# REFORM IN THE TIME OF STALIN:

# NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV AND THE FATE OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY

by

Auri C. Berg

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## Abstract

"Reform in the Time of Stalin: Nikita Khrushchev and the Fate of the Russian Peasantry"
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Auri C. Berg
Graduate Department of History
University of Toronto

"Reform in the Time of Stalin" is an exploration of a little-known, but highly significant chapter from the last years of the Stalin era. Between 1949 and 1951, Nikita Khrushchev attempted to carry out a radical reform of collective farms, an event that served as a turning point in the history of rural Russia and could be justifiably labeled "the second collectivization." Through the prism of James Scott's concept of "high modernism," this study examines the issue of reform under Stalin, demonstrating the political, economic, and social context in which the top leadership struggled to reform what had become an unworkable agricultural system. The dissertation draws on sources from party and state archives in Moscow, Kiev and Arkhangelsk, as well as central and regional newspapers and unpublished memoirs.

To lay the background, the dissertation first explores the failed attempt by the Soviet Union to replace the traditional Russian commune with larger, rationally organized farms during the course of collectivization in the early 1930s. The subsequent two chapters are focused on the origins of the reform campaign: first in post-war Ukraine, where Nikita Khrushchev had considerable independence; and subsequently in Moscow, where high-level political rivalries and institutional competition undermined his efforts. Chapter four explores the local dimensions of the campaign through a case study from the province of Arkhangelsk. The final chapter

turns to the relationship between center and periphery during the final chaotic months of the campaign.

This study of late Stalin-era reform contributes to several recent debates in the historiography. First, it provides a new assessment of an increasingly controversial period in Nikita Khrushchev's career. Second, it challenges the conventional view of a totalitarian society marked by conformity and fear by demonstrating that there was significant pressure throughout the country for reform during Stalin's last years. What the prism of high modernism reveals is that advocates for change were limited by their own conviction that science and technology could solve social problems.

## Preface

In the summer of 2005 I spent three weeks in the northern Russian city of Arkhangelsk investigating the origins of an open-air museum, the Malye Korely Museum of Traditional Wooden Architecture. I was interested in why the USSR, a nominally workers' state that had long prioritized industrialization and urbanization, had come to create such a museum near this remote port city.

Malye Korely, as it is called, is "the largest depository of wooden architecture in all of Russia."[1] Spread out over 150 hectares on hills overlooking the slow moving Dvina River, it is a peaceful and pastoral sanctuary, an elegantly designed and scientifically documented window into the province's rich rural architectural legacy. Also a popular tourist destination since it opened in 1973, Malye Korely is one of the lesser known products of Soviet modernity. Its natural aesthetic stands in sharp contrast to the more recognizable Soviet icons that we passed on the thirty minute drive out of Arkhangelsk: the monumental square in the city center, the standardized concrete high rises of the working class district of Sulfate, and one of Arkhangelsk's massive pulp and paper mills that continues to spew fumes, which, when the wind comes out of the southwest, engulf this northerly outpost with the smell of hydrogen sulfide.

The origins of the Malye Korely museum, I found, can be traced to the early 1950s. The central figure in these early years was M. F. Kibirev, then the city's chief

[1] L. Bostrem, and G. E. Shestakova, eds. *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno prakticheskoi konferentsii* "*Narodnaia kul'tura i muzei pod otkrytym nebom. Puti sokhraneniia i vozrozhdeniia traditsionnoi kul'tury*" (Arkhangelsk: Pravda Severa, 2000), 8.

architect and a local proponent of architectural preservation during the post-war period.[2] In the late 1940s he took measures to protect the now famous monastery complex on the nearby Solovetskii archipelago as well as the 17th century Preobrazhenskii cathedral in the nearby town of Kholmogory.[3] Likely already with a museum in mind, in 1952 he asked the architectural administration of the Council of Ministers for the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) for permission to relocate another wooden church built in 1642. His request was rejected (he was informed that the question of open air museums was currently "under discussion"), but he continued to support preservation efforts.[4] Correspondence shows that he fought to keep aging structures on the government's list of protected monuments and in 1954 he officially sought funding for a restoration workshop that would soon become an important local institutional base for the museum supporters.[5]

In order to understand what led Kibirev to first imagine and then advocate for the future museum, I began to ask broader questions about the social and cultural changes then occurring in the Arkhangelsk countryside. The museum, it seemed to me, was being created as a window on a rural past, which apparently was in danger of being irrevocably lost. Was this so? The idea that Russian villages were threatened by modernization, I discovered during my research, has been a topic of interest since the late nineteenth century.[6] But it reemerged in the late 1950s, most prominently as a major theme in the literary movement known as Village Prose. And as the Soviet

[2] In 1955 he published an architectural history of the city. M. F. Kibirev, *Arkhangelsk* (Arkhangelskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1955).
[3] GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 4392.
[4] Bostrem, L., ed. *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii*, 3.
[5] GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 4235 and 4392.
[6] L. N. Denisova, *Ischezhaiushchaia derevnia Rossii: Nechernozem'e v 1960-1980-e gody* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1996), 3.

Union and then the Russian Federation's rural population continued to decline, the story of the dying village was frequently repeated.[7]

What was the connection, I wondered, between the reality of village life in the 1950s Arkhangelsk countryside and the idea of creating a museum? Was there a relationship between the ways rural life was being "modernized" at the time and the urge to preserve traditional architecture? Were the churches, barns and windmills that were selected and eventually transferred to the museum still in everyday use, or had they been abandoned? And if they were obsolete, what structures had replaced them? I carried these questions with me as I began to systematically investigate the overarching question of rural modernization in the 1950s Soviet countryside. This in turn led me to the topic of this dissertation: the collective farm amalgamation campaign of 1950.

Many people helped me on this journey, for which I am deeply grateful. This dissertation simply would not have been possible without the guidance, intellectual mentorship, and boundless generosity of my thesis advisor, Lynne Viola. Jennifer Jenkins, Robert Johnson, and Thomas Lahusen have also been supporters of this project since its inception, providing invaluable guidance at important junctures. And I thank

[7] On Village Prose, see Kathleen Parthé, *Russian Village Prose: the Radiant Past*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992). Feodor Abramov, Village Prose author and Arkhangelsk native, weighed in on these debates in a 1978 article entitled "Ot etikh vesei Rus' poshla," *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Leningrad: 1990), vol. 5, 133-152. For the argument that collective farm consolidation in fact did not impact out-migration rates, see G. Ioffe, *Nechernozem'e: sotsial'naya geografiya i khoziaistvo* (Moscow, 1986). T. I. Zaslavskaia recent memories provide one insider's recollection of the debates: *Moia zhizn'* (2007), 619-625. On the topic in general, I have found these works especially useful: L. Denisova, *Ischezhaiushchaia derevnia Rossii* and Judith Pallot, "Rural Depopulation and the Restoration of the Russian Village under Gorbachev," *Soviet Studies* 42 (1990): 655-74. A recent contribution focusing on contemporary issues is G. V. Ioffe, T. G. Nefedova and Ilya Zaslavsky, *The End of Peasantry?: The Disintegration of Rural Russia*, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006). The results of the 2010 census have prompted renewed concerns about the fate of tens of thousands of rural communities; for example, "Towns, villages a dying phenomenon in Russia," *RTE Online*, 06 April 2011 (http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0406/russia1.html, last accessed 3 December 2011).

