MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY WORKING PAPERS

MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

Working Paper No.35

YULIAN KONSTANTINOV

VLADISLAVA VLADIMIROVA

AMBIGUOUS TRANSITION: AGRARIAN REFORMS, MANAGEMENT, AND COPING PRACTICES IN MURMANSK REGION REINDEER HERDING

Halle / Saale 2002
ISSN 1615-4568

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, P.O. Box 110351,
06017 Halle / Saale, Phone: +49 (0)345 2927-0, Fax: +49 (0)345 2927-402,
http://www.eth.mpg.de, e-mail: workingpaper@eth.mpg.de

Ambiguous Transition: Agrarian Reforms, Management, and Coping Practices in Murmansk Region Reindeer Herding

Yulian Konstantinov[1] / Vladislava Vladimirova[2]

Abstract

Reforms in the Russian Federation have so far shown a significant degree of ambiguity. Taken as leading to a transition from a totalitarian state of command socialism to a democratic state with a market-oriented economy, the reforms tend to show only surface resemblances to such a process. Taken in an "oligarchic" sense, that is, as dispensing with social security and greatly expanding the sphere of the informal ("grey") economy, the process seems to be fully completed.

Against this background we ask how specifically agrarian reforms reflect on reindeer herding in the Russian North. Field research based data indicates that while local administrations continue to rule in a Soviet manner, in a mix with high orbit "grey" economic practices, agricultural workers rely on lower level informalities to cope with a continuing economic and social crisis. Searching for reliance on traditional or neo-traditional land-use is pronouncedly absent and in this context the Murmansk Region seems to stand apart from developments in many other parts of the Russian North and Siberia. Reasons may be found in the longest history of colonisation of this region (since the 10th century), in a traditionally non-nomadic herding, and in very strong local preferences for state socialist forms of management ("sovkhoism"). At the same time, there are signs of opposition to the current management practices of village cooperatives, fuelled by the appearance of new liberal agrarian legislation. This is the point at which agrarian reforms acquire real life significance locally. The article describes and discusses such a situation on the basis of recent material from six months of field work with reindeer herders and the administration of SKhPK "Tundra" in the settlement

[1] Yulian Konstantinov, New Bulgarian University, Sofia; e-mail: bsrcs@mbox.cit.bg
[2] Vladislava Vladimirova, Uppsala University

of Lovozero, Murmansk Region. The field work was carried out in three consecutive periods in 2001.[3]

Introduction

The paper discusses the current dynamics of three major developments affecting people's lives in the rural parts of Russia (with a fieldwork focus on its north-western most part). The first of these is the new agrarian legislation passed since 1990, the second is management practices by the administrations of the heirs of former state farms (*sovkhoz*, pl. *sovkhozy*) and the third is coping strategies as practised by rank-and-file members of such farms, now renamed as agricultural companies (TOO) or cooperatives (SKhPK).[4] We describe these developments and try to show how a local reality is effected by the major protagonists: distant legislators in Moscow; local administrations and cooperative management; and workers and dependants on such cooperative farms, in our case, a small reindeer herding community in the centre of the Kola Peninsula, NW Russia.

We discuss first the more prominent documents from the post-1990 reform-oriented legislation concerning the restructuring ('privatisation') of former state farms (*sovkhozy*). The specificity of their application in the reindeer herding sector of the Murmansk Region is treated next and an anti-reformist ideological tendency as effected practice is described, which we call for working purposes *sovkhoism*. Here an analogy is sought with other *-isms*: for instance the imagined reality of *communism*, originally denoting – in terms of everyday life – one ideally lived in an egalitarian commune. By the same token *sovkhoism* attempts to describe again a desired life, but this time retrospectively – one ideally lived again in a

---

[3] Field-work was carried out within RENMAN – "The Challenges of Modernity for Reindeer Management: Integration and Sustainable Development in Europe's Subarctic and Boreal Regions". 1 March 2001-28 February 2003. A Project within the Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources part of the Fifth Research and Technological Development Framework Programme of the European Union; and by the Uppsala University led project "Post-Soviet Political and Socio-economic Transformation Among the Indigenous Peoples of Northern Russia: Current Administrative Policies, Legal Rights, and Applied Strategies", a Swedish Riksbank sponsored research program. Field work reflected in this working paper was carried out in May-June 2001 (Calving); July-August (Summer grazing), and October-December (Meat harvest) and is to continue until 2004.

[4] TOO stands for *tovarishchestvo ogranichennoy otvestvenosti*, or a limited liability company; SKhPK is the acronym for *sel'skokhoziaistvennaia proizvoditel'naia kooperatsiia*, or agricultural production cooperative. These are two of the numerous forms into which previous state farms (*sovkhozy*), collective farms (*kolkhozy*) or other Soviet-era agricultural entities were restructured with the dismantling of state socialism in the former union.

protected social reality like that of the state farm. The state farm is thus seen, following Humphrey (1983; 1998) and Clarke (1992), as a total social institution; at present, a fatally lost world, to somehow be regained.

Such a retrospective disposition, often intensely emotional and nationalistic in a pro-USSR sense,[5] can be attributed to a plane of cultural ideals and ideologies (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann 1999: 22). At the same time, a critical economic situation requires effective coping strategies on the level of the individual domestic economy, and for this reason we treat next a pivotal coping mechanism for the local herding community. This is a "private-within-the-collective" coping device, realised by having privately owned deer mixed with the cooperative herd. The ethnography of this new-old strategy is used to illustrate an applied meaning of sovkhoism. As an ideological practice it seeks maximum personal security and a maximising of personal gain at the expense of a public resource managed by superordinate power holders (i.e. managed "from above"). We conclude that in such a context "transition" (from command socialism to market-based capitalism – whatever the virtues and vices of such a process) is not in evidence, as implied by the meaning of reforms if the latter are taken on the level of officially proclaimed goals. Seen from a grassroots level, what we observe looks much more like an acceptance of events, tragically but inevitably imposed from above, and their spontaneous subversion by overt public demonstrations or covert, informal and loosely concerted means in the realm of the domestic economy. In this way, at the base of the social pyramid sovkhoism appears as a contradictory bundle of vernacular ideological dispositions and applied strategies, reinterpreting previous forms of processing and surviving of upheavals, or, to paraphrase slightly Creed's felicitous definition – of "domesticating revolutions" (Creed 1998).

[5] Emotional anti-reformist expression escalates at public festivals commemorating victory in the Second World War – *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina* (the Great Fatherland War). Such occasions are, primarily, May 9 Celebrations (*Den' Pobedy* (Victory Day)) and February 23 (*Den' zashchitnikov Otechestva* (Day of the Defenders of the Fatherland)).

Agrarian Reforms: Work History vs. Restitution

The first stage of the agrarian reforms in the Russian Federation, carried out in 1990-1991, affected the former state agrarian enterprises (*sovkhozy*) in two principal ways. In the first place, the Law for Private Property (*Zakon o sobstvennosti*) of 1990 postulated that part of the net profit of an enterprise had to be shared out among employees. The resulting sum, calculated per person, formed a share (*pai*). On the basis of ownership of such shares dividends to members were to be paid out periodically.[6]

The Law on Changes and Additions to the Constitution of RSFSR *(Ob izmeneniiakh i dopolneniiakh Konstitutsii RSFSR)* of 15.12.1990 recognised state farms (*sovkhozy*) as the owners of the property bound to them. One of the implications of this law seems to be that shares of employees' property are formed on the basis of work history and not on property owned by them, their parents or grandparents prior to the collectivisation drives of the late '20s and '30s. Thus, the principle of *sovkhoz* transformation of property is not primarily one of restitution – as, for instance, was legislated in Bulgaria, among many other countries of the former Soviet Bloc – but on work history. In this way a sense of final departure from pre-Soviet property regimes and practices seems to be implied by federal reform legislation and its various regional interpretations and applications.

