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On Some Aspects of the Final Stage
of the Russian Peasant Commune:
Village Ramen'e and the Strategy of Collectivization

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On Some Aspects of the Final Stage of the Russian Peasant Commune:

Village Ramen'e and the Strategy of Collectivization.¹⁾

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1

By the end of the 19th century particularly in northwest and central Russia the peasants' response to the defects of communal land tenure showed the following two main trends: redistribution of communal land into widened strips and multi-field rotation without destroying communal land tenure itself, and its radical liquidation and transformation into *khutora* and *otruba*. In the northwest the first trend at first began to appear, but was soon replaced by the second, which developed at such a speed that it surpassed the first movement.²⁾ In Moscow province, however, improvements in communal land tenure developed even until the 1920s, partly because the communes there were much more vital, and partly because local agronomists were interested in improving peasant economy as a whole.

In the 1880s and 1890s in Moscow province, important roles were played by V.G.Bazhaev, D.N.Shipov, and A.A.Zubrilin who, as the first Volokolamsk county agronomist, was called "first obstetrician of Volokolamsk *travoseianie* (grass sowing)". *Travoseianie* on peasant land first appeared in Volokolamsk county and the northern part of Mozhaisk county, both situated in the western part of Moscow province. Particularly in Kul'pinskaia and Iaropol'skaia volosti of Volokolamsk county many villages existed that won fame for introducing *travoseianie*. Sowing of perennial forage plants, clover above all, first appeared on peasants' private plots (*usad'ba*) or land leased by a whole commune. After their conviction of its advantage, it was introduced within the peasants' crop rotation, which contributed to the abolition of the traditional three-field system. Flax, which by the end of the 19th century had been widely sowed in Volokolamsk county and enjoyed a big demand in the world market, played an important role in the introduction of peasants' *travoseianie*, because flax robbed land of its fertility, which clover then replenished.

Moreover, particularly after 1910, clover was utilized as fodder to improve animal husbandry and finally gave birth to dairy cooperatives. These became prototypes of the cooperative movement in the 1920s.³⁾

Peasant communes introduced *travoseianie* by the general decision (*prigovol*) of *skhod*. Moscow provincial agronomist, I.P.Stepanov, emphasized that communes did not serve as a brake in that process but, on the contrary, accelerated it. According to him : "The Commune is a pioneer of *travoseianie* on the land of Volokolamsk county."⁴⁾ The wide spread of *travoseianie* on the peasants' land caused the collapse of the landlords' economy. Thus, during 1893-1903 when Zubrilin worked in Volokolamsk county, 245 out of the 368 villages there introduced *travoseianie* on the peasants' crop-rotation, which stopped the lease of the landlord's meadow by local peasants. By 1903 out of 25 landlords' businesses, as many as 20 collapsed.⁵⁾

2

After a retreat in the development of *travoseianie* during the War and the Revolution, Moscow agronomists newly revived the idea in the 1920s during the big campaign for the liquidation of the three-field system. They paid special attention to improving communal land tenure without much interest in the *otruba* which composed about 10 percent of the peasant households in Moscow province. Their activities were directed toward concentrating all agronomical measures upon "communes as an economic unit."⁶⁾

For the All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition which took place in Moscow in August-October 1923, the Exhibition Committee of Moscow province decided to exhibit 3 examples: "two communal villages", the village Burtsevo in Sudislovskaja volost' of Volokolamsk county and the village Kurovo in Dmitrovskaya volost' of Dmitrov county, and the example of influences of agronomical measures upon the whole Ramen'e agronomical district with village Remen'e as a centre. This decision was connected with high estimates by leading agronomists: K.K.Dysky working in Burtsevo, V.N.Alekseev in Kurovo, K.I.Serebrennikov in Ramen'e. Both Burtsevo and

Kurovo were typical villages which followed the evolutionary course stated above.⁷⁾ (For Ramen'e see below). These two villages received a prize in the Exhibition. Burtsevo in particular with its common *travoseianie*, dairy cooperative (its founder was the famous old peasant G.K.Sedov), electric powerhouse and so on, was recognized by a special decision of the Exhibition as "a live example" which Soviet villages should follow.⁸⁾ Apparently it was expected that this "improved commune" might be a prototype for future Soviet villages.

M.I.Kalinin, All-Union *starosta*, was especially interested in the Exhibition and wrote an article shortly after the Exhibition closed. In this article titled "More attention to communes" he emphasized the possibility of "revival of the commune (*pererozhdenie obshchiny*)". Though he admitted that the destruction of communes and their separation into *khutora* and *otruba* then under way, particularly in the west and northwest regions, was a favorable course which administrative measures should not hinder, he also stated "Nevertheless I will say: quite fascinating are the activities concerning the improvement of the commune, the transformation of the commune from an organization of darkness, illiteracy and conventionalism into, as it were, a productive cooperative organization."⁹⁾

Under the immediate influence of Kalinin's article, A.Lisitsyn who worked in the Moscow Land Department (MOZO), in the following year demanded revisions in the Russian Land Code that had admitted peasants' rights to land tenure both in and outside the land society (*zemel'noe obshchestvo*). He thought the right should be admitted only in the land society¹⁰⁾ as in the Ukrainian Land Code.¹¹⁾

The process of liquidating the three-field system in Moscow province was accelerated by a decree of Mossovet in February 1924, and by the end of 1926, in 5,204 villages out of all the communal villages totalling 6,458, this feudal agrarian system was abolished. Finally in 1927 it was announced that in Volokolamsk and Zvenigorod counties it was totally liquidated. Multi-field rotation with *travoseianie* was introduced instead. On the 9th and 10th of July 1927, a large-scale celebration was held in the town of Volokolamsk with the participation of influential Party

members such as Ryskulov, Kiselev, Svidersky, Kotov and others, not to mention many agronomists including Zubrilin.