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## Contents

Abstract ..... ii
Preface ..... iv
Contents ..... x
Illustrations and Tables ..... xi

Introduction ..... 1

Chapter 1: Size Matters: The Soviet Union's Failure to Create Large Collective Farms, 1917-1949 ..... 20

Chapter 2: "Rattling Around in the Countryside:" Nikita Khrushchev's Rural Activism in Kiev and Moscow, 1949-1950 ..... 55

Chapter 3: Seeing like a Late Stalinist State: Moscow's Role in the All-Union Amalgamation Campaign ..... 87

Chapter 4: "To Capitalize on All the Benefits of Amalgamation:" The Second Collectivization in Arkhangelsk Province ..... 121

Chapter 5: Dizziness with Success? Stalin's Enlarged Collective Farms ..... 155

Conclusion ..... 197
Epilogue ..... 203

Appendix ..... 214
Bibliography ..... 221

## Illustrations

Illustration 1: Sketch of European Russia .....34

Illustration 2: Sketch of the Bereznik agrotown, December 1950.....122

Illustration 3: Administrative Map of Arkhangelsk Province .....127

Illustration 4: Excerpt of a 1951 map of Niandoma district, Arkhangelsk province.....140

Illustration 5: Excerpt of a map of the enlarged collective farm Karl Marx, 1951 .....141

Illustration 9: The center of Nizhneborsk, 2011.....212

Illustration 8: Nizhneborsk: The community center and the store, 2011 .....212

Illustration 10: Nizhneborsk: The abandoned pig farm, 2011.....212

Illustration 6: Shelomenskoe, a view from the hills, 2011 .....213

Illustration 7: Kononov's childhood home, on the right, 2011.....213

## Tables

Table 1: Number of collective farms and households by region of the USSR for 1937 .....35

Table 2: Proportional distribution of households for selected regions, including Riazan.....36

Table 3: Distribution of able-bodied workers in Arkhangelsk collective farms .....130

Table 4: Proportion of collective farms by number of households .....143

Table 5: Party status, education and gender of collective farm chairmen for 1952 .....189

Table 6: Collective farm chairmen turnover rates as of 1 July 1952.....191

Table 7: Collective farms and households by region of the USSR for 1937.....214

Table 8: Proportional distribution of households per collective farm for select regions.....215

Table 9: Collective farms and households for regions within the small farm zone .....216

Table 10: Propotional distribution of households for the small farm zone .....217

Table 11: Collective farms and households by other regions of the RSFSR.....218

Table 12: Proportional distribution of households for other regions of the RSFSR .....219

## Introduction

Along the ring of the horizon the sky is still evenly filled by the thick nightly darkness. Sharp icicles, covered with soft hoarfrost… hang from the wooden roof edges. Small paths in the snow crisscross the village and end in a knot near the cattle barn. Milkmaids are rushing along them. Each one wants to be there first, because there is so much work. The barn in Lantysh is the largest on the farm. Before amalgamation there was a collective farm here. The work of a milkmaid is still very hard. Producing hundreds of kilograms of milk and fattening up calves is not a simple task… The facilities are several dozen years old, and space in the cow-sheds, calf-sheds and pig sties is tight. The only processes that have been mechanized in these facilities are the supply of water to the stalls and manure removal. "And even this is a good start," says Anna Semenovna Turobova, "I can't even begin to count how many buckets of water I carried in my time!"

--Excerpt from O. Pavlov's report for *Pravda Severa*, "The Second Generation," 26 April 1959.[1]

In December 1958 Sergei Smetanin made a journey to the village of Yangory in his native Priozernyi district, Arkhangelsk province, which he described a year later for his local newspaper. "That distant and remote little corner," Smetanin recalled, "surrounded by impassable swamps, high hills and virgin forests, was cut off from the

[1] The story is set in the village of *Lantysh*, located four kilometers downriver (Vychegda) from the Lensk district center, Yarensk, and lying roughly between Syktyvkar and Kotlas. *Lantysh* was then part of the collective farm *Pobeda* [Victory]. O. Pavlov, "Vtoroe pokolenie," *Pravda Severa*, 26 April 1959, 2.

main settlements by almost two hundred kilometers." Smetanin had been a part-time countryside correspondent [*sel'kor*] for local newspapers since 1950, but in 1958 he was also chairman of the Priozernyi district administration and was accompanied on this trip by the district's first party secretary. These two senior officials had traveled to Yangory to inform local residents that the three local collective farms—*Trudovik* [The Worker], *Bolshevik*, and *Krasnyi Oktiabr* [Red October]—were to be liquidated and the villagers resettled.

In his article, Smetanin explained that the village of Yangory had been founded a hundred years before by peasants fleeing serfdom and the army, and that the collective farms there dated from 1931. Smetanin found time during the trip to make some sketches of the settlement and the proceedings, which depicted the village as a dozen or so dilapidated homes leading up to the top of a small hill where a collective farm cowshed stood alongside a tall church. "This farming cooperative," he wrote, "had no future prospects [*bezperspectivnoe artel'noe khoziaistvo*]." One of the problems he underscored was that the villagers "lived by way of their 'excessively inflated' personal farming rather than collective enterprise." In other words, they survived primarily through subsistence farming, and contributed little if anything to the state. A day after their arrival, a collective farm meeting was held in the schoolroom, where the stern looking first secretary read a speech setting the resettlement process in motion. Deemed too small and remote, the village of Yangory and the surrounding county were abandoned. There was no listening to eighty-three year old "granny" [*babushka*]

Varvara, who according to Smetanin's article had insisted, "I was born here, I will die here."[2]

The decision to abandon the villages around Yangory was a small step towards fulfilling one of the Soviet Union's long-term goals in agriculture: the creation of large, modern farms. Indeed, what is initially most compelling about this story is the fact that such small, isolated villages had survived as independent farms into the middle of the twentieth century. The case raises an interesting question: to what extent were Soviet collective farms based on traditional rural communities? And if they were, how did the persistence of village life influence collective farms? The northerly villages of Arkhangelsk, such as those around Yangory, were of course somewhat exceptional in their remoteness. But it is worth recalling, as Moshe Lewin once wrote, that the majority of the Russian peasantry lived in what were often considered "distant villages" [*glukhie derevni*].[3] Building on this insight, this study explores the Soviet Union's struggle to overcome traditional village life through their attempts to create modern farm enterprises.

The dissertation examines one of the most important episodes in Soviet rural history: the all-Union collective farm amalgamation campaign of 1950, referred to on occasion as a "second collectivization."[4] Between the early 1930s and 1950, the number of collective farms in the country changed little, except during the Nazi occupation. But over the course of 1950 and 1951, the number of collective farms

[2] "Na novye zemli," *Leninskii Zavet,* 4 March 1960, 2.
[3] Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, Norton library (New York: Norton, 1975), 31
[4] M. I. Klepikov, "Byt' zemledel'tsem," *Znamia* 2 (1975), 92, 104.

decreased by 152,746, or just over sixty percent.[5] In each case, the chairman and salaried staff were fired and the formerly "independent" collective farm became subject to another farm's (and hence a neighboring village's) authority. And over the 1950s, the total number of farms in the country was reduced to thirty thousand. The community around Yangory, which was resettled in 1958, was one of the many casualties of this process.