While in other parts of the Russian North such an implication is being attacked by problematising the issue of indigenous land use and occupancy, Murmansk Region[7] – in its agricultural sector – seems to remain indifferent to such implied meanings and their practical outcomes. In other words, local ideological concerns and parallel coping applications do not favour a resurrection of pre-Soviet management regimes, but favour an ongoing reinterpretation of such for which the state farm, or *sovkhoz*, stands as a paradigmatic core meaning.

---

[6] Here and below our main source of information about agrarian reforms is Bogoliubov and Minina (2000). See also: GARANT 2001.

[7] Region (*oblast)* within the Russian system of territorial distribution is a fairly large administrative unit consisting of a number of municipalities (*rayony*). In our case *Murmanskaia Oblast* (Murmansk Region), established in 1938, comprises 144 000 sq. km and is subdivided into five *rayony*. *Lovozerskiy Rayon* (Municipality of Lovozero), where the reindeer herding cooperatives are situated, is the biggest rayon of the oblast and is situated in the central and eastern part of the Kola Peninsula.

The working term offered above – sovkhoism – attempts to capture such a world view. It is seen here as an ideology in practice, officially unproclaimed, but effected to a greater or lesser degree by all principal players. It is important to note, however, that such a world view is not unidimensional in its practical expressions and this adds an often bewildering complexity for the outsider. While public rhetoric of a pro-Soviet, anti-reformist kind is predicated on lofty ideals and sentiments with a strong bias for collectivism, social order, care and protection, coping practices are of intensely individualistic pragmatic nature, looking for loopholes in the expanded informality of the public economic domain.

Of the principal players in this indeterminate, contradictory and increasingly open to local interpretation space of "reforms", most relevant for us are regional (*oblast*) and municipal (r*ayon*) administrations – i.e. those of Murmansk Region and the Municipality of Lovozero (*Lovozerskiy Rayon*). The space of reforms is highly indeterminate and contradictory precisely because much lip-service is paid to anti-statist and anti-bureaucratic rhetoric, development of small businesses, sustainable development, etc., but this seems to be mainly for foreign or other (often credulous) consumption and serves to legitimate high-orbit political establishments, again, mainly for export purposes. When it comes to local political realities, the "communist (anti-reformist) vs. democratic (pro-reformist)" debate is of main concern and here the anti-reformists are certainly more popular on both the regional and the municipal level. This explains the coming to gubernatorial power of the present governor Yuriy Yevdokimov (former First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and former Chairman of the Regional Soviet) who won in 1996 against the Yeltsin-supported (hence: pro-reformist) Yevgeniy Komarov (cf. Blakkisrud 2001: 76).

In the present crisis in *Lovozerskiy Rayon* (henceforth: the Rayon) – due to what looks like the final passing of its biggest economic actor, the mining-processing complex OAO "Sevredmet" – the Rayon is pleading to the regional governor personally for help, for otherwise it is doomed to economic collapse. The situation is such that in the winter months, at the time of writing (January-April 2002), the main settlements of the Rayon have had to limit heating and lighting for the population with threats of full stoppage by the heating and lighting plant (LP 8/02/2002).

It is thus the case that twelve years after the passing of privatisation reforms, the Rayon is pleading more or less on its knees for the personal intervention of the Governor to save an

unprofitable industrial relic now a private enterprise from collapse. “Most respected Yuriy Alekseevich”, we read on the first page of the Rayon newspaper *Lovozesrkaia Pravda*, “please help ‘Sevredmet’ and Lovozero Rayon (*pozhaluysta pomigite “Sevredmetu” i Lovozerskomu rayonu*) for the solving of the most critical task in their history!” (LP 8/02/2002). In between bouts of acrimonious accusations of high treason, similar pleas have been addressed to President Putin. The desire is to avert – by personal intervention from the elites – this latest instance of the “tragedy of the privates”, to use Chris Hann's apt paraphrase of Hardin's classical formulation (Hann 2000; Hardin 1968).

It is telling that solutions of such critical problems are seen to be in the hands of local or federal administrators and are to be realised by statist intervention, and not by the market-based instructions of the privatisation reforms. Structures have been dismantled, better ones have not been created. This kind of conclusion, which one often hears in everyday conversation, leads to retrospective search for redress, often publicly expressed in so many words. The privatisation reforms are called *reformy smerti* (death reforms) (LP 22/02/2002), and alternatives are seen in the following way:

> Small islands of a new life, in fact not so small at all, have appeared in Russia: these are *gubernii* (governorships, i.e. regions) in which communists have come to power, like the communist G.Khodyrev in the Nizhgorod Region (....), in the Vladimir Region, headed by the communist N. Vinogradov. And in a number of others. At the elections they took up to 80% of the vote. In these governorships crucial attention is placed on social programs... (LP 25/01/2002).

Thus, in sum, reforms proclaiming privatisation may have indeed been passed but to what extent both the principal actors and the population at large believe in them and implement them in their original sense is quite a different matter. As Humphrey notes: “in many (postsocialist) countries there is a rather unpredictable propensity ‘to turn back’, or at least a resolute refusal to abandon values and expectations associated with socialism” (2002: 13). In some cases such leanings for restoration of the old regime have become radical practices, as in Belarus; in others – as in our case in the Murmansk Region – they exist in a realm of tense contradiction and indeterminacy. This space is inhabited by “export-oriented slogans” coming from the centre and locally intended for foreign investors and aid-industries, side by side with nostalgic sentiments for former security and relative affluence, hatred for those who “destroyed the great country”, an equally passionate hatred for the new rich and private

entrepreneurs in general (*komersanty*). All this is living together with actual day-to-day practices, whose effective potential for the home economy is mostly based on available openings in the 'grey' one. In this sense, parallelism with the state socialist period is clear and in harmony with such generalising metaphors as "solitude of collectivism" (Kideckel 1993), or Creed's already mentioned "domesticating the revolution". Of the popular generalisations of those who lived the regimes, a telling one in the home economic sense is "mine is my own, that of the others is common" (Bulg.: *moeto si e moe, chuzhdoto e obshto*).

Herding specifics

The socialist-period saying cited above gives us a vernacular lead into the 'commons' debate. In the world of herding – as in that of any pastoralist society – the 'commons' dilemma exists in a very graphical form by definition, since grazing ranges are rarely exclusive private property. Especially with extensive herding - such as it is on the Kola Peninsula - the situation is problematic irrespective of "capitalist" or "socialist/post-socialist" settings. Here both synchronic similarities appear across the borders (cf. Paine 1992), as well as diachronic ones, when seen in terms of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet continuities. In all the variety of cases which may populate such a comparison, the main driving force is inevitably connected with extracting the greatest private security possible from within, often at the expense of a publicly owned and collectively managed resource.

While the state farm which is our case study focus – "Tundra" of Lovozero – was still in existence, Hugh Beach observantly noticed that in comparison to Fennoscandic herders, *sovkhoz* herders in Russia enjoyed "a basic income security independent of their 'reindeer luck'" (Beach 1992: 141). He notes both in this and an earlier article (Beach 1986) the importance of private deer for the herders' well being, and to this point we turn special attention further down. Most importantly, his informants, when asked about the future of reindeer herding in the area, said that "there would probably be a state farm as today" (1992: 140), in a premonition of what we call here sovkhoism. This type of statement was registered at the very beginning of reforms – in 1990. Subsequently, in the experience of our own team, it was repeated in various ways over the years among many different brigades in the Peninsula.