This large scale celebration reflected the official policy of the Moscow Committee (MK) of the Communist Party. The XIII Moscow provincial Party Conference in January of 1925 adopted a policy which openly favoured the communal form of land tenure. The most desirable forms of land tenure, it proclaimed, were "communes which liquidated the length, intermixing and narrowness of strips, and new hamlets (*poselki*)". This decision demanded efforts in urging peasants to choose this form of land tenure. It was K.Ia. Bauman, later MK Secretary, that led the Moscow land policy at this Conference.¹²⁾ In spite of no concrete measures toward *khutora* and *otruba*, the hostile attitude toward them was obvious, since the Conference regarded the communal form of land tenure as the most desirable. As MK member P.Zaitsev recollected later, "the direct anti-*khutora*, anti-*otruba* line" was taken in the XIII Moscow Party Conference.¹³⁾ The radical change in Volokolamsk county took place as early as 1925, long before the XV All-Union Party Congress. In that year the collapse of communes was artificially restricted, and the improvement of the communal form of land tenure (that is, transition toward widened strips and multi-field rotation) took its place.¹⁴⁾

The policy against enclosed farms not only restricted the exodus from communes but was also accompanied by efforts to take the existing *khutora* back into land societies (so-called *sselenie khutorov*). Firstly, in 1925 organizations of Rabkrin investigated how the land policy of Moscow province was carried out, and on this basis demanded the acceleration of *sselenie khutorov*, as well as the "improvement of communes" and transition to kolkhozy.¹⁵⁾ This fact suggests that besides the "improvement of communes", *sselenie khutorov* was undertaken in Moscow province and at the same time such experiences in Moscow province began to influence the central organizations. Secondly, when the newspaper "*Krest'ianskaia gazeta*" took a wide ranging survey about communes, a peasant in Moscow province (county unknown) wrote to make clear the peasants' attitude toward separate farmsteads citing the

decision of the county Soviets that "we should try in all ways to redistribute Stolypin's *khutora* and *otruba*."¹⁶⁾

But what relation does such pro-commune policy have to the Land Code's principle that the freedom to choose any form of land tenure should be strictly observed? Moreover, after the restrictive measures adopted in 1924 toward *khutora* in western Russia,¹⁷⁾ the April Plenum of the All-Union Communist Party in 1925 once again demanded that this freedom be observed. This position soon became the law in the resolution of the III Union Soviets Congress in May 1925.¹⁸⁾ One remarkable article published in the newspaper "*Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn*" on the eve of the April Plenum, apparently paved the way for the decision of the Plenum. It opened to the public the results of investigations in 1923-1924 into 40 villages (285 households) in Moscow province, reporting that "the strong desire (*tiaga*) to move to individual forms of land tenure" could be witnessed among 70.6 percent of the total households investigated, and that communes in Moscow province began to collapse. It also reported that *otruba* in Volokolamsk, Dmitrov and Moscow counties were more productive and developed in agricultural technique than communal peasant households.¹⁹⁾ K.Ia.Kindeev, too, condemned the Moscow land policy, arguing that "agronomists in Moscow province led by Zubrilin" were treating *otruba* as "bastards".²⁰⁾ On the eve of a large-scale open debate which was to take place in the Moscow Peasant's House (MDK) in June of 1927, A.Lisitsyn, who formerly stood for Kalinin's slogan "More attention to communes," now openly attacked Moscow land policy in defence of *otruba*.²¹⁾

These differences ran deeper than a mere argument "For or against communes", still less a doctrinal dispute over the historical fates of communes in Marxism. Behind them lay the two histories of the villages of Moscow province: the improvement and destruction of communes. In the early 1920s in Moscow province the two movements developed simultaneously (that is, one commune was improved, and the other was abolished) and often struggled against each other within a village. Of such struggles, many examples can be cited from the local newspaper

"*Moskovskaia derevnia*". In a village where widened strips and multi-field rotation had finally been introduced after long conflicts among the peasants, the attempt by individual peasants to move to *otruba* sparked deep discontent among the rest, because it made inevitable a new wholesale land redistribution.