According to official rhetoric, the merging of collective farms was an important step in modernizing agricultural practices. Larger farms, it was said, would be better able to make use of machinery like tractors and would be able to utilize their resources more efficiently. But the campaign was also rooted in more ambitious ideas about the best ways to reorganize rural life: there were widespread discussions at the time of investing in and resettling villagers to central settlements, sometimes referred to as "agrotowns" [*agrogoroda*]. Merging collective farms was thus just one aspect of a broader effort to bring Soviet power to the countryside. In 1950, a provincial official referred in a report to the amalgamation campaign as the "second and most important stage of the transformation of the countryside."[6]

Yet despite the magnitude of the reform, there has been virtually no research on the topic of collective farm expansion, for a number of reasons. The 1950 campaign took place during the nadir of Stalin's power, a period that was shrouded in secrecy. The few Soviet scholars who were able to take advantage of greater (but far from complete) academic freedom in the post-Stalin era treated the campaign for the most part as a purely economic measure. In recent years, a new generation of historians has

[5] The exact decrease was from 252,146 to 99,400. See Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
[6] The report is republished in V. Popov's "Vtoroi i vazhneishii etap: Ob ukrupnenii kolkhozov v 50-e - nachale 60-kh godov," *Otechestvennye Arkhivy* no. 1 (1994), 27-50 (37).

begun to revisit this period, but—as is frequently the case in Soviet history—little attention has been paid to rural life, despite the fact that a slight majority of the Soviet population still lived in the countryside. The urban population only overtook the rural one in 1959.

I frame my study of the amalgamation campaign around James C. Scott's work on "authoritarian high modernism," a theory of state action that posits why state projects intended to "improve the human condition" have unexpected and often disastrous consequences. Scott's approach has had a considerable influence on the field of Soviet history in recent years.[7] In many ways the amalgamation campaign appears to be a perfect example of high modernism. It was premised on the idea that agriculture could only be improved through state-led scientific intervention, a cause that garnered a wide degree of support among party and state bureaucrats, as well as the technical *intelligentsia*.[8] However, I argue that the ideology of high modernism was just one of a number of important factors that influenced events. By exploring the complex genesis and implementation of this single campaign, this study reveals the tension between modernism and traditional state practices within the Soviet Union.

For Scott, a central characteristic of the modern state is its need for an ordered relationship with nature and society. The state can only govern in the modern sense, he

[7] Lynne Viola, "The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning and the World of the Special Villages," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 1 (2003), 101-128; Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (February 2001), 17- 48; Stephen Brain, "The Great Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature," *Environmental History* 15 no. 4 (2010), 670-700; Sergei Abashin, "'Ideal'nyi kolkhoz' v sovetskoi Srednei Azii: Istoriia neudachi ili uspekha?" *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 29 (2011): 1-26.

[8] Of course, modernism was not new to advocates of rural reform in Russia. The Soviet Union inherited a tradition from the Russian Empire of doubting the ability of peasants to improve their own lot. On rural reform in the late Imperial and early Soviet period, see George L. Yaney, *The Urge to Mobilize: Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1861-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Ilia Gerasimov, *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905-30*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and James W. Heinzen, *Inventing a Soviet Countryside: State Power and the Transformation of Rural Russia, 1917-1929* (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).

argues, when it has an effective means of filtering the complexity of the real world into measurable units. The increasing "legibility" of modern society enables the state to carry out "interventions of every kind," ranging from public-health measures to political surveillance. When states lack such means, however, they often seek to compensate by imposing simplified templates of social and economic organization to meet their needs, a response that he labels "high modernist." He traces the origins of this practice to the Enlightenment, the intellectual setting for his first significant case study: scientific forestry as developed in late eighteen-century Prussia. In order to maximize production, German foresters created large, carefully ordered monocrop forests designed to facilitate access and extraction. But in creating such clean forests they disrupted the complex ecological system that naturally replenished the soil, protected the forest from pests, and—in short—ensured survival. The result was what Germans came to call *Waldsterben*, the dying of the forest. To Scott, this case is emblematic of high modernism and reflects his central argument: efforts to reorder complex natural phenomena (or societies) to seemingly well-structured models are inevitably damaging and dangerous.[9]

The collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union is one of Scott's central case studies, which he uses to draw attention to both the accomplishments as well as the failures of one of the twentieth century's most notorious dictatorships. He argues that collectivization replaced the traditional agricultural market with a centralized system of production and procurement, and that it reduced the village to a functional unit within this system. "In place of an opaque and often obstinate local community [*mir*]," Scott

[9] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yales UP, 1998), 19.

writes, "it had fashioned a legible collective farm. In place of myriad small farms, it had created a single, local economic unit." At the same time, Scott recognizes that collective farms never became the successful, efficient, mechanized grain factories that Lenin and then Stalin had envisioned. In part, this was because the violent collectivization campaigns of 1930 and 1931 resulted in social and economic disaster that significantly reduced the potential for progressive modernization.[10] At the same time, the unpredictable course of collectivization also led the government to abandon its ambition to create truly "large farms." As a result, the new collective farms ended up coinciding "roughly with the earlier peasant commune and its lands."[11]

The realities of restructuring the social landscape of rural Russia were much more challenging than Soviet planners anticipated. The vision of creating large farms helped garner support for collectivization in 1929, but the realities of mass collectivization led to the adoption by mid-1930 of the much more expedient practice of creating "collectivized villages." In some parts of the country, such farms were based on large amounts of land; at the same time, tens of thousands of such collectives were extremely small, prompting efforts throughout the 1930s and 1940s to merge communities. Yet despite the state's seeming omnipotence, these amalgamation efforts proved largely unsuccessful. The process of amalgamation threatened important village interests like land usage, and prompted local resistance. In short, Chapter 1 argues that the failure of enlargement in the 1930s and 1940s was in part caused by the preference within largely autonomous villages to maintain their own collective farm.

[10] Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin,* Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. 69-79.
[11] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 214-217.

The irony of high modernism is that the dangerous state projects of social transformation that Scott describes are often rooted in the desire to "improve the human condition," to quote from the title of his book. The high modernist approach appealed in particular to a wide range of experts, some of whom believed that they could parlay their learning into real-world models that could make people's lives better. Baron Haussmann's famous renovation of Paris, for instance, involved hygienists whose interventions improved the "circulation of air and water" that made it "a far healthier city." High modernists though rarely put people first. Urban planner Le Corbusier, to Scott a high modernist *par excellence*, designed cities in which individuals were simply cogs in the great machine of industry or government. What they held in common, however, was what Scott calls their "quasi-religious enthusiasm" for what they considered modern and a "sharp and moral" angst towards what appeared primitive or backwards.[12] It was precisely such attitudes and assumptions that were behind two rural modernization projects in postwar Ukraine that helped spark a return to the idea of enlarging collective farms, as I explore in Chapter 2. In the broader context of rural and urban post-war reconstruction, first party secretary Nikita Khrushchev collaborated with a new generation of Soviet experts who were keen to apply their knowledge for the purpose of improving rural life. They proposed carrying out measures like comprehensive rural planning, investing in rural construction, and resettling peasants into modern apartments. In this context, Khrushchev emerges as an archetypal high modernist.

But in December of 1949—just as his projects were getting under way—Khrushchev was transferred to Moscow. Within months, Khrushchev's experimental

[12] Ibid., 62, 103-146, 254.

ideas had been adopted by the country's central ministries: on 30 May 1950, the government initiated the 1950 all-Union amalgamation campaign. Chapter 3 explores how the high modernist principles of rural development were adapted and modified in Moscow and in the context of the campaign as it developed in practice. While the high modernist vision for rural reform had a great deal of appeal and helped build support for the campaign, it was subordinate in Moscow to other concerns and priorities. From the very beginning the campaign was constrained by high-level resistance within the government to increasing the state's role in developing collective farms. The result was a steadily deepening divide between those who (like Khrushchev) were committed to making amalgamation "meaningful"—that is, for instance by helping collective farms make development plans, providing construction guidance or in allowing the resettlement of small villages—and others who refused to increase the state's role in the countryside.

