in a November 1929 article, they were pushed to go to the polls of the agricultural workers' union: "Batraks – to the polls!" The *Izhevskaia Pravda* pointed out that the polls were an occasion to check the political work previously done among the "agricultural proletariat," and that they were meant to organise the bedniak and batrak masses against kulakdom.

Socialist Competition: Praising and Criticism

The *Izhevskaia Pravda* seemingly did much to foster a sense of socialist competition among districts and different kolkhozes. "Record" kolkhozes were praised and bad ones criticised with a sort of finger-pointing campaigns. Often one of the reasons was economic: highly productive kolkhozes which met the targets were praised, while those which did not were criticised. Kolkhozes were praised in comparison with the individual farmers and the "kulaks," who were said to be far behind on the production front.[207] On their side, the "kulaks" were shown as primarily guilty of economic crimes, like not fulfilling their *tverdye zadaniia* – "hard tasks," that is particularly exorbitant economic tasks the kulaks were supposed to fulfil.[208]

The reasons could also be political: sometimes the *Izhevskaia Pravda* published articles which were nothing more than lists of people with names and surnames supposedly guilty of various offences. However, we see that quite often praising on the economic side goes together with praise for the political struggle against the "kulaks," as if implying that success in the latter is a crucial condition for the former. In October 1931 the *Izhevskaia Pravda* pointed out that in those cases where "kulaks" were treated with a tough hand, 100% of the plan was

[206] Ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.
[207] See for example: ibid., October 16, 1931, 2; ibid., October 18, 3.
[208] For the comparison between kolkhozes, individual farmers and kulaks see: ibid., 3 October 1931, 3.

accomplished.[209] These kind of articles also included lists of activists who deserved praise.[210] Obviously, "kulaks" were common characters in these articles, together with their supposed allies even in Party organs.

As mentioned elsewhere, the *Izhevskaia Pravda* often mentioned that the "kulak-well off top," far from being totally defeated, tried to penetrate the kolkhozes, the Selsoviets and even the local Party cells. Once penetrated in the kolkhozes, the "kulaks" would conduct sabotage campaigns, for example ill-treating draft animals on purpose so that they become useless, or putting more procurement burdens on the bedniaks rather than on themselves. Interestingly, sometimes even the judiciary were criticised for not being efficient enough in their struggle with kulakdom, and "exemplary trials" were called for.[211] In fact, "Public-exemplary trials" were seen as a good way to solve the "kulak" problem.[212] Other kolkhozes were accused of selling their production illegally on the private market.

Kolkhozes which conducted a seemingly successful struggle against kulakdom were praised: this is the case of the kolkhoz "Stroitel'": "Implacably fighting against kulakdom, the kolkhoz 'Stroitel'' grows and strengthens itself."[213] In these cases, the efficient kolkhozes were reported to help the others with their experience and skills. This is the case of an article praising the Novyi Multan district. According to the *Izhpravda*, good results could not but be achieved with "socialist methods" and with the establishment of a "social tug of the progressive kolkhozes, which pulled those which hung behind."[214]

[209] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.
[210] Ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.
[211] For separate procurement treatment and criticism of the judiciary see: ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.
[212] Ibid., October 18, 1931, 3.
[213] See also the case of the Novyi Multan district in: ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.
[214] Ibid., October 10, 1931, 3.

Conclusion

It is only too clear that the *Izhevskaia Pravda* acted as a Party mouthpiece during collectivisation, though I cannot ascertain the impact of its propaganda. The analysis of its collectivisation-related articles allows me to draw a few conclusions. The official line is always presented without any doubt that the situation could be different than how described. The newspaper tried hard to present collectivisation in Udmurtia as a spontaneous, grassroots campaign, in which the poorest strata of the peasantry willingly participated to shake away from themselves "kulak" oppression. This way of presenting the facts is in line with the official and not very credible Soviet version of collectivisation, according to which peasants themselves demanded it from Soviet power. Notwithstanding this, it is clear from the *Izhevskaia Pravda* articles that collectivisation encountered active resistance in Udmurtia, which expressed itself in a number of ways. However, you would never encounter the word "resistance" in the *Izhevskaia Pravda*. In fact, according to its role of Party mouthpiece, these events were always presented as the crimes and even as the terror acts of a specific minority, the "kulaks." No hints are present that collectivisation might in fact have encountered wider opposition from below, and this rationale is often repeated.

Opposition to collectivisation assumed a variety of forms. The spread of rumours is reported to have been a particularly prominent strategy, in line with what we know about the Soviet Union in general. On top of that, more or less open acts of "sabotage" are reported, which sometimes included even violent acts against kolkhoz officials. The cases of violence against poor peasants are particularly relevant. In fact, whether made up or not, they were crucial in pointing out that the well-off top of the peasants had decided to violently fight the bedniak-batrak stratum, the supposed "supporters" of collectivisation.