In the debate in the Moscow Peasant's House, Serebrennikov emphasized that in model villages with communal land tenure, "self-duty" (*samoobiazannost'*) was strongly developed and that via methods of "self-duty" various agricultural and agronomical improvements were accepted by the whole village.²²⁾ Serebrennikov's expression "self-duty" reflected a function of the village *skhod*: the peasants' traditional way of deciding (*prigovor*). The village that he had in mind was Ramen'e where he had worked for about 15 years. Ramen'e used the communal form of land tenure.²³⁾ It was counted as one of the first villages to introduce clover sowing in peasant's private plots, but the introduction in 1909 of multi-field (8-field in this village) rotation was comparatively late. In 1923 a circle on agriculture there proposed the introduction of common cultivation, which at the beginning met with resistance from the old and their refusal to work on holidays which often coincided with harvest days. But by 1926 land for common cultivation (*obshchestvennaia zapashka*) 13 hectares in size did appear, and in the next year it rose to 28 hectares out of all 473 hectares of arable land. In relation to the argument below it must be noted that this common land was "dried": obviously a former marsh. This land was cultivated by a tractor and other agricultural machines commonly bought and owned by the village. The income from this land was not distributed among the 70 households present in 1927, but utilized for construction of common buildings, purchase of common agricultural machines and so forth.

In this village various cooperatives for land and seed improvement, extinction of fires, sale of dairy products and so forth had been organized since 1923-1924. Active peasants decided to consolidate these cooperatives into "one wholeness" (*odno tseloe*), and by the celebration in 1927 it was reported that the village economy was working on a "planned" basis. The plan and the budget necessary for it whose fund

came from the cultivation of common land were firstly considered in the circle on agriculture with the participation of agronomists and then accepted by the decision of the *skhod*.²³⁾

The *skhod*, it was true, played a progressive role under certain conditions. Thus, for example, hamlet Reviakino, another famous village situated near the county town Dmitrov, had adopted *otrub* form of land tenure since 1912, but utilized meadow (*luga*) in communal form which was divided into two (good and bad) parts and distributed among peasants from each part. It had the apparent object of preventing some unlucky peasants from being unable to get hay in consequence of redistribution. Moreover, *skhod* obliged each household to improve a bad part of the meadow, and if they were negligent, they were obliged to accept the same bad meadow in the next redistribution.²⁴⁾ Analogous progressive measures by the *skhod* could be widely detected in the 1920s.

That communes after long conflicts in the village could oblige the "backward" minority to accept "progressive" measures of the *skhod* presented the strongest argument for pro-commune policy in Moscow province. On this ground it was assumed by such Moscow agronomists as Stepanov that communes could develop and evolve by themselves. Serebrennikov also took it for granted that the narrow land for common cultivation could become a prototype for the future socialist farm. He made it a rule to say that in Ramen'e, the basis of collectivization already existed in the form of land for common cultivation, and that further collectivization should be carried out gradually but strenuously so that each peasant could understand its advantage.²⁵⁾ In the debate in the Moscow Peasant's House, I.P.Stepanov, the most enthusiastic advocator in favour of communes in the debate, strongly supported his argument.²⁶⁾

In the debate with the participation of peasants who supported the *otrub* form of land tenure, opponents of Moscow land policy violently attacked its artificial support for communes. They maintained: "if [in this room] the arms of peasants are liberated and they are told that they can choose any form of land tenure without any

obstacle, and if in this room officials of MOZO did not sit and had not told them "Never go away toward *khutora* and *otruba*, and we will give you 'an improved commune', then communes will unconditionally break down with sounds."²⁷⁾ Another speaker, a land-consolidator in Moscow province, characterized Moscow land policy as "administrative suppressions" of *otruba*, a policy that "tries to drive peasants to heaven even by using a truncheon."²⁸⁾

Moscow land policy was not withdrawn despite the presence in MOZO itself of such opponents as Sorokin, Lisitsyn, Kozheurov and others. Moreover, after this large-scale debate in the Moscow Peasant's House, anti-enclosed farm policy became All-Union in the resolution of the XV Party Congress in December 1927, though the political attitude toward communes remained ambiguous. It was Molotov who made clear the new attitudes of the Communist Party toward *khutora* and *otruba*. Judging from the relation between Molotov and Bauman, the political experts on agrarian problems who after the Congress became heads of the Department on the work in the countryside of the Central Committee, it is impossible to assume that regardless of Moscow land policy, Molotov initiated the anti-enclosed farm policy in the Congress. In fact Bauman proudly stated in the Congress: "we adopted the analogous decision at the XIII Moscow provincial Party Conference in 1925".²⁹⁾ The resolution also ordered the drawing up of the All-Union Land Law, which in December 1928 appeared as "Basic Principles of Land Use and Land Consolidation".

Along with the adoption of the All-Union Land Law, an attempt to draw up a new Land Code for each Republic was initiated. The first attempt was undertaken by the Rozit Commission. On May 22, 1929, K.I.Klimenko, the former Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party till 1928, presented to the collegium of Narkomzem a proposal on compelling individual *dvors* into a land society.³⁰⁾ This request had already been widely expressed by various Ukrainian organizations in the process of drawing up the All-Union Land Law, but was not accepted in a final form. The draft of the Rozit Commission approved by Russian Sovnarkom at the end of August 1929,³¹⁾ however, did include such an article proposed by Klimenko.