Chapter 4 continues to highlight the state's heterogeneity by exploring how the campaign was perceived and implemented in the distant province of Arkhangelsk, where this dissertation began. What did amalgamation and the vision of the agrotown mean once transplanted into the local context? Like other technocrats, provincial authorities also embraced the idea of resettlement and concentrating scarce resources in central settlements. But I argue that they did so often for their own reasons. They were compelled in particular by a looming labor crisis in the depopulated countryside and believed that amalgamation could help them solve it. It is in such a local context, moreover, that we begin to see that collective farm amalgamation took on a very different meaning than that ascribed to it by Moscow's planners and officials.

On 6 March 1951, a brief note appeared in *Pravda* explaining that an article published the day before by Khrushchev about the campaign had been "for discussion purposes only." Close watchers of the Kremlin immediately understood that something was afoot, and within a month the campaign ended. Khrushchev, it was clear, had suffered a significant defeat. Political scientist Werner G. Hahn argued that this episode reflected a high level struggle for influence between Malenkov and Khrushchev. Indeed, it is widely accepted that Stalin promoted Khrushchev from Kiev to Moscow in December 1949 to provide a counterweight to Malenkov and Beria following the death of Andrei Zhdanov in August 1948. Khrushchev's rural activism in 1950, Hahn argued, threatened Malenkov's position as the Central Committee's chief decision maker on agriculture, which he had wrested from A. A. Andreev in the late 1940s.[13] My research confirms this interpretation. Malenkov, I argue in Chapter 5, maneuvered to discredit Khrushchev in a way that could well have resulted in his downfall and destruction. My findings give credence to Khrushchev's claims in his memoirs that he was constantly butting heads with Malenkov and Beria, and raise questions about Khlevniuk and Gorlizki's recent conclusion that Stalin's deputies "recognized that the best way to protect their own individual interests was by preserving the balance of power within the group." The conflict over rural reform was more than "healthy competition."[14]

The amalgamation campaign was a significant reform that raised the possibility of radically altering Stalinist rural policies. Like other high modernist campaigns of the twentieth century, it was inspired by a desire to improve the human condition. And

[13] Werner G. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946-53* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 137-140.
[14] O. Khlevniuk and Y. Gorlizki, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 6. For a recent argument that Khrushchev and Malenkov were allies, see I. U. Emelianov, *Khrushchev: Ot pastukha do sekretaria TsK* (Moscow: Veche, 2005), 272.

we should not dismiss the possibility that it might have done so, to a certain extent. Under Stalin, collective farms as a rule were treated as bottomless sources of labor and grain. In contrast, amalgamation and farm reorganization were based on the notion that Soviet science and technology could be mobilized to improve rural life. It would be this same basic idea that would continue to inspire many of the much more well-known reforms of the post-Stalin era.

**Amalgamation as Rural Reform: A Historiographical Review**

There are strong historiographical reasons for reconsidering the question of rural reform in the late Stalinist era. In the historiography, the period of 1945 to 1953 has traditionally been viewed as a period of economic and political reconstruction, ideological conservatism, social conformism and renewed repression. "Reform" was a word for a different era, namely the "Khrushchev period" (1953-1964). However, as Khrushchev's first big foray into agricultural politics, the amalgamation campaign of 1950 challenges this traditional periodization. Thus my study builds on the work of scholars who have questioned the sharp divide between late Stalinism and the post-1953 era by exploring the origins of reformist thinking in the late-Stalinist era. At the same time, by taking up a long ignored aspect of Khrushchev's contribution to Soviet agricultural policy, it also engages in older but ongoing and increasingly contentious debates about Nikita Khrushchev's legacy as one of Russia's great reformers.

Scholarship on Soviet agriculture in the 1950s is inseparable from the character of Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's eventual successor. This is largely because Khrushchev used rural reform as a central platform in his effort to establish his legitimacy after Stalin's death. In the historiography, the condition of the peasantry during the Thaw—

as the period is widely known—became a litmus test of Nikita Khrushchev's legacy, a topic which invites widely divergent opinions.

To many, Khrushchev came to be seen as a reformer who, against staunch conservative opposition, sought to undo Stalin's repressive methods of managing agriculture and replace them with material incentives and local autonomy. Sidney Ploss, for instance, argued that Khrushchev's efforts to reform the system were undermined by a "neo-Stalinist" opposition.[15] Martin McCauley too, in his 1976 study of the Virgin Lands campaign, dedicated a considerable portion of his book to attempting to identify the supposed neo-Stalinist/conservative opposition to Khrushchev's policies.[16] The dissident historians Zhores and Roy Medvedev also emphasized Khrushchev's crucial support of reform, describing him—for instance—as the only person who "really comprehended the danger posed to the future of Soviet agriculture because of Stalin's policies."[17] They concluded that despite his many mistakes, Khrushchev had left the country better off than when he got it, an argument that William Taubman has very elegantly restated in his prize-winning biography.[18]

While many acknowledge Khrushchev's mistakes, defenders of Khrushchev have tended to emphasize the difficult circumstances that he and the leadership of the country faced. For example, in his recent survey of Khrushchev's agricultural policies, the late Ilya Zelenin emphasized the complex economic issues behind policies such as the Virgin Lands Campaign, the corn growing campaign and the restrictions on city

[15] See the astute review by Nancy Nimitz in *Agricultural History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1966), 326-328.
[16] Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Virgin Land Programme 1953-1964* (London, 1976).
[17] Medvedev, *The Years in Power*, 31. At the same time, they were not uncritical of his attempts to reform the system.
[18] William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era* (New York: Norton, 2003), 7.

dwellers having livestock, to name just a few.[19] As Khrushchev himself argued before the Politburo in 1954, the country faced a critical shortage of grain because of low procurements since 1950 and a rapidly growing urban population.[20] His Virgin Lands campaign, which would involve ploughing up millions of acres of grasslands mostly in Siberia and Kazakhstan, promised to rapidly increase grain procurements. The alternative solution, increasing the productivity of land already under cultivation, would have required much more time and resources than the country could afford (including developing a chemical fertilizer almost from scratch).[21] And recent research continues to provide new angles on the significant challenges Khrushchev and the leadership faced. While the Virgin Lands campaign vastly increased production, for example, corruption, poor agricultural practices and insufficient storage meant that even its successes must be significantly qualified. By the late 1950s almost half the grain produced in Siberia was unusable for most basic purposes, forcing the government to dip into its strategic reserves for producing basic consumer goods as early as 1957.[22] Urgent attempts to reform the system, in other words, created a whole new set of problems, a finding that bolsters the view that, as McCauley put it in his 1995 biography, "despite his failings [Khrushchev] had been in a 'no-win situation.'"[23]

If the parallels between the 1950s and Gorbachev's reform efforts in the 1990s at first shined a positive light on Khrushchev, the economic collapse and chaos of the

[19] Zelenin, *Agrarnaia politika Khrushcheva i sel'skoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow: RAN, 2001), 53, 67, 78, 86-87, 104-105, 109, 140 and elsewhere.
[20] Pohl was one of the first Western historians to study the original transcripts and memoranda from this period. See her, "The Virgin Lands between Memory and Forgetting: People and Transformation in the Soviet Union, 1954-1960," Ph.D. Dissertation (Indiana University, 1999).
[21] Zhores A. Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture* (New York: Norton, 1987), 161.
[22] Andreenkov, S. N., and V. A. Ilinykh, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Zapadnoi Sibirii v 1953-1964 gg*. (Novosibirsk: 2007), 193.
[23] Martin McCauley, *The Khrushchev Era: 1953-1964* (London, Longman House: 1995), 99.