The belief in the state farm or its reformed variants (TOO, SKhPK) as the mainstay of existence has been forcibly evoked by a scene in Petya Mankova's film "Over Troubled Waters" (Mankova 2000) in which the director of a herding SkhPK points at a light bulb and says: "Without the *sovkhoz* we shall not even have light!" The statement is literal: without the *sovkhoz* (at present, the SKhPK), it is assumed that the village will not be able to buy fuel for the electric generator that provides light at set periods of the day. This was said three years ago about the small village of Krasnoshchelye and is doubly true for it today, but even more so for the much larger settlements of Lovozero and Revda, with their combined population of 15 000. The difference is that a mining-processing complex is the pivotal agent in the second case, the SKhPK ("Tundra") being of much lesser economic weight. The desire for preservation, with the help of enlightened princes, of such former state enterprises, be they mining complexes or former *sovkhozy*, as economic entities and social institutions, is at the heart of the ideological disposition described here.

It is beyond dispute that privatisation reforms have removed a substantial part of previous state support – that was, after all, their very aim. Since the farms were run like state owned factories, the state took care of them in many ways, most prominently by paying relatively high salaries and premiums and also by ensuring the marketing of products. Of this, little is left today. As one herder from Brigade 8 ("Tundra") put it: "Only we and the sailors received the highest salaries. But the sailor is at sea, while we walk on dry land and can see our families" (December 2001). Beach echoes retrospectively this statement from seventeen years before when reporting the situation in the *Tomponski Sovkhoz* (Yakutia) back in 1984: "The State seeks to stimulate herding enlistment by offering herders the highest salary of almost any Soviet employee along with other bonuses such as free work clothes, food delivery, cultural activities, housing and free vacation travel anywhere in the country" (Beach 1986: 76).

Today salaries have gone dramatically down in their buying potential, while prices of just about everything having rocketed. The state has also withdrawn from taking care of production and it is mainly due to a Swedish company based in Lovozero that there is a buyer at all – a rather fortunate situation in comparison to many other herding areas. In this rather depressing context, one may well ask what it is that still makes the skeletal remains of the former state farms or aging industrial facilities such overwhelmingly attractive options?

The answer is to be sought not in the direction of economic efficiency but in collective social security with opportunities opened for informal gains above what the official salary allows. Sovkhoism – as a working term offered here – attempts to capture the yearning for state-ensured social security tolerating a degree of private informalism ("institutionalised theft", Creed 1998: 197-200). The existence of the private under the umbrella of the collective seems to have significant attractive power and Hann is certainly right in saying that a simplistic private vs. collective property dichotomy would not do when attempting to explain current postsocialist developments. (Hann 2000: 17)

A "third way" (ibid.) in the context we are discussing here seems to be provided by the "private-in-the-collective" option, going well back to the first collectivisation waves of the late 1920s. A reimposition of pre-collectivisation principles of ownership and management practices, is, consequently not sought. Moreover, in reference to the Murmansk Region (henceforth: the Region) the new reformist legislation did not inspire, by and large, any great interest in the issue of indigenous land use and occupancy and native rights in this respect. The Region thus stands apart both from Fennoscandia to the west and from many parts of the Russian North and Siberia to the east.[8] This is all the more intriguing in view of the inclusion of the Region in the Fennoscandic ethnopolitical universe in recent years and a proclaimed awakening to the indigenous debate. It seems to substantiate the contradictory but parallel use – according to the demands of the moment – of export and home oriented ideological stances.[9]

A practical reflection of the home position in this respect is the fact, well pointed out by Osherenko, that " [...] Murmansk *Oblast* [...] has not carved up *sovkhoz* land used for reindeer pastures into individual or family parcels", unlike, for instance, in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous *Okrug*" (Osherenko 2001: 720-721).

Neotraditionalist ideas (e.g. Pika & Prokhorov 1994) do not seem to have takenhold here either. Again, the practical outcome has been that locally, there have been very few attempts for setting up private reindeer herding in any form. By "private reindeer herding" we mean

---

[8] On a comparison between Fennoscandia and the Russian North relating to this problematic see Silanpää (1999).
[9] One answer here is the dubious representativeness of local ethnopolitical organisations as has been very convincingly shown by Overland (1999). Fieldwork of our group in this region since 1994 certainly corroborates what Overland talks about – a small group of the same (female) activists going to conferences about ethnic rights who do not seem to have any firm link with what (male) reindeer herders are doing or want to do. As a phenomenon, however, ethnopolitical non-representativeness ("conferencism") seems, sadly, to be more the norm than the exception. See also Vitebsky and Wolfe (2001: 81-95) on gender separation in Siberian reindeer herding.

really private, i.e. claiming one's animals from the former collective (*sovkhoz*) herd, and setting oneself up as an independent herder. This officially or formally private herding is a very different species from the unofficially or informally private one. The latter herder is characterised by being officially a salaried member of a cooperative enterprise (a TOO or SKhPK as successors of the *sovkhoz*) and having personal private deer (*lichnye oleni*) mixed with the cooperative herd.

A third level of complexity is introduced by the fact that the cooperative (TOO or SKhPK) is a child of the reformist legislation which "privatised" former state property. In reality, however, those who continued to be members of the former *sovkhoz* in its new guise – and this is close to 100% of all herders – have little sense of becoming private owners who have united into a cooperative. No dividends from shares have ever been paid and while in principle one can reclaim one's private share of property, mainly as head of deer, very few have done so. We do not know, in fact, of more than five such attempts which by now have all failed according to local reports.[10] The reasons for their failure has been attributed primarily to poachers coming from urban centres and military bases. Other reasons are connected with lack of investment for building up transport infrastructure, refrigeration facilities, finding market outlets, etc., i.e. the lack of those instruments which the reforms were supposed to bring in to build private businesses (*razvyvat' malogo biznesa*).

We can thus see that words like "private" and "privatisation" tend to have highly polysemantic meanings, with shifting and indeterminate contextual nuances, often effected as equally indeterminate practical acts and states of property. Here most striking examples may appear as with indeterminacy – *elasticity* – of land, or of "fuzzy" property (Verdery 1994; 1999); with real vs. nominal restitution of property (Konstantinov 2002); or, as in our case in the Rayon – with the indeterminate status of the cooperative (SKhPK) between a state enterprise, which it ostensibly supplants and a cooperative of private owners, which it hardly is. It is into this indeterminacy that proclaimed reforms grind to a halt and one is tempted to

[10] Vatonena's project for a tourist camp and herding in the valley of the Lumbovka River (Kalvem 1995); plans for return to Varzino (Korf 1991: 2-4); Sharshina's farm at Loparskoe (Mihailova 1995: 17-19.); an unconfirmed journalistic report of a private herd on the Ribachiy Peninsula (Gorter-Grønvik 1995: 16-18); and some attempts for setting up private reindeer herding in the valley between Notta and Lotta in the western part of the region (Rybkin 1999: 18).

ask whether the transition has run its course once such a fuzziness has been (purposefully) created.

To sum up at this point: The situation in the Murmansk Region shares the general ambiguity in the meaning of reforms; ambiguity characteristic of many other regions and countries of the former Soviet Bloc. In its agricultural sector – reindeer herding, with which we are concerned in this paper – this ambiguity is of a dynamic mixture of a "more or less" and not of a linear "either-or" type. Thus it shows a strong bias for less formal "privateness" and more informal "privateness". Hotly contested issues in Fennoscandia and the rest of the Russian North and Siberia – like land rights, *obshchina*-type ownership or neotraditionalism – have not interested the local reindeer herding population. Other issues and practices are much more relevant locally in the sense of the "less formally private, more informally private" formula, offered above. The attractiveness of such a strategy seems to be based on a received sense of security which is associated with the *sovkhoz* as a state enterprise. On a pragmatic level this ideological stance seems to get reduced to the attractions of a continuing source of informal opportunities and the possibilities for relegating individual risks to a collective body. Before going into the ethnography of sovkhoism, we turn to the possible causes of its taking such firm roots in this region to the level of excluding other indigenous rights oriented options, predating Soviet history.