During the preparation of the old Land Code of 1922, the proposal that the right to utilize land should be admitted only by joining of *dvors* in a land society was finally rejected. The final text of the 1922 Land Code admitted the right both in and outside a land society, regarding it as a "backward compulsory commune". According to the comment by A.Evsigneev, Lenin played an important role in this matter. When the problem was considered in Sovnarkom, Lenin spoke against the proposal of compulsory enrollment, asserting: "It is sheer nonsense to revive the *tiaglo* of the 16th century".³²⁾ According to another new study, at the same meeting Lenin and Kalinin said that "by this we are introducing an old commune, so we will at once after that have to introduce mutual responsibility (*krugovaia poruka*), and the delivery of passports".³³⁾

Thus the 1929 draft of the Rozit Commission* revived a standpoint formerly rejected. It ruled that there should not be individual *khutora* and *otruba* which did not join the land society, but also that they should be liquidated in the interest of collectivization. Rozit explained the article of the new Land Code in this way: "egalitarian land redistribution can thus be carried out, and for the purpose of the construction of kolkhozy and the struggle with *kulachestvo* the compulsory alteration of the place and boundary of *khutora* and *otruba* can be carried out."³⁴⁾

3

Another peculiarity of agrarian policy in Moscow province was that the strategy to collectivize a village as a whole was set by the beginning of 1928 as an immediate derivative of the pro-commune land policy. The important document on this matter is "Materials" drawn up for the XVI Moscow provincial Party Conference. "Materials" adopted the standpoint that Ramen'e should be regarded as an "evolved" form of commune, which should be widely promoted. "Materials" noted: "The principally important and great fact is that whole villages are combined around agricultural machines and common-collective works (For example see village Ramen'e, where complex threshing machines, a tractor and many other agricultural machines are

under *common ownership of the whole village*). Thus the socialization of individual production processes (cultivation, threshing and so on) as a whole village is under way)." Secondly, "Materials" estimated that liquidation of the three-field system had a "*really revolutionary tempo in agriculture*" that any bourgeois revolution lacked.³⁵⁾

Bauman's report at the Party Conference was mainly based on the "Materials" document. But he related the liquidation of the three-field system prevalent to the communal land tenure in Moscow province. He stated: "We cannot forget the phenomena that our province has communes as the main, predominant form of land tenure. Transition to a multi-field system can get under way only as a whole village moves to a multi-field system"; "I want progressive peasants who sometimes suffered from not so good situations because of the communal conventionalism, to recollect that it is not only they but also all the peasants following them that moved to a multi-field system after 2 or 3 years [of the struggle with communes] "Indeed thanks to this [communal] form of land tenure, transition to a multi-field system goes under way like an avalanche (*sploshnoi lavinoi*)." "These small communes, I think, are already not hindering the development of progressive agriculture."³⁶⁾ Bauman referred also to Ramen'e. Its significance lay in the fact that the whole village (*vsia derevnia*) makes one productive unit. He emphasized that it was "a really productive association that unifies the whole village"; "Indeed this is why I regard the fact of village Ramen'e as having colossal, basic significance."³⁷⁾

Later in April 1929, at the XVI All-Union Party Conference, P.Zaitsev reported that it was at this XVI Moscow provincial Party Conference that the strategy to collectivize villages as wholes was set up in Moscow province.³⁸⁾ But as far as can be judged from Bauman's report, the strategy to collectivize villages as a whole was still in the formative process in the XVI Moscow provincial Party Conference, because the relation between the abolition of the three-field system and the collectivization of whole villages was not yet clear. In Bauman's report these two problems were argued separately. But his standpoint was very close to the strategy by the time of the XV Party Congress.

Based on Bauman's report, the XVI Moscow provincial Party Conference decided to keep the pro-commune land policy adopted at the XIII Conference in January 1925, and urged the organization of "land for common cultivation by the whole village (particularly on the new land)", and "the socialization of individual production processes of the whole village" by input of modern agricultural machines.³⁹⁾ At the XV Party Congress Bauman repeated the same argument, adding that the desirable aspects of communes which make possible the transition of villages as a whole to a multi-field system could be witnessed not only in Moscow province but also "in the Ukraine and many other regions".⁴⁰⁾

Soon after the XV Party Congress, MK Bureau in 20th March 1928, related the strategy to collectivize whole villages with the successful abolition of the three-field system.⁴¹⁾ After a month Bauman explained this decision of the MK Bureau in the following way: "Comrades, under the conditions of Moscow province where land communes are not big..., we must *develop* the idea that villages as a whole move to the collective form of cultivation, starting from the simplest form, and moving gradually to the high form. We have examples that in the transition to a multi-field system, land societies as a whole moved from the three-field system to multi-field system *by the decision of the peasant skhod*.... We must, in turn, move to the collective cultivation *like an avalanche*."⁴²⁾ Thus the strategy of collectivization contrived by Bauman and MK was based on historical experiences with the abolition of the three-field system by the decision of the *skhod*. Collectivization must also proceed from the introduction of land for common cultivation by the same decision and gradually develop into a high form of socialization. Bauman repeated the same argument in the Third All-Russian Congress of Kolkhozy in May 1929.⁴³⁾