1990s and the subsequent collapse of Soviet/Russian prestige did the opposite.[24] In recent years, a number of historians have emphasized Khrushchev's detrimental influence on the reform process. One of the most influential Russian historians of the Thaw, Aleksandr Pyzhikov, emphasizes the inconsistencies, power struggles, and general foolishness of Khrushchev's reforms.[25] There is no shortage of examples of Khrushchev's overreach in agriculture. In-depth studies of specific episodes or reforms, such as V. I. Tomilin's work on the MTS system, confirm earlier claims that Khrushchev unnecessarily rushed important reforms with damaging consequences.[26] Indeed, the picture of the bureaucratic mechanisms of collective farm administration that is emerging from the archives reveals the complex interaction between Khrushchev, central party departments and the peripheries. The party agricultural department in the mid-1950s, for example, was run by V. Mylarshchikov, described as a heavy drinker in memoirs and as one of Khrushchev's "favorites." In 1957 and 1958, when Novosibirsk province in Siberia was under pressure to increase their grain deliveries, Mylarshchikov personally pressured provincial authorities to fake documentation and use seed reserves to meet quotas, which led to his dismissal in 1959 as well as the fall of a number of Siberian officials. It has long been recognized that Khrushchev put unreasonable pressure on the agricultural sector (for instance, with his public claims in 1957 that the

[24] Denis Kozlov, "The Readers of *Novyi Mir*, 1945-1970: Twentieth-Century Experience and Soviet Historical Consciousness," PhD Dissertation (University of Toronto, 2006), 467. Also see David Nordlander, "Khrushchev's Image in the Light of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*," *The Russian Review* 52, no.2 (April 1993), 248-264.
[25] A. V Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaia "Ottepel'"* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), esp. 156-176, 262-275.
[26] There is a wide range of opinions about the reform. Zelenin, for instance, described it as one of Khrushchev's most "anti-totalitarian," V. B. Chistiakov has described it as "another forced collectivization," and Mitrokhin and Smetanin in their study of post-war Komi argued that it reversed all the positive measures that had been taken to help the peasantry up until that point. See Tomilin, V. I. *Nasha krepost': Mashinno-traktornye stantsii Chernozemnogo Tsentra Rossii v poslevoennyi period: 1946-1958* (Moskva: AIRO-XXI, 2009).

USSR would "catch up and overtake the United States of America in meat production"). But as the Russian historian S. N. Andreenkov's research show, Khrushchev's own representatives were directly involved in corrupting the system.[27]

It was another *perestroika*-era trend in the historiography, however, that has contributed to a new avenue of criticism against Khrushchev: the development of a Russian social history of the post-World War II countryside. Since the late 1980s (and continuing to this day), Russian scholars have incorporated an increasingly wide range of data in order to assess the impact of Soviet modernization on the countryside. Topics covered include migration and other aspects of demography (age, sex, marriage, etc), household budgets and expenditures, diet and consumption, along with more traditional topics in Soviet historiography such as mechanization. One of the pioneers in this field was O. M. Verbitskaia, whose work provides a valuable overview of the declining countryside under Stalin and Khrushchev.[28] Most studies focused on particular provinces of the former USSR, and some have supported earlier Soviet claims of positive trends in rural life.[29] The earliest and most influential studies, however, were of the forested "non-black earth" provinces of Central and Northern Russia, which attracted attention precisely because of the widespread conviction in the Soviet Union that rural modernization there had been a failure. In a number of essays dedicated to income and consumptions patterns in this province as well as family structure, Mikhail

[27] Andreenkov, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Zapadnoi Sibirii,* 129. For the latest (though far from complete) take on the infamous Riazan' affair, based in part on local archival materials, see Agarev, A. F., ed. *Tragicheskaia avantiura: sel'skoe khoziaistvo Riazanskoi oblasti 1950-1960 gg., A.N. Larionov, N.S. Khrushchev i drugie; dokumenty, sobytiia, fakty* (Riazan: Russkoe slovo, 2005).

[28] O. M. Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo: Ot Stalina k Krushchevu: seredina 40-kh – nachalo 60-kh godov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992).

[29] The most recent studies are O. Yu. El'chaninova, *Sel'skoe naselenie Srednego Povolzh'ia v period reform 1953-1964* (Samara, 2006) and S. V. Filatov, "Partiino-gosudarstvennaia agrarnaia politika i uroven' zhizni kolkhoznogo krest'ianstva v 1950-e - nachale 1960-kh gg," kandidatskaia dissertatsiia (Rostov, 2007).

Beznin argued for instance that Soviet rural policy during the 1950s had effectively "ended the 1,000 year history of the Russian peasant by turning him (or her) into "a worker with a vegetable-garden."[30]

It is in this context that amalgamation has been resurrected in the historiography. Beznin, for example, argues that two aspects of Soviet policy played a crucial role in undermining traditional modes of rural life: the amalgamation campaign and official pressure against household farming. Pressure against the private plot, combined with changing incomes, likewise undermined the peasant's connection to the land. The policy reduced the average size of plots across the region (by an average of one hundred and fifty square meters between 1955 and 1956 and again by a further hundred between 1959 and 1960) and led to a significant decrease in the percentage of family income from the private plots.[31] At the same time, Beznin asserts that amalgamation broke the traditional rural social structure and undermined the feasibility of many small villages.[32] He is not alone in this view. Verbitskaia too asserts that amalgamation "destroyed the traditional economic boundaries between villages," and that this "marked an onset of dissociation between collective farmers united within enlarged farms." She maintained, however, that the mergers over the long term had more positive effects than negative.[33] More recently, Tatiana Zaslavskaia, a prominent academic who spent time in the 1950s countryside as a young economist, wrote that amalgamation from 1950 "led to the final destruction of the village commune and the alienation of the peasantry from all levels of

[30] M. A. Beznin "Krestianskii dvor Rossiiskogo Nechernozem'ia v 1950-1965 gody," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* no. 2 (1992), 16-29. For the reference to "one thousand years," see M. A. Beznin, *Material'noe polozhenie, byt i kul'tura severnogo krestianstva (sovetskii period): Mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Vologda: Izd-vo Vologodskii gos. pedagog. in-t, 1992), 89.
[31] Ibid., 82-94.
[32] Beznin, "Krestianskii dvor Rossiiskogo Nechernozem'ia," 22-24.
[33] Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo*, 31.

power, even within the collective farm." What was particularly damaging, in her view, was the loss of the "collective spirit and neighborly support networks," which up until then "had to some extent compensated for the [difficult] conditions of rural life."[34]

Growing awareness about the significance of the campaign has prompted historians to reconsider the government's intentions. I. Karasev was one of the first Russian historians to express skepticism about Soviet claims that modernization was the primary motivation behind the campaign, arguing that the real reason was the government's "inability to control small collective farms."[35] Then, in a widely cited 1994 article, V. Popov described amalgamation as a campaign of forced "sovietization," inspired by Khrushchev, which was aimed specifically at taking away the peasants' private plot. What prevented this from happening, he claimed, was Stalin's personal intervention in March of 1951. Furthermore, he asserted that Khrushchev in 1958 suppressed the "truth"—that the real goal of the campaign was a reduction in the size of the private plot.[36] Not everyone was convinced by Popov's claims, however. As Russian historian V. A. Shestakov recently argued, the central issue, and the one that prompted Stalin's involvement, was not concern about the private plot but the fact that "Khrushchev … was provoking a 'consumerist mentality;' that is, he was speaking straightforwardly about the need to improve the quality of life for collective farmers."[37]

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[34] Zaslavskaia, *Moia zhizn'*, 366. For one of Zaslavskaia's earlier essays on the small village problem, see, "The Fate of the Small Siberian Village," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. XXXII, No. 37 (1981).