Preconditions

Some of the reasons for a pronouncedly sovkhoist trend in this region have much to do with the region's long history of colonisation in comparison to other northern regions. Ten centuries of majority presence and five centuries of Russian Orthodox Christianity have contributed to a much longer history of integration into the Russian state and its cultural influence in comparison to other regions. One fact that forcibly illustrates this process is that Saami personal names have practically been completely lost with the completion of their conversion to Orthodox Christianity.

Against this background of a thousand year old firm link with the Russian state, modern history contributed significantly to a generally "pro-red" orientation of the general population.

This is to be connected primarily with a nearly century old labour migration from the south,[11] and eventually – insofar as herding is concerned – the formulation of first Soviet reindeer herding policies based on imported (Komi/Nenets) methods of extensive herding.[12] All these developments have certainly had an impact on the local reindeer herding population. The Saami herders found additional income opportunities in industrial development and in the first instance as supply workers for the Murman Railway.[13] This brought along strongly pro-revolutionary ideas, which had an influence both on the revolutionary and post-revolutionary history of the Peninsula. Thus, such processes set apart the local tundra-based populations (the indigenous Saami, the Russian Pomors, and the immigrant Komi and Nenets) from more traditionalist parts of the Russian reindeer herding universe.

A brief excerpt from an interview could illustrate this point in the sense of an experience of a sudden void of southern influences, as an integral part of a sovkhoist world view. Describing how everything has deteriorated and collapsed after the demise of the *sovkhoz* as a state supported institution, a Saami senior official from a former *sovkhoz* exclaimed: "We do not even have an ideology any more, we do not know in what to believe!" (Mankova 2000).

In the course of time the Murmansk Region became the most urbanised region in the Russian North with an overall population of 1.1 to 1.25 million, of which the military (minus the conscripts) number between 150 000-200 000 people. Amid – but apart from – this town or military compound based population, there live some 4000 to 5000 indigenous people (*korennye narody*), i.e. Saami, Komi and Nenets. Of them, the number of people connected actively with reindeer herding ranges between only 150 and 250 people, depending on how we define the category (cf. Rybkin 1999: 20). At the same time, these 150-250 people, a really minute percentage of the whole population, are the only ones with uncontested and legitimate rights of being and working on a grazing range of about 60 000 sq. km, which comprises over a third of the whole territory of the Region (144 000 sq. km.). The range is divided into brigade territories – about sixteen altogether – which, given an average brigade crew number

[11] In this respect the building of the Murman Railway (1915-16) has to be mentioned in the first instance, as the voluntary and forced labour recruitment for the industrial projects of the 1930s-1950s (Kiselev & Shevchenko 1996: 207; Konstantinov 1999: 18-22; Nilsen 1992: 38-40; Shashkov 1993).

[12] On the importance of The First Oblast Congress of Animal Husbandry in 1919, see Kertselli (1919); Konstantinov (2000: 59).

[13] See especially the materials from the Lapp Expeditions of the Russian Geographical Society 1926-1928, and The Russian Academy of Sciences Kola Expedition 1929-1930, particularly Zolotarev (1927); Charnolusskiy (1930).

of eight people at present, means that a brigade operates as the only legitimate presence over some 3 750 sq. km of territory, or over 470 sq. km to a person. These rough calculations may be corrected if more precise sources of information are obtained. They, nevertheless, underscore the fact that the role of the herders in this most urbanised region is to be "custodians of the tundra". The phrase was aptly, and we believe spontaneously, used by a local journalist, describing the life of the herders. The title read: *"Ty – khoziain vechnoy tundry"* (You are the custodian of the perennial tundra). (LP 30/04/1997)

The critical mass of workers surrounding the minute herding community, drawn to this region by offers of higher pay or being descendents of the forced labourers, are currently most acutely suffering from the disappearance of jobs and the salaries and premiums attached to them. This, as explained in the first part, produces strong anti-reformist feelings and a pronounced yearning for resurrection of state-supported enterprises. The yearning for restoration is certainly present in reindeer herding also – as a desire to sustain the *sovkhoz* in some inevitably changed form (TOO, SKhPK) – but retain its basic features as a supporting institution. Its opposite, again experienced in intensely ideological terms, is "privatism". Sovkhoism - in its ideological and public part - exists in a binary opposition with "privatism", which parallels such diads as "socialism-capitalism", "order-chaos", "prosperity-misery", "security-insecurity", etc. Being unquestionably the positive element in any such ideological diad, sovkhoism quickly overpowers any privatist neotraditionalist ideas when they happen to be entertained by the rare enthusiast. It should be noticed, however, that while the public ideological debate lends itself to the use of simple dichotomies of the "socialism good – capitalism bad" type, applied strategies are more complex, operating in "more or less" mixed modes as noted above.

The peculiar situation in the Murmansk Oblast, in the sense of "non-reterritorialisation" in any noticeable form, provides an interesting contrast to other regions in which opposite tendencies dominate. This fact indicates the necessity to view post-Soviet developments in the Russian North as a rich array of various forms of departure from the relatively unitary Soviet model of the recent past. In this sense, the Murmansk Region would stand as a case in which tendencies for minimal departure seem to be present.

Given this situation, the question arises: to what extent to agrarian reforms have a bearing on the local situation, if at all? Secondly: if there is such a pronounced anti-reformist popular

position in the reindeer herding sector, what are the "uses" of the *sovkhoz* – as an anti-reform alternative – in its present form, when it has been divested of state support and is little more than an empty shell?

As much of the ethnography gathered in the region under discussion indicates, a risk-free, albeit low earning existential mode may hold such an attraction that it tends to obliterate all previous memory within the sovkhoist frame of reference. In our particular case, time and time again we have been confronted with the fact that there is little collective memory "before the *sovkhoz*". The relevant past is in "*sovkhoz* days" and that is from the sixties or seventies of the last century until the catastrophic change called *perestroika* (restructuring) or *demokratsiia* – words that have acquired heavily pejorative connotations. It could be concluded, that a generational experience of a risk-free environment (in the sense described above) may establish a model of reinterpretation which is terminally self-perpetuating. A risk-free low earning mode may therefore be so vital that it can be seen as always being "somewhere", being able to create a system of its own. It is in this sense that we have to read the appeals for a "new life" quoted above from the official newspaper of the Rayon administration ("Small islands of a new life have appeared in Russia [...]") The appeals are for restoring previous social security by ameliorating what the reforms have done, not by their abolition. In a curious reversal of the old reformist slogan of "socialism with a human face", a point seems to have been arrived at in which the present reforms have to acquire a human face, i.e. to be restructured in a social security sense.

While an expectation of such a restructuring is in the air, the herding community – as everyone else – has to rely on what is at hand. Herein lies the strongest card of the herders, and it derives from a security of an altogether superior historical order; one that is based on the human/reindeer relationship. Statements to this effect are often made in conversations with herders; one telling variant is: "If a girl marries a herder, she shall always have meat". The human/reindeer relationship is capable of revealing itself through enormous variations where the variables range from natural givens and herding modes to ideological resonances in a very modern sense. As we shall see below, postsocialist "sovkhoist" herding resembles, in many ways, a combined hunting/free grazing/fishing pattern, so characteristic of Saami herding before the immigration of the Komi, with their very different methods of extensive year-round controlled herding, to the Kola Peninsula in late 19th century. There is one important

difference however: the presence of a residual *sovkhoz* structure which is stripped of state support but is still a functioning economic agent. Its functioning is mainly due, as has been mentioned before, to the presence of a Swedish buyer on the Peninsula (the Norfrys Company). Norfrys buys practically the whole produce and pays in hard cash at prices which are higher than most across the Russian North and Siberia (currently around 2-2.5 USD for a kilo of meat). So far it remains an open question whether this presence could be the single basket in which the herding community has placed its fortunes, or whether it has other reserves capable of overcoming an existential crisis.