His position was soon succeeded by G. N. Kaminsky in the First All-Union Congress of Kolkhozy, where he asserted that "if we take Moscow province, there are also examples that the whole villages are moving to collectives."⁴⁴⁾ The resolution of the Congress, which demanded "the preparation of transition to the collective form of economy as whole hamlets, as whole villages", referred to "gradual

socialization of individual agricultural production processes of whole villages" seen in "the experiences of Moscow province and the Ukraine", in which can be seen Bauman's Moscow via Kaminsky.⁴⁵⁾ Kaminsky, however, went further than Bauman by requesting that "if the overwhelming majority, *for example two-thirds*, of the village decided to adopt the common [improved] crop rotation and common land cultivation, the rest should be subordinated to it."⁴⁶⁾ One meeting of Soiuz Soiuzov in June, based on Kaminsky's proposal, adopted the same decision, regarding peasants reluctant to accept the decision of two-thirds as "*kulak part of the land society*".⁴⁷⁾

Bauman's position, succeeded by Kaminsky's, influenced the drawing up of the All-Union Land Law. An early draft presented to Union Sovnarkom read: "as for agrotechnical improvements such as transition toward multi-field rotation, *improved, common land cultivation*, struggle against weeds..." the decision compulsory for the minority could be adopted on the basis of the decision of two-thirds of all the members in the land society.⁴⁸⁾ Thus the improvement of communes was identified with the introduction of common cultivation. But in the final text of the 1928 All-Union Land Law, the word "common" was struck out, Miliutin explaining that in this context the word "common land cultivation" might be interpreted as "forcible collectivization".⁴⁹⁾ However, the famous decision adopted in the course of wholesale collectivization dated 30th July 1930 revived similar arrangements in abolishing of land communes, ruling that when 75 percent of households in a land society had joined kolkhoz, it should then be abolished.⁵⁰⁾

How can we describe the improved communes and land for common cultivation that gave rise to the collectivization strategy, a forerunner of the "Ural-Siberian method"⁵¹⁾ during wholesale collectivization in the winter of 1929-1930? The strategy to collectivize a village as a whole had other historical sources, such as the experiences of tractor-columns and *kontraktatsiia*. But in Moscow province, a non grain-producing region, such experiences were not so important before wholesale collectivization.

In the first place, a close examination of land for common cultivation ** shows that it was too small. As stated above, such land occupied about a twentieth of all arable land even in the model village Ramen'e. In other villages it was still smaller. Moreover, most of the land was leased from state land or was land formerly left unutilized by the commune.⁵²⁾ It scarcely touched the peasants' strips. These factors influenced the XVI Moscow provincial Party Conference, which took up the task of organizing "land for common cultivation (*particularly on the new land*)" as stated above. (Emphasis added). In the course of drawing up an All-Union Land Law, the Volokolamsk county executive committee opposed the draft which ruled that near and good land should be allotted to kolkhozy, demanding instead that to kolkhozy land should not be allotted from the communal but from the state-owned land.⁵³⁾ It suggested a basic difference between land for common cultivation and for kolkhozy.

Secondly, the income from this land was not divided among villagers but served as a fund for common expenditure (purchase of common machines, building of schools or barns, paying the commune's debts). This differed from the distribution of income within kolkhozy. The fact that even kolkhozy, too, sometimes had such land for common purposes serves as another argument for this difference. Though Soviet authorities in the 1920's repeatedly emphasized the significance of land for common cultivation as a school of collective farming, *** such land was a source of funds to reinforce village societies along with self-taxation (*samooblozhenie*). S.I.Chugunov, for example, argued that such common cultivation would never lead to socialism but was a mere form of traditional communal mutual aid.⁵⁴⁾ One reporter who investigated such land wrote that "I don't know in what degree it makes us approach socialism".⁵⁵⁾ In many cases land for common cultivation was connected with the Committees for Peasants' Mutual Aids (*krestkomy*) in the 1920s, which were soon to be liquidated in the course of wholesale collectivization.⁵⁶⁾

Moreover, though abolishing the three-field system was of course an indication of "improved" communes, the improving of communes on the basis of private peasant households could also deepen the peasants' attraction to private farming that only

increased their resistance to kolkhozy. Many examples can be cited here from the local newspapers. But the most conspicuous incidents were the collapse of model communal villages. First of all, village Burtsevo, for all efforts of agronomists and for all official supports, collapsed in 1925 into five parts (two communes, two kolkhozy and one *otruba*). In the same year village Kurovo also collapsed completely into *otruba*. The reporter even asserted that "just as collective farms did not emerge from villages Burtsevo and Kurovo, so under the present conditions collective farms will not emerge from old communes, or even from the most cultural commune."⁵⁷⁾ Peasants from the Urals, who visited Volokolamsk county in the summer of 1928, were seriously disappointed to see Burtsevo without electricity and the famous peasant Sedov. Sedov would not agree to join kolkhoz and disappeared from the village.⁵⁸⁾ It must be said that the improved commune was in its final stage of development on the eve of its collapse. **** Needless to say, in grain-producing regions, a backward communal form of land tenure remained vital till the beginning of wholesale collectivization. In Moscow province, however, many "improved" communes collapsed into *otruba* in the 1920s,⁵⁹⁾ though the predominant form of land tenure remained communal because of the artificial restrictions upon the collapse of communes.