[35] Karasev also asserted, without evidence, that "the enlargement of collective farms alienated the collective farmers from the land because now it no longer coincided with the land of the former community [*obshchina]*." "The Reconstruction of Agriculture in Pskov Oblast', 1945-1953," *Soviet Studies* 43, no 2, (1991), 301-309 (305).

[36] V. Popov, "Vtoroi i vazhneishii etap," 27-50.

[37] V. Shestakov, "Politika N. S. Khrushcheva v agrarnoi sfere: preemstvennost' i novatsii," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 6 (2006), 106-114 (114).

Issues of "consumerism" and "quality of life" are not usually associated with the late 1940s, a period traditionally known for conservatism, conformity and repression. But new research on "late Stalinism" increasingly suggests that reformist ideas were percolating behind the walls of the numerous ministries that were staffed just as much by educated technocrats as they were by party officials. According to historians Oleg Khlevniuk and Yoram Gorlizki, the principle obstacle to reform in this period was Stalin. Not only did he personally intervene in decision making, but the threat of his ire also influenced ministers, who "learned to adjust their behavior to Stalin's temperament by repressing pieces of legislation, however sound, or items of information, however urgent, that might disturb him." Stalin's close companions were well aware, they argue, of the brewing economic crises affecting the country at the time.[38]

Khlevniuk and Gorlizki define reform in two ways. On the one hand, they suggest that reformist proposals were a natural result of the increasingly technocratic management of the economy, made possible by the expansion of various ministries and their increasing independence from political interference.[39] On the other hand, they also discuss reform proposals in the context of immediate crises. The dreadful situation facing the Gulag camp system, for example, prompted Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) bureaucrats to "consider a major reorganization… that would have freed them from the need to keep over a million camp prisoners continuously under guard." And an agricultural procurement crisis in 1952 led to the creation of a commission (headed by Khrushchev) that proposed raising the prices that collective farmers were paid for

[38] Khlevniuk and Gorlizki, *Cold Peace*, 62.
[39] On the role of central ministries in influencing policy, see Timothy Dunmore's *Soviet Politics, 1945-53* (London: Macmillan, 1984). On the growth and increasing importance of the technical intelligentsia in this period, see J. Eric Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction and the Confirmation of a New Elite, 1945-1953* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).

cattle meat. Stalin, however, seems to have only been willing to consider the proposal if it was paid for by another increase in taxes.[40] These two characterizations of reform have one thing in common: they both imply that there were somewhat straightforward, rational solutions to the problems facing the Soviet government. Improving the economy or handling crisis, they suggest, could be best accomplished by freeing the responsible parties—whether technocrats or respective leaders—from political oversight, in particular by Stalin.

The case of amalgamation, however, suggests that reform did not come quite as naturally to bureaucrats and technocrats as Khlevniuk and Gorlizki suggest it should have. Most importantly, specialists and administrators judged and devised policy based on their own institutional interests as well as the nature of their technical expertise. Khrushchev's proposals for collective farm reform at this time were rooted in this way of viewing the countryside. The amalgamation campaign—never considered a proper reform in the first place and therefore hardly studied—offers a unique opportunity for the historian to reexamine Khrushchev's beliefs about the Soviet countryside and the specific context in which they emerged. It underscores both the complex problems that the Soviet Union faced as it attempted to improve agricultural yields and the fundamental differences between Stalin and Khrushchev.

[40] Khlevniuk and Gorlizki, *Cold Peace*, 130, 140, 166.

## Chapter 1:

## The Origins of Stalin's Small Collective Farms, 1929-49

One can expect great changes in the Dvina river basin following the fifteenth Bolshevik Congress (December 1927)…. I have been sent to create a collective farm here that will encompass all the villages of the rural soviet (*sel'sovet*)… In no more than two or three years, there will be wonderful, complete abundance in the giant collective farm.[1]
--Excerpt from Arkhangelsk native Nikolai Zhernakov's 1955 novella, *Voskhod* [Dawn].

Many are saying that we need to create small collective farms...[2]
--Comment by a Riazan peasant named Baskakov, reported to the secret police on 16 December, 1929.

There is a tendency to view collectivization (1929-1932) as a complete turning point in the life of the Russian peasantry. As historian James Hughes has written, "comprehensive collectivization symbolically and literally erased the distinctiveness of peasant tradition and culture, drawing the peasant into the orbit of state control and a captive status." He describes collectivization as a "transformational project" that "permanently remade the Russian countryside." One of the fundamental changes, which he underscores, is that peasants were forced to join "large-scale collective

[1] Nikolai Zhernakov, "Voskhod," *Sever* (Arkhangelsk: 1955), 2-92 (56).
[2] Lynne Viola, and Tracy McDonald, eds. *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930 gg.: Khronika golovokruzheniia: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998), 84.

farms."[3] James C Scott describes collectivization as a classic case of "high modernist" economic and social engineering. He argues that it succeeded, through social and political repression, in replacing the traditional agricultural market with a centralized system of production and procurement. "In place of an opaque and often obstinate local community [*mir*]," Scott writes, the government "fashioned a legible collective farm. In place of myriad small farms, it had created a single, local economic unit."[4] At the 1934 "Congress of Victors," which marked the end of the first Five Year Plan, Stalin himself in a frequently cited passage claimed that the process of replacing the traditional rural order with a distinctly Soviet system of life and labor in the countryside was well on its way:

> The old village with its church at the highest point and its best houses belonging to the policeman, priest and *kulak* to the fore and the half broken down huts of the peasants behind is beginning to disappear. In its place a new type of village is developing which has communal buildings, clubs, the radio, cinemas, schools, libraries and kindergartens, and tractors, combines, threshing machines and cars.[5]

According to Stalin, the transformation of rural culture was to be embodied in the reorganization of both the village's physical and social space, and through the introduction of modern technologies. And over the years, Stalin repeatedly insisted that

[3] James Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province: a Study of Collectivization and Dekulakization in Siberia* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 2.
[4] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 214-217.
[5] Quoted in Judith Pallot, "Living in the Soviet Countryside," in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, eds. William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 213.

collectivization had done away with small landholders and replaced them with large collective farms.[6]

Creating large farms was one of the main goals of collectivization. The Bolsheviks, like most European socialists and many Americans, believed that the modernization of agriculture meant creating economies of scales and managing them with new technologies.[7] As Stalin put it in May 1929, the aim of collectivization was "to transfer from small, backward, and fragmented peasants farms to consolidated, big, public farms, provided with machines, equipped with the data of science, and capable of producing the greatest quantity of grain for the market."[8] This last point was critical, and one that he had made before: studies showed that large farms historically delivered a much higher percentage of grain to market (or to the state) than did small, household farms.[9]