Strategies

Agrarian Reforms as Power Tools

Before describing grassroot coping strategies, we will turn to those applications of the reforms that we have observed at this point of the research. So far, the only application we have registered that seems to make operational sense, and is not simply media rhetoric, is, when reforms are being used as power tools by higher orbit local actors. To describe how the mechanism works we need to go into a brief sketch of this part of reform dynamics. Of local relevance is the law mentioned at the beginning ("On Changes and Additions to the Constitution of the RSFSR") which recognised state farms (*sovkhozy*) as the owners of the property bound to them. Indications, however, of how this law was to be applied did not appear until two years after it was passed. Signs of some real transformation became visible only with the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 1992 titled "Towards Urgent Measures for Accomplishing the Land Reform in the RSFSR" (*O neotlozhnykh merakh po osushchestvleniiu zemel'noi reformy v RSFSR)*. The document prescribed that all *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy* should be re-registered in accordance with the new liberal reform legislation.

Together with this procedure, the new legislative documents demanded the formation of a specialised committee in each *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz*. The activities of these committees were specified within the "Regulation for the committee for privatisation of the land and the reorganization of the *kolkhoz*/*sovkhoz*" (*Polozhenie o komisii po privatizatsii zemli i reorganizatsii kolkhoza/sovkhoza*) (Bogoliubov & Minina 2000: 13). The Regulation is the

first document which defined who had the right to be given plots of land and shares of property, the principles for determining the size of these plots and shares and the rights of the new owners with respect to their property. Data from the former *sovkhoz* "Tundra" of Lovozero suggests that what became relevant from this document was not the land or other property but much more the issue of shares, or, more precisely: the possibility of attaining power in the post-*sovkhoz* cooperative by redistributing them.

"Tundra" of Lovozero is one of the two reindeer collectives in the Murmansk Region, the second being SKhPK "Olenevod" of Krasnoshchelye. The latter has been discussed in earlier publications (Konstantinov 1997; 2000) and, structurally, presents much the same case. The combined herd of both cooperatives counts between sixty and eighty thousand after-harvest head at present, grazing on, roughly, one third of the entire territory of the region. (Rybkin 1999; Seppänen 1995: 27)

During the initial period of reforms "Tundra" realised the new directives by changing its organisational form from *sovkhoz* to a limited liability company (TOO) in 1992. In 1998 the TOO was changed to SKhPK, a transformation to which we shall return again below. At the same time the property of the former *sovkhoz* was divided – as a number of shares owned – between its employees according to the Regulation. The main principle employed seems to have been, again, the length of service in the *sovkhoz*, i.e. work history and not property owned before the collectivisation of the late 1920s and 1930s (i.e. restitution). Or, in other words, the number of deer an owner had prior to collectivisation seems to have had no bearing at all on the number of shares in the cooperative a descendant owns at the moment. The veracity of this statement needs, however, to find more extensive confirmation in the future, but so far there has been no evidence of restitution-based practices, neither in the legislative documents we have worked with, nor in oral accounts of the situation.

Land Issues

When it comes to the land used by the heir of the former *sovkhoz*, the situation is even less clear, especially when it comes to the reindeer grazing range, which is of primary concern to us. Of major importance is the issue of native legal rights of the Saami who are listed in the Federal Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Small Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation" (Federal Law 1999). Despite the various provisions there, allegedly assuring right

to occupancy in ancestral lands, the land situation has remained pretty much the same as before. It is similar to what Osherenko writes about Yamal, i.e. that the system of land ownership is at one and the same time public, common and private. While the land is officially owned by the state, it is mainly managed by the local authorities, who give it for use to the *sovkhoz* (Osherenko 1995: 1091). The same presumably applies to post-*sovkhoz* cooperatives, i.e. the SKhPKs that interests us here.

About the Kola Peninsula it is known only that for the lands used as reindeer pastures, preferential tax rates have been allowed by the regional authorities. Undoubtedly, a serious role here has been played by Western (mainly Fennoscandic) ethnopolitical debate about preservation of Saami original occupation and ensuing legal rights of this, as well as of other native minorities (Afanas'eva 2000: 64).

SKhPK Structure

In the mid 1990s new changes concerning farming organisations were introduced. The mechanisms for forming and functioning of cooperatives were laid down by two new laws. According to them the cooperative is a formation consisting of people, whose aim it is, to perform a common activity and not to pool common capital together. That is why participation in the work of the cooperative is compulsory for each member. Furthermore, members are paid salaries according to work done and not by dividends in accordance with their shares. The net profit is meant to take care of the needs of the cooperative. At the same time every member bears a subsidiary responsibility for the debts of the cooperative (Bogoliubov & Minina 2000: 135-137). Regarding "Tundra", it has to be noted again that no one takes seriously the issue of dividends, since they have apparently never been paid.

The major decision making body of the SKhPK type of organisation – which "Tundra" became in 1998 – is the general meeting of all the members of the cooperative. Each one of them has one vote in the meeting. Having no right to vote are the associate members of the cooperative, a special category of shareholders, usually old age pensioners or previous employees of the *sovkhoz*, who do not participate directly in the work of the cooperative.

A number of decisions concerning the management of the cooperative lies within the exclusive competence of the general meeting. Among them is electing a board of managers and a board of observers. These bodies are elected for a period of five years. In this scheme

the position that was known formerly as “the director of the *sovkhoz*” became “the head of the board of managers” and subject to the provisions stated above. It is telling, however, that the “head” is still popularly called “director” and the SKhPK itself – “the *sovkhoz*”.

These persisting appellations reflect two facts. One is connected with the general disposition for regaining the *sovkhoz* as a way of life, which we called sovkhoism. Embedded in it is the actual practice of the so-called “head of the board of managers” to behave exactly like directors previously – in fact, as the current instance shows, even more authoritatively. The director makes the majority of decisions without consulting the board of managers and thus their decision-making power is largely symbolic.

A brief story shall illustrate the point. The present director is short-tempered and quick to fire employees when, as he puts it, “they make him angry”. In a recent case with herders from a brigade we are working with, he met two senior herders from the brigade in the streets of Lovozero when they were actually supposed to be at the intermediate tundra base of their brigade, 150 km away from the settlement. (The truth was that they had left the brigade temporarily to ferry a group of geologists to the village on a private track-vehicle belonging to one of the herders and thus make some extra money on the side.) The director told them then and there that they were fired. After a couple of months however, he changed his mind in the face of the generally poor recruitment and a greatly understaffed brigade team, and told the herders to go back to the brigade. “But you fired us”, one of them said. “Ah, is that so?” replied the director, “I have forgotten. You must have made me very angry then.” As the incident illustrates, critical decisions such as firing of herders – in the face of catastrophically understaffed brigades – can be made (and often are) temperamentally on the spot, with no calling of meetings or other such ceremonies. This type of relationship between management and herders is a far cry from the management of a cooperative with its members as private owners. The directors and the workers are here revealed as conflicting and not cooperating sides, engaged in outsmarting each other.

It is only at this point that we can illustrate how all the above mentioned pieces of reformist legislation acquire relevance on the local level. Principles of share distribution and shareholders’ rights and obligations are currently being used by the previous director of SKhPK “Tundra” – deposed in 1998 – to regain power after an interval of four years. At the moment this person is initiating an opposition to present administrative practices (of the

current director) by attracting a large group of small shareholders to her side. Two main issues are being discussed: the policy of the present director, which is seen to be ruining the co-operative (along with his often rude behaviour to the employees), as well as his alleged disregard of herders' interests. The goal of the undertaking is the overthrowing of the present head of the managing board (i.e. the director) and his replacement with a person who is more caring for the reindeer herders (most probably the former director).