In summer of 1928 Ramen'e received the designation: "Society for agrarian socialization of village Ramen'e named Bauman" (*obshchestvo po obobshchestvleniiu sel'skogo khoziaistva s. Ramen'ia imeni Baumana*), whose name means that the village still remained land society, not TOZ (*tovarishchestvo po sovместnoi obrabotke zemli*). Ramen'e was reported to have decided then "not to destroy individual (private) economy".⁶⁰⁾ Obviously the strip system was left untouched. Its name "Society for agrarian socialization" meant the presence of common agricultural machines, barns, cattle sheds and many others, but not the socialization of peasants strips and their own agricultural implements. Villagers of Ramen'e confessed their backwardness in comparison with kolkhozy to peasants from the Urals. It was reported, however, that by spring 1929 in Ramen'e "open (*otkrytye*) kolkhozy were organized in the

village".⁶¹⁾ Thus Ramen'e did not join kolkhoz as a whole village but followed the general trend of collectivization at that time. Till the eve of wholesale collectivization, an overwhelming majority of kolkhozy remained small and organized a small portion of land in each field of crop rotation in a so-called "open" form.

The meeting at the Moscow Peasants' House in April 1929, where opponents of Ramen'e's gradual collectivization requested immediate organization of kolkhozy, was the last occasion in which Soviet newspapers referred to Ramen'e. Moscow authorities still defended the experiences of Ramen'e at the meeting.⁶²⁾ From the latter half of 1929 onward, no history of Ramen'e can be traced in Soviet publications. This absence suggests that the attempts to evolve communes into kolkhozy were finally regarded as fruitless. The strategy to collectivize whole villages, a strategy to which Moscow province made a contribution, was called for as an official policy of Communist Party from the spring of 1929. But Moscow province (now Moscow oblast' since January 1929), on the contrary, began falling behind the general tempo of collectivization.

In August 1929, a government organ strongly condemned the county land departments in Moscow province for having no plan to collectivize villages as a whole, though this "decision had been adopted as early as the previous spring (March, April) by MK and Mossovet." The organ reported that as investigators in Volokolamsk county had reported, collectivization of whole villages was not seriously carried out there.⁶³⁾ Soon after this report, on September 20th, the Collegium of Narkomzem opened a special meeting about the agrarian policy of former Moscow province. Sorokin, the leader of MOZO, who had supported the principle of freedom to choose a form of land tenure, was violently accused for the failure in collectivization. Rozit referred to the provincial efforts to abolish the three-field system, stating that "although there are many examples that individual counties have moved to a multi-field system..., no effect from this reorganization exists."⁶⁴⁾ The political significance of this meeting was the exculpation of the MK pro-commune policy with Bauman (now candidate of Politbureau) as its leader. Instead Sorokin and others were

saddled with all the responsibilities of the failed collectivization and were condemned as "Right-wing". Because the leading policy maker was free of blame, whether or not the evolution of communes could bring socialist agriculture was not really discussed.

4

As was proclaimed by the XVI Party Congress in June-July 1930, the first stage of wholesale collectivization from the latter half of 1929 to 1930 could be characterized as the "immediate transition" from communal private households to kolkhozy.⁶⁵⁾ One of its basic processes was the by-passing and even the destruction of transitional forms from communes to kolkhozy.⁶⁶⁾ Its open manifestation on the Republican level was a directive letter by Khlebotsentr dated 9th November 1929, which labelled simple producers' cooperatives with land for common cultivation within them as counterproductive. They were "retarding the tempo of kolkhoz construction" and "totally perverting the ends and natures" of socialist construction in the countryside. The task of wholesale collectivization, according to it, was the transformation of communes immediately into kolkhozy "without any intermediate link" (*minuia vse promezhutochnye zven'ia*).⁶⁷⁾

During wholesale collectivization, crop rotation in kolkhozy was ignored in many places because of *obezlichka* of the kolkhozniks themselves, and was frequently destroyed because the boundaries of kolkhozy were frequently changed. Land use in kolkhozy was chaotic.⁶⁸⁾ Under these circumstances a queer report by Kovalev, the new MOZO head, appeared at the meeting of kolkhozniks in Moscow oblast' in 1933, asserting that no crop rotation had existed before collectivization in Moscow province: "it was difficult for small-scale private peasants to arrive at agreements to introduce the common crop rotation into communes."⁶⁹⁾

The final stage of the Russian peasant commune was related to improvements in land tenure and introduction of common cultivation. These "new characteristics", however, could not alter the historical nature of the peasant commune itself as the territorial organization of traditional private peasant households.⁷⁰⁾ The "new

characteristics" gave birth to a peculiar collectivization strategy. But its actual processes were not the spontaneous development of the "new characteristics", still less the "evolution" of communes by themselves.