Conclusion

No matter how they resisted, by the end of the 1930s the peasantry in Udmurtia and in the Soviet Union in general had been crushed. The peasants conducted a struggle of titanic proportions with utmost obstinacy, but were in the end defeated by the Soviet repressive apparatus and by Stalin's iron will. As David Moon argued, collectivisation de facto meant the end of the traditional way of life for Russian peasants.[215] In fact, as I have underlined in my discussion, collectivisation was a cultural war against traditional peasant society. This was the case in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, in the *kresy* or in the Russian heartland. The situation was not dissimilar in Udmurtia, an autonomous oblast' very closely divided between Russians and Udmurts, where national differences overlapped with geographic and class differences. However, I argue that collectivisation in Udmurtia presented certain peculiarities which can help us better understand Soviet collectivisation in general.

Collectivisation in Udmurtia began earlier than in the rest of the Soviet Union, and I argue that this feature was closely linked to the fact that Udmurtia was inhabited by a non-Russian people considered backward. However, this radical project of modernisation and emancipation from above, which the Udmurt peasants were subject to, was rich in contradictions. In fact, though being cajoled into collective farms against their will, Udmurts never lost their status of titular nationality and of former oppressed nation. This status meant that during collectivisation they were subject to what I have defined as examples of "extreme

[215] David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London: Longman, 1999).

affirmative action" and "morbid ethnophilia." More precisely, my research has allowed me to draw three main conclusions.

Firstly, the early start of collectivisation in Udmurtia confirms what was already pointed out by Lynne Viola in the late 1980s, that is that Soviet collectivisation was a "spontaneous" campaign with intertwining central and local drives, with the local sometimes preceding the central. The triggering of collectivisation in Udmurtia was definitely marked by the Ludorvai case. Without the Ludorvai case, collectivisation in Udmurtia would have begun later, and perhaps may have been less violent. It is not clear to this day whether the Ludorvai beating was a propaganda hoax to call for collectivisation or a symptom of growing social tensions in the Udmurt countryside. In any case, the propaganda apparatus of the Votiak Autonomous Region exploited it to convince its inhabitants that collectivisation and dekulakisation were indispensable. Kulakdom was getting ready to fight back Soviet power more and more harshly, how was it possible to leave it alone?

My second conclusion is linked to the first. In Udmurtia, the early collectivisation campaign was conducted in a radical and relentless way. However, I have shown that these characteristics were not exclusively the fruit of sheer chance or contingency. The Ludorvai case certainly served as a *casus belli*, but the ideological justification of radical collectivisation was the backwardness of Udmurt farming and of the Udmurt nation. In the eyes of the authorities, collectivisation was a political project of national and social emancipation from above, meant to transform the entire society and to build a socialist nation. Somewhat paradoxically, collectivisation in Udmurtia was implemented at breakneck speed not *notwithstanding*, but *because of* the region's national and backward character.

The Udmurt countryside suffered from many economic, cultural and health ills: primitive agriculture, lack of implements, ignorance, illiteracy, trachoma and syphilis. In its extreme

modernising language, the Regional Party Committee presented collectivisation as a radical solution to the Udmurt national question and to its inherent backwardness. In the eyes of the authorities, this final, almost millenarian solution was meant to create a new modernised, rational, socialist Udmurt nation far from its sorry past state. Udmurtia's backwardness could have allowed its authorities to fulfil smaller quotas than in other regions, but they explicitly chose to follow another way. This choice could also be explained by Stalinist economic practices as they were crystallised into the Five-Year Plans. Their rationale was to provide indicative targets, often unrealistically high, which basically were there to be overfulfilled. In the frenzy of the Five-Year Plans, overachievement became almost a must. In order to survive, the country had to be collectivised and industrialised, capitalist countries had to be caught up with and overtaken as soon as possible. This might indeed be part of the explanation.

The third important aspect I have underlined in my thesis is the special treatment Udmurts received during collectivisation and dekulakisation. Udmurt peasants were clearly subject to a sort of revolutionary emancipation from above, which had contradictory characteristics. On the one hand, being the titular nationality of the region and a former oppressed nation, Udmurts were a special target and were supposed to enjoy different policies of promotion. Udmurt language and culture, education and literature in Udmurt were promoted. The Regional Party Committee tried hard to involve Udmurts in the collectivisation campaign, and there is evidence that it considered Udmurt pro-collectivisation activists as especially precious. A policy of Udmurt *korenizatsiia*, "*udmurtizatsiia*", was adopted, with the goal of increasing the number of Udmurt cadres in all Party organisations, and there were attempts to promote the usage of Udmurt at an official level.