The problem, as historian Sheila Fitzpatrick has argued, was that collective farms as they came to actually exist in the 1930s were a far cry from Stalin's "big, public farms." Rather than New Soviet Farms, they were more akin to "collectivized villages," and maintained significant continuities with the pre-collectivized village community.[10] Interestingly, Fitzpatrick suggests that Stalin's regime quickly adapted to this state of affairs, for two reasons. First, the regime accepted the village-collective

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[6] For example, J. Stalin, "*Speeches Delivered at Meetings of Voters of the Stalin Electoral District, Moscow*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950, 37.
[7] David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: a Study in Social Dogmatism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951).
[8] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 39
[9] I. V. Stalin, "Na khlebnom fronte," *Pravda*, 2 June 1928. Thank you to Jonathan Daly for suggesting this source.
[10] For a discussion of these issues, see Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 10-16, 103-127, and passim. For an ethnographic study (based on the Pskov province) that highlights the persistence of village culture, see the work of I. I. Verniaev in A. V. Gadlo, et. al., *Etnografiia severo-zapada Rossii: luzhnye okrestnosti Peterburga-Preladozh'e-tsentral'nye raiony Pskovshchiny*, (Izd-vo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2004), 148-207.

farm because collectivization on the basis of entire villages proved successful as early as 1929. Second, the dramatic efforts to enlarge collective farms in 1929-1930 (later labeled with the pejorative *gigantomania*) ended up discrediting the idea of enlargement itself. The campaign, Fitzpatrick writes, had been carried out in a "spirit of utopian fantasy and harebrained scheming." These two factors led the government to "modify" its original intent and to accept that collective farms would be based on existing village communities.[11]

The goal of enlarging collective farms, however, should not be reduced to *gigantomania*. There were very good economic reasons to create large farms in 1929. And after collectivization, the state had good reason to be very concerned about the preponderance of small, remote farms. The state's efforts through the 1930s and 1940s to merge villages to create large farms, however, threatened village claims to local resources, prompting resistance. The success of such resistance, and the failure of the government to enlarge farms in this period, says a great deal about the state of the countryside in 1950 when the prospect of a mass campaign of collective farm amalgamation was raised again in Moscow.

**The Making of the Collectivized Village**

In 1928, the average collective farm consisted of only twelve households.[12] Such farms had been formed on the premise of merging poor peasant lands in order to make the use of a horse-drawn plough more economical. In the 1920s, advocates of

[11] Ibid., 8, 104-106.
[12] *Kolkhozy vtoroi piatiletki* (Moscow: 1939): Table 5. Also Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants,* 40. On examples of small *kommuny*, see Anastasiia N. Usatova, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia i pervye kommuny vo Vladimirskoi gubernii* (Vladimir: Vladimirskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1961).

large-scale farming pursued a further analogy: the size of farms was once again to be increased in order to justify the use of tractors.

In late 1928 this view gained traction at the highest levels of government, as demonstrated in a report by the Central Committee rural department in October on progress made since the Fifteenth Party Congress (December of 1927), which had set a firm course in the direction of collectivization. Claiming that small, scattered [*razbrosannye*] and secluded [*zamknutye*] collective farms were showing "capitalist tendencies," "more syndicalist than socialist," the authors of a Central Committee report from later that year argued that small farms needed to be united by "group association" [*kustovoe ob"edinenie*]. The report laid out a four-stage process for amalgamation. It proposed that independent collective farms first establish a common pool of educated technical workers and farm machinery, with the eventual goal of "setting up a common plan, administered from a single center and gradually reducing the independence of individual member collective farms." The ultimate goal was the creation, as they referred to it, of an industrial collective farm complex [*kolkhoz-kombinat*]. In practice, this meant integrating small collective farms around "the strongest" collective, referred to as the "the nucleus" [*iadrovyi kolkhoz*]. A stated goal was to "finish with dwarf-like collective farms." The report gave an example from the Northern territory [*krai*], where nine neighboring collective farms had been put in a group, for the purpose of "their gradual transformation … into a single large collective farm." The report also referred to the creation of the collective farm "Giant" in the Urals earlier that spring, which was already at an intermediate stage. "It is understood," the report continued, "that there is no need to go through all the stages. If conditions are good, it is possible to organize an

industrial collective farm complex straight away." [13] The report's stress on "industrializing" agriculture reflected an ambitious if not utopian vision of collectivization, one that would find widespread resonance in the press, especially following the Conference on Large Collective Farms held in Moscow in July 1929.[14]

Records from the conference provide a more concrete sense of what administrators and provincial authorities were envisioning when they discussed "large farms." For one, large farms in 1929 were seen as mechanized farms. As one delegate from Siberia explained, "in every single case the central factor" in the creation of large farms was "the technical base," the "desire to collectively make use of large complex agricultural machinery [*krupnye slozhnye sel'khoz mashiny*]." Indeed, the central commissariats in Moscow reportedly decided in 1929 that such equipment would be provided *only* to large farms and those collectives that had established "group associations." Representatives from the Urals even reported that they were attempting to prevent mergers because they did not have the necessary agricultural equipment or tractors necessary to properly equip them. Some organizers of large farms saw them as vehicles for investment. Often large farms or "group associations" were created, for instance, around existing enterprises, such as dairy works [*maslosyrovarennogo zavoda*].

[13] Victor Danilov, Roberta Manning and Lynne Viola, eds., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie: dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927-1939*, (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999-2006), vol. 1, 422-428. As of July 1929, the Urals' "Giant" would already consist of eighty-two separate collectives. In January 1930, these collective farms were officially merged into one, thus reaching the "highest stage" of amalgamation, according to the "group association" theory. R. W. Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980), 72.

[14] Davies has described the growing enthusiasm for large farms in Moscow, which came to include figures like Bukharin and even Chayanov. Ibid., 22, 37-44. On opposing viewpoints and debate, which at this point fell to the wayside, see Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, 361.

A couple of the proposals were in fact naked appeals for provincial investment. For example, representatives from the large collective farm *Svitskii mokh* (named after a local swamp, in the Western province) argued collectivization should be carried out part and parcel with industrial-scale extraction of local natural resources. In this case, they envisioned their collective as a model enterprise for peat extraction. They were looking for an approximately one million ruble investment over an eight to ten year period. A district from the central Tula province, which planned to divide one district into fourteen farms, calculated that with an investment of 236 rubles per hectare the government would get a very profitable return. As these cases suggest, many of those involved saw the enlarged farm as a vessel for economic transformation.[15]

That investment was a principle theme of the conference was underscored by the comments of a German agricultural specialist, P. Peuschel (П. Пюшель) who reportedly had worked extensively on plans for collectivization in Siberia and traveled widely in the Russian countryside.[16] He first commented generally on large farms, raising comparative points about the United States and Canada, but his overall assessment of collectivization was the most striking. "The majority of existing collective farms – you must not fool yourselves—are candidates for death [*oni — kandidaty na smert'*]," he declared. There was simply not enough credit available and it was being distributed

[15] *Za krupnye kolkhozy* (Moscow, 1929), 65-72, 75-77, 80-87, 91, 124. For a map of enlarged farms, see 486.