Notes (1)

* The new Land Code, though accepted by Sovnarkom, was not adopted by VTsIK, so did not take effect after all. After the draft of the Rozit commission, several attempts to draw up a new Land Code were made in vain. None of these drafts was published. Apparently the final draft of the Muralov commission was on the eve of publication at the beginning of 1931. (See: Anfiteatrov, G. Kodeks sots. rekonstruktsii sel'skogo khoziaistva -- in: *Sotsialisticheskoe zemleustroistvo*, 1931, No. 1, pp. 31-39.)

** According to the results of investigation on the All-Russian level, 23 out of 100 communes investigated had land for common cultivation. (*Revoliutsiia prava*, 1928, No. 5, p. 97.)

*** Such cultivation was spread mainly in southern grain-producing areas where no manuring was necessary because of the land fertility. But in this "common" cultivation the hiring of labour was widely practiced, so the significance of "collective" farming was apparently secondary. (For details see Arbuzov, M. *K ocherednym zadacham K.O.V. Moskva*, 1928, p.26; *Krest'ianskaia vzaimopomoshch'*, 1929, No.13, p.5).

**** In England, for example, during the 18th century in the transitional period from open-field system to wholesale enclosure, the improved crop rotation with grass sowing was often introduced by the decision of the village assembly (Vestry) without destroying the open-field system.

Notes (2)

- 1) This is a brief and tentative synopsis of the second chapter of a book "The Making of Soviet Collective Farms" that I am now writing.
- 2) For details see: Pershin, P.N., *Zemel'noe ustroistvo dorevoliutsionnoi derevni*, Vol.1, Moskva-Voronezh, 1928, chap.3.
- 3) For details see: Bazhaev, V.G., *Krest'ianskoe travonol'noe khoziaistvo v Nechernozemnoi Polose Evropeiskoi Rossii*, Moskva, 1900, chap. 11; Zubrilin, A.A., *Uluchshenie krest'ianskogo khoziaistva*, Vol. 1, Moskva, 1908; *Ekonomicheskii sbornik po Volokolamskomu uezdu*, Volokolamsk, 1926, chaps 9, 21.
- 4) Stepanov, I.P., *Neskol'ko dannykh o sostoianii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Moskovskoi gubernii*, Vyp. 1, Moskva, 1922, pp. 116, 122; *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia zhizn'*, 1927, No. 27, pp. 6-7 (I.P. Stepanov).
- 5) *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia zhizn'*, 1927, No. 27, p. 5 (I. Frolov).
- 6) *Ekonomicheskii sbornik...*, p. 487.
- 7) Stepanov, I.P., Foreword for the book: Dyskii, K.K., *Opyt monograficheskogo opisaniia der. Burtsevoi*, Moskva, 1923. Dysky called the village "Burtseva," which was as a rule called "Burtsevo" at that time. For details of Burtsevo see Dyskii, K.K., *op. cit.*; for Kurovo see Alekseev, V.N., *Opyt monograficheskogo opisaniia der. Kurovo*, Moskva, 1923.
- 8) *Bednota*, October 23 and 28, 1923.
- 9) *Bednota*, November 1, 1923.
- 10) *Bednota*, April 16, 1924.
- 11) For the details of this system in the Ukrainian Land Code see: Rozenblium, D.S., *Zemel'noe pravo RSFSR*, Moskva, 1925, p.106.
- 12) *Postanovleniia Moskovskoi gubpartkonferentsii*, Moskva, 1925, p. 27; *Moskovskaia derevnia*, February 1, 1924.
- 13) *Moskovskaia derevnia*, November 24, 1929.
- 14) *Ekonomicheskii sbornik...*, p.446.
- 15) Danilov, V.P., *Sovetskaia dokolkhoznaia derevnia: naselenie, zemlepol'zovanie, khoziaistvo*, Moskva, 1977, p. 185.
- 16) *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, January 18, 1927.
- 17) Kindeev, K.Ia., *Voprosy zemleustroistva*, Moskva, 1925, p. 60.
- 18) *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva*, Vol.1, Moskva, 1967, p.473; *KPSS v rez.*, (8-th Edition), Vol.3, Moskva, 1970, p.164.
- 19) *Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn'*, April 17, 1925.
- 20) Kindeev, K.Ia., *op cit.*, p.61.