The promotion of an Udmurt "working class" was also part of this national policy. Udmurts were a predominantly peasant people, and the Bolsheviks considered peasants second to factory workers in their "class scale." Therefore, sending Udmurts from the countryside to

work in Izhevsk's factories was considered a policy of affirmative action. However, according to contemporary accounts, this "proletarisation" of the Udmurts did not happen without problems. National distrust between Russians and Udmurts seemed to be hard to kill, and this was all the more irritating to the local Bolsheviks because this national discord was manifesting itself between "proletarians." Apparently, some Russian workers saw their new Udmurt colleagues as sort of yokels who had better go back to the village, and the authorities blamed this kind of attitude on "Great Russian chauvinism."[216]

The most remarkable aspect of this policy of promotion is that sometimes Udmurt "kulaks" were spared the worst punishment, the deportation out of the borders of the region. In fact, on at least two occasions the authorities explicitly singled out Russian "kulaks" for deportation and "saved" the Udmurts, who were evidently considered less guilty. This is not a completely isolated example, because there is evidence of a similar policy applied, for example, to "nationals-kulaks" in the neighbouring Mari region. However, it is important to underline that this policy was not applied consistently from the beginning to the end of the campaign.

In line with the rationale of collectivisation as a national revolution, I have shown that the local authorities tried hard to involve Udmurts in collectivisation, but with little success. Contrary to the Party's desires, Udmurts showed passivity and apathy towards collectivisation, when not open resistance. All kinds of resistance and violence were reported, from arson, "the red cockerel," to assaults, murders and the rape of local activists. The Regional Party Committee seems to have had to face an archaic and resilient national countryside which was attached to its traditional way of living, which was possibly even happy with it and which closed itself hedgehog-like to all the attempts of an external power's interference in its internal

[216] Glavatskikh, *Ot Ludorvaia*.

affairs. The stubborn fight against the kenesh is a perfect proof of this kind of cultural and political conflict.

Remarkably, the Bolsheviks' "modernizing" and "emancipation" rhetoric sometimes resembled a colonial one. Udmurt backwardness was presented in terms not so dissimilar from those used to describe the peasants or shepherds of the Caucasus or Central Asia. The Bolshevik modernisation drive did not have as a precondition the consent of the "masses" it wanted to enlighten. This was the way collectivisation of agriculture was applied in the Soviet Union and in Udmurtia in particular: Marx and Engels's warnings that it should have been encouraged through persuasion and political education were completely forgotten. To a Bolshevik set of thought, "dark" peasants and members of oppressed nationalities should have been Soviet power's natural allies in the crusade against backwardness. If consent was not forthcoming from the "masses" who should be liberated, then a never-ending series of propaganda, promises and coercive means had to be used until the end result was achieved: wholesale collectivisation. To paraphrase Yuri Slezkine, the Party Committee of Udmurtia did in fact show a sort of morbid "ethnophilia" toward the Udmurts.[217] If on the one hand, they had to be collectivised, modernised and developed wanting or not, on the other they were especially cherished.

The secretary of the Regional Party Committee Egorov made very clear that collectivisation was not going to be a dinner party for the Udmurt countryside:

> Within which limits shall we dekulakise? There are no laws […]. We think that basically all the property, all means of production, like different machines, seed, cattle […] must be taken away… We do not put in front of ourselves the task of physical destruction of all kulaks. For us it is important to break him economically, to found such an economic base in which a kulak cannot grow. We do not refrain,

[217] Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, 1994, 414, *JSTOR Journals*, EBSCO*host* (accessed April 29, 2017).

> of course, from the physical annihilation of certain characters of kulakdom and we will do so with all the severity which is intrinsic to our proletarian dictatorship. Against the activists of kulakdom, who are organisers of a struggle against us, who organize terror against kolkhozes, against our social activists […], we will mercilessly implement methods of physical annihilation. Revolution is not a joke, it can't be done in white gloves, and victims are absolutely inevitable.[218]

The "kulak class" was considered "liquidated" in Udmurtia already by 1931, and from 1932 on it was hard to encounter the word "kulak" in the Party lexicon. This is why archival evidence of collectivisation-related issues becomes sparser after 1931. Like in most of the Soviet Union, the process went on until the end of the 1930s, but more slowly and with less direct confrontations. "Kulaks" having been "liquidated," the *edinolichniki* too were becoming extinct in an almost total kolkhoz dominance, to the point that the last data referring at all to their presence relates to 1938.

Clearly, the role of the local press during the campaign was to serve as a Party mouthpiece. A radically one-sided picture of the events had to be presented in order to provide a rationale for collectivisation which, in reality, was as unpopular in Udmurtia as anywhere else in the Soviet Union. A monolithic press served as a cultural hegemony catalyser to gather the critical mass necessary to carry out the Party's will.

Certainly, though I have tried to insert a new approach into the existing field of collectivisation studies, my research has one main limitation. The constraints of an MA thesis forced me to concentrate on a relatively short time span. A larger and more complete study would need to dig further back in time, investigating the evolution of Udmurtia's peasantry since the conquest of the region by the Russians, and its attitude to the Russian Revolution and later towards Soviet power before collectivisation. On the chronological level, the later period would also be worth attention. A history of the long-term social, economic, and cultural

[218] Kulikov, *Istoriia Udmurtii*, 188.

consequences of collectivisation in Udmurtia would be welcome, following the process up to the reversal of collectivised agriculture in the 1990s. The reversal from state-owned collective farms to private property after the end of the Soviet Union was the last significant change the countryside underwent. Further studies will need to explore this aspect and to analyse its social, economic, and cultural consequences up to the present day.

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