A favourable precondition for the success of such a coup may prove to be plans by the current SKhPK administration to impose fees for private deer (see below under "Fishing"). The planned strategy for the coup is to persuade a large number of small shareholders to sell their shares to a single holder (presumably the former director) and thus attain a decisive majority vote in the governing committee.[14] This stratagem of buying the company from within may come to succeed, as the pretendant relies on her reputation of supporting what we may call "the private-within-the-collective-scheme", or, in other words, unlimited ownership of private deer grazing with the cooperative herds. Conversely, the present director is accused of being *biznesmen* and *komersant* who cares only for his private interests at the expense of the *sovkhoz*, alias cooperative (SKhPK).

Management

In theory the primary executive body of the cooperative is the board of managers. Its work is controlled by the board of observers, usually consisting of three members of the general assembly. Within the competence of this body is the convening of a meeting, to cease the five year mandate of the board of managers and to assume their functions until the summoning of a general meeting.

Despite such mechanisms, prescribed by the legislative documents, decisive remnants of the previous system have remained intact, with only slight superficial changes – mainly terminological – to be in tune with the reforms. One of these is the influence of local municipal and regional authorities over decisions of the general meeting when it comes to electing managers and decidedly, the choice of the head of managers alias the director. The

[14] Shares (*pai*) range from RBL 2000 each (Dec. 2001) to RBL 120 000. The total assets of the SKhPK are estimated at RBL 30 million (USD 1 million), with the provision that 51% of these assets are managed by the SKhPK. The number of shareholders are currently estimated at about 400 people, of whom at least 150 are OAPs with small shares. There are only ten big shareholders with shares worth RBL 120 000 (oral communication).

possibility of such practices is not averted by the current legislation. It only recommends that the federal and the local authorities do not interfere directly in the management and functioning of organisations other than federal or municipal entities. The role of such authorities is to create favourable conditions for their existence and performance by "indirect economic or psychological influence" (Bogoliubov & Minina 2000: 69). How this appears in actual practice may be seen by an account of the procedure of removing the old head of the cooperative and electing a new one in 1998. This telling story shall be briefly told below.

At the meeting of the shareholders, among other representatives of the regional and Rayon administrations, the vice-governor of the Region was present as the highest ranking guest. Commenting on the need to remove the old director he said: "We (sic!) have received many letters describing reindeer herding as being neglected. We have seen that there is complete lack of management in the cooperative. But it is you that have elected your head and we do not have any right whatsoever to fire him. It is your decision".

Following this comment, the regional head of agricultural management (*nachal'nik upravleniia sel'skogo khoziaistva*) said: "In actual fact, your director has turned out to be incompetent. Before we used to take her side, but we see now that she does not deserve our confidence." After that the head veterinary inspector of the Region took the floor and spoke in much the same vain, then other regional and Rayon dignitaries, until finally "the shareholders decided to elect a new head, and that happened on 19 May". (LP 29/05/1998) Evidently this is what is meant by "indirect psychological influence". As such it does not seem to differ in any detail but one from former Soviet practices: such moves and decisions were then made not at shareholders' meetings but at open Party meetings.

Four years after a new head of the cooperative was elected (with the strong approval and prompting of the regional and Rayon administrators), the herding community is up in arms against him. He is being accused of diverting large sums from the cooperative and investing them into private business deals, one of them a tourist venture. At the same time there is no evident concern about poor working conditions in the tundra bases, about the appalling state of the transport pool and, as a whole, about the deterioration of reindeer herding itself (on these problems see Konstantinov 2001).

Besides the general indifference to the problems of herders and herding, the management of the SKhPK has recently aroused the indignation of the herders by a year long delay in

paying for private meat sold to the SKhPK. This brings us to a bundle of problems around private reindeer – a problem with a long history stretching well back into Soviet times.

Private reindeer (lichnye oleni)

Private reindeer are the backbone of the primary informal activity – let us call it "grey herding" – practised as a coping strategy by the herders. Grey herding has always existed in *sovkhoz* practice,[15] but its present very high proportions have been reached due to a decision made by the SKhPK head removed in the said fateful meeting of May 1998. According to this decision all people working in the cooperative acquired the right to own an unlimited number of private animals grazing with the cooperative brigade herds without paying any fees, i.e. rent for using cooperative facilities, pastures and labour. Prior to this decision up to fifty head of private deer per herder or a herder's heir could be grazed in the collective herd with a small annual fee paid for each animal – a limit common in northern reindeer herding.

With the liberation of this regime at the time of the previous director – done in the name of improving recruitment and providing incentives – it became a simple matter to take an animal from the cooperative herd and put one's private mark on it and thereby increase one's private contingent. Another feature of the situation is that a private deer is "immortal", as the cynics put it. Since in the event of something happening to a private deer – loss by poaching, predation or disease – that deer can be easily replaced from the herd with a "collective" one (naturally, a private deer cannot die). Furthermore, internal poaching by herders – that is, taking from the collective herd at will and attributing the losses to outside poaching, predation or other accidents – has certainly experienced a rise with the liberation of the regime and the general deterioration of control and discipline. While bemoaning the present times of lawlessness and chaos brought about by the hated *perestroika*, the herders are taking advantage of it along with all other citizens, everyone according to the possibilities open to them.

[15] The problem of private deer within the *sovkhoz* herd has always been a feature of this uneasy marriage – a fact which tends to be easily forgotten today. Consider the following excerpt from an archival document: "The Rayon Inspectorate (*Raiinspektura*) one more time points out the unsatisfactory registration of reindeer for private use. There has been much talking on this topic, but all of it boils down to the fact that many herders deliberately hide the personal deer in their possession. This is borne out by the fact – supported by some statistical data – that the very severe (for reindeer-herding) year of 1972 has not affected private herd numbers." (GAMO-Kirovsk 1972: 7).

In the herders' case a lot of possibilities are open due to the almost total separation of the worlds of urban administration (in the settlement of Lovozero) and the herders out in the tundra. Unless they meet accidentally in the streets, as in the story of the director and the truant herders, the two sides do not see much of each other.

The members of the administration work in their modern offices in Lovozero, where they are under the vigilant eye of the director and are entirely dependent on the salaries attached to their positions. The workers in the tundra – the reindeer herders – have very marginal positions vis-à-vis the urbanite administration and, in fact, have no role in the management of the cooperative. They work in very severe conditions but, on the other hand, they are mostly out of the control of the administrators while, at the same time, they have access to the basic tundra resources: reindeer and fish. They are, after all, "the custodians of the tundra". On this basis, their main response to what they perceive as negative "policy" (their own words) of the administration, directed against them, is expressed in various forms of informal activity.

This last is a two-pronged movement. On the one hand, it aims at total risk disposition. This is achieved by attributing all losses to the cooperative while private property almost never sustains such losses, as explained above with the device of the "immortal private deer". The second prong is maximizing private profit at the expense of the cooperative by a variety of means, known in the literature as the aforementioned systematically tolerated and, in that sense, "institutionalised" theft. The main form is internal poaching, as mentioned above, but a great variety of other opportunities exist - desertion from work, using cooperative transport, fuel and all available facilities for private purposes. A main parallel activity which is supported in this way is freshwater subsistence and small time commercial fishing, and to this we turn below.

Fishing

Fishing is carried out in the tundra rivers and lakes during the time meant for herding. The activity largely disregards the requirements of current fishing regulations and permits gaining substantial additions to the otherwise fairly low herders' salaries.[16] Sizeable quantities of fish and roe are being sold privately in the municipality by people who have access to that resource

[16] At the moment a herder's average monthly salary amounts to RBL 2000 (USD 60). See Konstantinov (2001: 24) for details.

of the tundra via the SKhPK (i.e. herders, former herders, kin and para-kin, i.e. friends of active herders), and still enough remains for subsistence needs.