- 21) *Bednota*, June 7, 1927.
- 22) *Na putiakh kollektivizatsii krest'ianskogo khoziaistva*, Disput, Moskva, 1927, pp.20-21.
- 23) Information about Ramen'e were gathered from many materials. The main sources were: *Moskovskaia derevnia*, November 23, 1924; *Bednota*, July 9, 1927; *Sam sebe agronom*, 1927, No. 31, pp. 975-976.
- 24) *Moskovskaia derevnia*, June 4, 1926.
- 25) *Bednota*, July 9, 1927.
- 26) *Na putiakh kollektivizatsii...*, pp.68-69.
- 27) *Ibid.*, p.74.
- 28) *Ibid.*, pp.64-65.
- 29) *XV s"ezd VKP(b)*, Sten. otchet. Moskva, 1962, Vol.2, 1316.
- 30) *Bednota*, May 25, 1929.
- 31) *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia gazeta*, August 30, 1929.
- 32) Evsigneev, A., *Osnovy zemel'nogo kodeksa*, Moskva, 1923, p.11.
- 33) Cited from: Koznova, I.E., *Krest'iankaia pozemel'naia obshchina v 1921-1929 godakh*, Kand. diss. Moskva, 1981, p.63. (Source is not cited here).
- 34) Rozit, D.P., *Zemel'naia politika epokhi sots. rekonstruktsii*, Doklad o novom zemel'nom kodekse RSFSR, Moskva-Leningrad, 1929[?], p.48.
- 35) MK VKP(b), *Stroitel'stvo Sovetskoii derevni*. Opyt Moskovskoi gubernii. Materialy k XVI Mosk. gub. konferentsii VKP(b), Moskva, 1927, pp.14, 30.
- 36) *O rabote v derevne*, Doklad K. Ia. Baumana. Rezoliutsiia gubpartkonferentsii. Moskva, 1927, p.9.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p.15-16.
- 38) *XVI konferentsiia VKP(b)*, Aprel' 1929 goda. Sten. otchet. Moskva, 1962, p. 367.
- 39) *O rabote v derevne*, p.28.
- 40) *XV s"ezd VKP(b)*, Vol.2, pp.1316-1317, 1319-1320. One of "some our villages" that Bauman spoke of in the XV Party Congress (See: *ibid.*, p.1319) is village Ramen'e.
- 41) *Moskovskaia derevnia*, March 25, 1928.
- 42) *Moskovskaia derevnia*, April 22, 1928; emphasis added.
- 43) *Kolkhoznoe stroitel'stvo*, Moskva, 1929, p.7.
- 44) *Kolkhozy*, Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s"ezd kolkhozov, Moskva, 1929, p.103.

- 45) *Ibid.*, pp.393, 394.
- 46) *Ibid.*, p. 105; emphasis added.
- 47) *Vtoraia sessiia Soveta Soiuza Soiuzov*, Moskva, 1928, p. 111.
- 48) *Materialy k punktu 3-mu poriadka dnia: Obshchie nachala zemleustroistva i zemlepol'zovaniia Soiuza SSR*, Na pravakh rukopisi, Moskva, 1928, p. 142; emphasis added.
- 49) *4 sessiia TsIK SSSR 4 sozyva*, *Biulleten'*, 1928, No. 33, p. 6.
- 50) Danilov, V. P., *Ob istoricheskikh sud'bakh krest'ianskoi obshchiny v Rossii -- in: Ezhegodnik po agrarnoi istorii*, vyp. 6, Vologda, 1976; Atkinson, D., *The End of the Russian Land Commune 1905-1930*, Stanford, 1983, p. 369.
- 51) For details of the "Ural-Siberian method" see: Taniuchi, Yu., A Note on the "Ural-Siberian method" -- in: *Soviet Studies*, Vol.33, No.4, 1981.
- 52) See: *Moskovskaia derevnia*, May 22, July 8, 1927; May 1, 1929, and many others.
- 53) *Materialy k punktu...*(see note 48), p. 154.
- 54) Chugunov, S. I., *Voprosy organizatsii i deiatel'nosti sel'skikh sovetov*, Leningrad, 1925, pp.100, 102. For the different estimate that regards land for common cultivation as purely "socialistic" see: Koznova, I. E., *op. cit.*, pp. 107-111.
- 55) *Revoliutsia prava*, 1928, No. 5, p. 97.
- 56) For details see: *Krest'ianskaia vzaimopomoshch'*, 1930, No. 4, reverse side of p. 2; No. 9, pp. 4-6; No. 10, pp. 4-5; No. 12, p. 5; No. 14, p. 10; No. 16, reverse side of p. 3, p. 4; No. 19, p. 15.
- 57) *Bednota*, October 6, 1926.
- 58) *Bednota*, September 5, 1928.
- 59) See: *Sam sebe agronom*, 1927, No. 28, p. 878; No. 29, pp. 909-910.
- 60) *Moskovskaya derevnia*, February 22, 1929.
- 61) *Bednota*, May 1, 1929.
- 62) *Moskovskaia derevnia*, June 16, 1929.
- 63) *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia gazeta*, August 14, 1929.
- 64) For details of this meeting see: *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia zhizn'*, 1929, No. 39, pp. 17-18, *Sel'sko-khoziaistvennaia gazeta*, September 22, October 8, 1929. The decision of this meeting was published in: *Biulleten' uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii po sel'skomu i lecnomu khoziaistvu*, 1929, No. 42, pp. 2-5.
- 65) *KPSS v rez.* (8-th Edition), Vol. 4, p. 448.
- 66) Many sources are cited in my article "On the problem of So-called Communist transformation of the communes" (in Japanese) in "Keizaigaku-Ronshu", Vol. 49, No. 3, 1983.

- 67) *TsGANKh SSSR*, f. 4108, op. 2, d. 551, l. 39. A complete analysis of this document lies beyond this paper.
- 68) See, for example: *Sots. sel'skoe khoziaistvo*, 1932, No. 5-6, p. 43. Many other sources are cited in my articles on the 1930s.
- 69) *Za kollektivizatsiu*, February 28, 1933.
- 70) See: Danilov, V.P., *Ob istoricheckikh sud'bakh...*, p.134.