Subsistence fishing has always been considered as a legitimate fringe benefit of herding, but at present both "grey herding" and fishing are deemed by the administration to have taken such proportions that measures for severely curtailing them are being discussed. Concerning grey herding and its backbone, private deer, the administration is currently proposing a project for limiting the number of private reindeer a herder can own in the collective herd without paying a fee. At the same time, relatively high taxes are being proposed for all other owners of private reindeer in the cooperative.[17]

Such a measure, though aiming at the division of private from cooperative assets, and thus strengthening the cooperative, will, most probably, only exacerbate the current conflict between the administration, on the one hand, and the herding community, on the other. Since the measures will hit old age pensioners who, in most cases, have only one or two deer in their possession, and are critically dependent on the income from them, very hard a wave of social indignation may well sweep away the present leadership and reinstate a more liberal administration.

Conclusions

All above mentioned processes work against the interests of the cooperative as a whole. At the moment the erosion is working on three different levels: the level of legislative directives and the use made of them in upper orbit power struggles; of administrative practices; and of informal coping strategies. Caught between such conflicting forces, the SKhPK, which is otherwise a potentially profitable enterprise, is balancing on the edge of economic existence, surviving primarily due to the presence of a foreign buyer. Were that buyer to withdraw for some reason, it is difficult to see how the SKhPK could survive. In fact, when foreign buyers abandoned OAO "Sevredmet", mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it quickly went bankrupt and that has placed the Rayon in an extremely tense position. It should also be

[17] The current SKhPK administration is proposing the following system of fees: (a) for active herders – up to 50 head gratis, for every head above that RBL 200 per head annually; (b) former herders should pay 200 for every head; and (c) other people (neither herders nor former herders) should pay 400 per each head of private deer that is grazed with the SKhPK herd. (Personal communication from the administration, December 2001).

mentioned that a third reindeer herding entity on the Peninsula - the former reindeer herding experimental station in Loparskoe near Murmansk (MOOS) – was declared bankrupt last year and all its assets sold.

Against such a background, the general desire for the SKhPK to remain as the only conceivable support base – within the framework of a sovkhoist ideology and practice – can be easily understood. What may seem puzzling is possibly the fact that, notwithstanding such a desire – for the *sovkhoz* to stay and possibly regain its former stability – this very *sovkhoz*, in its present reformed SKhPK state, is being eroded by every informal means at hand, both from the top and from the bottom. While the director is allegedly using SKhPK funds for private commercial operations, the herders rely on the niches open to them, mostly in the direction of what has been called here grey herding.

The fact that the cooperative is composed of private individual members and theft eventually translates into everyone's loss (“tragedy of the commons”) is not an issue here – the collective is symbolised by the administration and the terms *sovkhoz* and *administratsiia* or *pravlenie* (leadership) are used in a synonymous fashion. These terms seem to be interchangeable and underscore a world view in which power comes from outside and above, and does not derive from individuals who cooperate for their common good. In this sense, one does not feel responsible for powers over which one has no control, by much the same token as before the reforms. Whereas previous times are looked upon as secure and affluent from the present perspective, while they lasted the (well known) saying was “they (the empowered) pretend that they pay us, we pretend that we work” (Bulg.: *te ni luzhat, che ni plashtat, nie gi luzhem, che rabotim*). The difference at present is in the very indeterminacy of reforms and the consequent increase in the scope of informalities. For with all the democratic rhetoric, the empowered are behaving in the same haughty and cavalier manner as before and one can react to them on that basis – again, as before. So much to the democratic (reformist) perspective. From the anti-reformist one, the reforms have "brought the great country to her knees", security has vanished and one has to survive by whatever means are at hand (*nado krutitsya*). This provokes a parallel motive for reaction and a very powerful one at that, since it is predicated on existential concerns for great masses of the population. In this way, although coming from ideologically contradictory directions, the motivations combine in one and the same drive to live by whatever informal means are available (since there is little else).

Living in such a greatly expanded informal (“grey”) space, while being very lucrative for some, has placed the majority of the population in a much more chaotic and tense state than before. With less informal opportunities (but still enough) and most of all, less security, the pre-reform period looks in retrospect to have been a haven of modest, but content life and, above all, one of safety. The dominant ideological preference for a caring state (condoning a degree of private irregularity) has been, in this way, reinforced by the period of reforms. The more troubling conclusion is that while the reformers discarded with little trouble the caring state part of the previous equation, the expansion of its informal part was much more relevant and attractive to them. The possibilities for informal expansion at progressively lower layers of society stem from this more correct meaning of reforms. At the same time, while this very expansion is prompted at the top by sybaritic desires, at the bottom it is prompted by existential concerns. In this sense it is misleading to try and understand the situation in terms of whether reforms have been carried out or not or to what extent. In the oligarchic sense of reforms, they have been carried out completely; in their original sense, they may have not even begun. At least the situation in the Murmansk Region leads to such a conclusion.

Lastly, it is surprising that reindeer herding in the region has survived the reforms at all. An interesting question in fact is, what the factors have been that have averted a total failure, beside the mentioned opportune presence of a foreign buyer. Apart from monitoring the work of the erosive forces outlined above, a main task of future research has to be the definition of such preventive factors and, in an applied sense, the search for possible mechanisms for immediate strengthening of their action (in case they exist).

The local community is incessantly circulating predictions of an apocalyptic outcome of current practices, unless, as a herder said recently during an interview (December 2001), “the present politics is changed and life becomes good once again” (*esli politika ne peremenitsya i opyat' stalo khorosho*). Upon being asked who is to change the present politics, the herder looked upwards and said: “I don't know.... up there, the bosses...” (*ne znaiu.... tam na verkhu... nachal'niki*). The statement is indicative of the general mood and does not indicate anything remotely like transition from one type of system (command socialism) to another (market capitalism) significantly taking place in local world-views. At the same time, the challenging questions posed above remain. What are the inner long-term defensive strategies of the community, how are they discussed and formulated and how are they articulated?

References

Afanas'eva, Nina E. (2000) O sotsial'no-ekonomicheskom i pravovom polozhenii saamov Murmanskoi oblasti i obrashchenie o priniatii srochnykh mer. In: Ol'ga Murashko (ed.) *Severnye narody Rosii na puti v novoe tysiacheletie. K desiatiletiiu Associatsii korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii*. (The Northern Peoples of Russia on the Way to the New Millenium). Moscow: AKMNS, 60-65.

Beach, Hugh (1986) Visit to a Siberian Sovkhoz. *Antropologiska Studier* 38-39: 73-79.
-- (1992) Reindeer Herding on the Kola Peninsula – Report of a Visit with Saami Herdersof Sovkhoz Tundra. In: R. Kvist (ed) Readings in Saami History, Culture and Language III. University of Umeå, 113-142.

Benda-Beckmann, Franz von and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (1999) A Functional Analysis of Property Rights, With Special Reference to Indonesia. In: T.van Meijl and F. von Benda-Beckman (eds.) Property Rights and Economic Development. Land and Natural Resources in Southeast Asia and Oceania. London: Kegan Paul, 15-56.

Blakkisrud, Helge (2001) The Russian Regionalisation Process: Decentralisation by Design or Disintegration by Default? In: Geir Hønneland, Helge Blakkisrud, (eds.) Centre-Periphery Relations in Russia. The Case of the Northwestern Regions. Aldershot, etc.: Ashgate, 61-91.

Bogoliubov, S. A., Minina, E. L., (eds.) (2000) *Agrarnoe pravo*. (Agrarian Law.) Moskva.

Charnoluskiy, V.V. (1930) *Materiali po bytu loparei. Opyt opredeleniia kochevogo sostoianiia loparei vostochnoi chasti Kol'skogo poluostrova*. (Materials on Lapp Everyday Life. An Attempt for Definition of the Nomadic State of the Lapps of the Eastern Part of the Kola Peninsula). Leningrad: State Russian Geographical Society.

Clarke, Simon (1992) The Quagmire of Privatization. *New Left Review* 196: 3-28.

Creed, Gerald W. (1998) Domesticating Revolution. From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State UP.

Federal Law (1999) *Federal'nyi zakon No. 82-FZ ot 30 aprelia 1999 "O garantiiakh prav korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii*. (Federal Law No. 82-FZ of 30 April 1999 'On Guarantees of the Rights of the Indigenous Small Peoples of the Russian Federation). Moscow: Russian Federation.

GARANT 2001. *Spravochnaia pravovaia systema GARANT*. (System for legislative reference GARANT). Moscow. Internet: www.garant.ru

GAMO-Kirovsk 1972. *Dokladnaia zapiska "o sostoianii olenevodstva v sovkhozakh Lovozerskogo rayona na 1972 god."* F.142, op.2, d.19, l.30-34. Kirovsk: Gosudarstvenniy arkhiv Murmanskoy oblasti.

Gorter-Grønvik, Waling T. 1995. *Reindriften på Kola halvøya og på Fiskerhalvøya*. (Reindeer-herds on the Kola Peninsula and the Ribachiy Peninsula). Barents Perspektiv 10: 16-18.

Hann, C.M. (2000) The Tragedy of the Privates? Postsocialist Property Relations in Anthropological Perspective. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers. No. 2. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

Hardin, Garett (1968) The Tragedy of the Commons. Science 162: 1243-1248.

Humphrey, Caroline (1983) Karl Marx Collective. Economy, Society, and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm. Cambridge: CUP.
-- (1998) The Domestic Mode of Production in post-Soviet Siberia? Anthropology Today 14(3): 2-8.
-- (2002) Does the Category 'Postsocialist' Still Make Sense? In: C. M. Hann (ed.) Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia. London, New York: Routledge, 12-15.

Kalvemø, Jos (1995) "Losers of the Tundra". Video documentary. Karasjok: Sami Television.

Kertselli, S. (1919) *Znachenie olenevodstva i meri dlia ego razvitiia*. In: S. Kertselli, V. Houdadov (eds.) *Olenevodstvo* (Reindeer Husbandry). Moscow: *Izdatel'stvo Narodnogo Komissariata Zemledeliia*, 3-8.

Kideckel, David A. (1993) The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kiselev, Aleksei A. and Alexander V. Shevchenko (1996) *Murmanskaia oblast: geografiia i istoriia osvoeniia*. (Murmansk Region: Geography and History of Settlement). Murmansk: Sever.

Konstantinov, Yulian 1(997) Memory of Lenin Ltd. Reindeer-Herding Brigades on the Kola Peninsula. *Anthropology Today* 13(3): 14-19.
-- (1999) The Northern Sea Route and Local Communities in Northwest Russia: Social Impact Assessment for the Murmansk Region. INSROP Working Paper No.152 - 1999, IV. Oslo: The Fridtjof Nansen Institute.
-- (2000) Pre-Soviet Pasts of Reindeer-Herding Collectives: Ethnographies of Transition in Murmansk Region. *Acta Borealia* 2: 49-64.
-- (2001) RENMAN Interim Report. RENMAN WP 4 Field Study: "Kola-'01". Interim Report-December 2001. A Project within the Quality of Life and Management Research of Living Resources part of the Fifth and Technological Development Framework Programme of the European Union. Brussels.
-- (2002) Bulgaria: Property Registration and Cadastre Project. Social Assessment Part. Final Report. Washington: World Bank (forthcoming).

Korf , V. (1991) *Na krugi svoia* (In home lands). *Severnie prostori* 46: 2-4.

LP (Lovozerskaia Pravda) 30/04/1997. Ty -k hoziain vechnoi tundry. (You are the custodian of the perennial tundra). Lovozerskaia Pravda. Newspaper of Lovozero Rayon, Murmansk Oblast, p. 4.
-- 29/05/1998. "Tundra" - vremia obnovleniia. ("Tundra" - time for renewal), pp. 1, 6.
-- 25/01/2002. Pamiati geriya. Imia ostalos' v istorii. (In Memory of the Hero. The Name Stayed in History), p. 5.
-- 8/02/2002. Vozmozhno li u nas otkliuchenie tepla i sveta? (Is stoppage of heating and lighting likely in our homes?), pp. 1,6.
-- 8/02/2002. Gubernatoru oblasti Yu. A. Yevdokimovu. (To the Oblast Governor Yu. A. Yevdokimov), p. 1.
-- 22/02/2002. Zreiut grozdia gneva. Otkrytoe pis'mo prezidentu V. Putinu. (The Grapes of Wrath Are Ripening. An Open Letter to the President V.Putin), p. 6.

Mankova, Petya (2000) "Over Troubled Waters". Video documentary. Tromsø: University of Tromsø.

Mihailova, N. (1995) Bespokoinoe khoziaistvo (A worried farm). *Severnye prostory* 1: 17-19.

Nilsen, Jens Peter (1992) Russkaia opasnost' dlia Severnoi Norvegii? (Russian threat to Northern Norway?) In: Ottar. Norway and Russia in the North. Tromsø Museum. No 192, 33-41.

Osherenko, Gail (1995) Property Rights and Transformation in Russia: Institutional Change in the Far North. *Europe-Asia Studies* 47(7): 1077-1108.
-- (2001) Indigenous Rights in Russia: Is Title to Land Essential for Cultural Survival? *The Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 13(3): 695-734.

Overland, Indra Nobl (1999) Politics and Culture among the Russian Sami: Leadership, Representation and Legitimacy. Doctoral Dissertation. Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge. Unpublished MS.

Paine, Robert (1992) Social Construction of the 'Tragedy of the Commons' and Saami Reindeer Pastoralism. *Acta Borealia* 2: 3-14.

Pika, A.I. and B.B. Prokhorov (eds.) (1994) *Neotraditsionalizm na Rossiiskom Severe i gosudarstvennaia regional'naia politika*. (Neotraditionalism in the Russian North and State Regional Policy). Moscow.

Rybkin, Artiom (1999) *Olenevodstvo v Murmanskoi oblasti*. (Reindeer Breeding in Murmansk Oblast). Tromsø: Association of World Reindeer Herders, 23-30.
Seppänen, Susanna (1995) The Barents Region: An Emerging Market. Helsinki: International Business Statistics.

Shashkov, Viktor Ya. (1993) *Spetspereselentsi na Murmane. Rol' spetspereselentsev v razvitii proizvoditel'nykh sil na Kol'skom poluostrove (19030-1936 g.g.)* (Forced Labour Migrants on the Murman Coast. Contribution of the Forced Labour Migrants to the Development of

Industrial Facilities on the Kola Peninsula (1930-1936). Murmansk: Murmansk State Pedagogical Institute.

Silanpää, Lennard (1999) Small Nations of the Russian North and Their Rights as Indigenous Peoples: Some Observations and Preliminary Hypothesis. In: Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, Harald W. Finkler (eds.) Folk Law and Legal Pluralism: Societies in Transformation. Papers of the XI International Congress, August 18-22, 1997. Nijmegen, Holland: Commission on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism, 109-120.

Verdery, Katherine (1994) The Ealsticity of Land. Problems of Property Restitution in Transylvania. *Slavic Review* 53(4): 1071-1109.
-- (1999) Fuzzy Property: Rights, Power and Identity in Transylvania's Decollectivzation. In: Michael Burawoy, Katherine Verdery (eds.) Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 53-81.

Vitebsky, Piers and Sally Wolfe (2001) The Separation of the Sexes Among Siberian Reindeer Herders. In: Alaine Low, Soraya Tremayne (eds.) Sacred Custodians of the Earth? Women, Spirituality and the Environment. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 81-95.

Zolotarev, D.A. (1927) *Loparskaia ekspeditsiia (11/I-11/V 1927-go goda).* (The Lapp Expedition (11/1-11/5 1927)). Leningrad: State Russian Geographical Society.