[16] Peuschel came to the Soviet Union in the mid-1920s and worked under Sergei Syrtsov, who was then a secretary of the Siberian territory party committee and a member of the Central Committee. In 1929, when Syrtsov became the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, Peuschel reportedly moved to Moscow to continue as Syrtsov's agricultural advisor. According to Karl Albrekht, who met Peuschel in 1930, Peuschel believed that he had been one of the primary architects of collectivization. As Albrecht recalled, when they met "he was in distress because, as it seemed to him, his plan had been misunderstood." See Dmitri Khmel'nitski's *Natsistskaia propaganda protiv SSSR: materially i kommentarii, 1941-1945* (Moscow: 2010), ch. 1. Albrecht's original account is an unpublished manuscript entitled "Der verratene Sozialismus" (Berlin, 1938), and his account was used for a 1942 Nazi propaganda brochure entitled "Kollektivizatsia derevniu – lozung Trotskogo. Udar Stalina."

much too widely to be effective [*slishkom raspylenno*]. In his view, these mistakes were "discrediting the entire collectivization process and frequently had even managed to raise doubts [*otniat' veru v pravil'nost' idei kollektivizatsii*] about whether the idea of collectivization is correct."[17] Despite his harsh assessment, which was rebutted later by the organizers but published in the conference proceedings, his stress on the need to concentrate investment dovetailed with the interests of the campaign.

As historians have noted, the majority of enlarged farms at this stage were being created in the regions most conducive to large-scale farming, which were also the key grain growing areas. The majority of farms were in the Central Black-Earth regions (47),[18] the North Caucasus (49), Siberia (37), and Kazakhstan (24).[19] During the course of collectivization, however, the high modernist enthusiasm for enlarging collective spread to central and north-westerly regions as well. Draft instructions for collectivization in Riazan (a region located about two hundred kilometers South of Moscow) from January of 1930, for example, stated that collectivization should begin with all the villages of any given rural soviet, but then should promptly expand through further mergers.[20] Likewise, on 7 January the plenum of the Western province Communist party resolved to allow mergers by "group association" [*kustovoe ob"edinenie*] as a "transitional form in the establishment of agro-industrial state/collective farm complexes" [*agroindustrial'nye sovkolkhozkombinaty*], which were declared to be the certain goal of collectivization. The declaration even raised the

[17] *Za krupnye kolkhozy*, 99-104.
[18] The Central Black Earth, the Lower Volga and Central Volga provinces.
[19] For the lists of large collective farms, including data on the number of households in each, their landholdings, location and some other agricultural figures, see ibid., 470-477.
[20] Viola et. al., *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930 gg.*, 148.

question of establishing "agricultural cities" [*postroika agrarnykh gorodov*].[21] Officials from one rural soviet in the Northern territory [*krai*] sought to organize local villages into a large milk production collective that would have combined two thousand cattle, but the local peasants apparently refused and the idea was dropped.[22]

There is evidence that the goal of creating large farms had a significant impact in February 1930 on the first massive wave of collectivization. In Riazan, the regional [*okrug*] OGPU [Unified State Political Administration, or political police] reported that the creation of "larger collective farms, which incorporated entire villages [*sela tselikom*]" had begun in September 1929. However, as of 10 February 1930, when Riazan officials claimed that fifty percent of the district's peasant households had been collectivized, the provincial OGPU still criticized the overall low number (109 in total) of "large farms" (on average 240 households) in the region. Their data indicates that eighty-five percent of collectivized households (152,490) were still in unsatisfactorily small collective farms. As one official put it, "although the objective of creating large farms has been established, many districts still have a majority of small and 'dwarfish' collective farms."[23]

However, in February 1930 there was a striking increase in the number of large farms in Riazan. And February also saw especially dramatic rates of collectivization. Two weeks after the Riazan OGPU report that criticized the low number of large collective farms in the region, party secretaries from each of the region's twenty-seven districts reported in person on the progress of collectivization before their supervisors

[21] D. I. Budaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Zapadnom raione RSFSR* (Smolensk: Moskovsky rabochii, 1968), 226, 231.
[22] M. Sovetov, "Yangosorskii sel'sovet: raskulachivaniie i krest'ianskie sud'by," in M. A. Beznin, et al., ed., *Sel´skoe rasselenie na Evropeiskom Severe Rossii: Mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Vologda: VGPI izd-vo "Rus", 1993), 140-154.
[23] Viola et. al., *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930 gg.*, 205.

from Moscow. Party Secretary Bauman, who had in fact run the Central Committee's Department on Village Affairs [*Otdel po rabote v derevne*] up until January, was relentless in his push for complete collectivization. When Riazan reported that it could finish by 15 March, he retorted that they could easily finish a week earlier.[24] These rates were reached almost entirely on the basis of creating large farms from multiple villages. The party secretary of Kadomskii district (seventy-six percent collectivized), which reported having a total of twenty-five collective farms, stated outright: "We organize collective farms by rural soviet. If there are three settlements within the jurisdiction of a soviet, they all go into a single collective farm." In fact, the eight districts that reported their total number of collective farms had cumulatively 275 farms, an average of thirty-four collectives each, only slightly more than the average number of rural soviets per district in the region. The high number of peasant households per collective farm also betrays their large size. The thirty-one collective farms in Saraevskii district had an average of 340 households each, and the collective farms in Sapozhkovskii district, which was only forty-five percent collectivized, averaged 226 households.[25]

The results of this campaign are difficult to judge. The same week that district officials were reporting their successes, the OGPU began reporting "mass" departures from collective farms. For example, on 18 February one hundred and fifty households out of four hundred (!) submitted requests to leave their collective farm, which, in the words of the OGPU, "had been created without satisfactory explanatory work."[26] "From the 24 to 27 February," another OGPU report explained, "an entire series of

[24] Liubov' A. Kozlova, *K pobede kolkhoznogo stroia* (Moscow: Moskovsky rabochi, 1971), 193.
[25] Viola et. al., *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930 gg.*, 296, 311, 314.
[26] Ibid., 280

collective departures from collective farms (some times on a "mass" scale) have occurred." "It is not unusual," went a report from 22 March, "when a large collective farm with a couple hundred households falls apart [*razvalivalsia*] in one day or even one morning."[27] The large farms, in other words, fell apart just as quickly as they had been created.

A complicating factor is that OGPU officials seem to have at times spoken of large farms and *kommuny*, a type of collective that became quite controversial at this time, interchangeably.[28] Discussing problems that led peasants to begin leaving collective farms on mass, the author of one report wrote:

> One of the particularities is that there were efforts to create as many large *kommuny* as possible, and as many large farms as possible, forcefully pulling those who just wanted to create their own collectivized settlement into the *kommuna*.[29]

The official cited one concrete example to explain what had led to the mass departures. The "forceful inclusion of the surrounding fifteen villages into the *kommuna* had," he explained, "brought about a shrill anti-collective farm mood among the peasantry, which led to the departures." Did the expansion of these collectives—which in effect meant subordinating village communities within larger units—contribute to the opposition to collectivization? This is difficult to determine for sure, but the evidence from Riazan is suggestive. Two days later, another official wrote a report that blurred the line between "large collectives" and the *kommuna*. He complained about

[27] Ibid., 460.
[28] On Soviet communes, see Robert G. Wesson, "The Soviet Communes," *Soviet Studies* , Vol. 13, No. 4 (April 1962), 341-361.
[29] Viola et. al., *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930 gg.*, 397.

"plenipotentiaries and brigade leaders," who continued to "insist on their false principles of creating large *kommuny* [*krupnykh kommun*] in which all property and livestock is socialized and do all they can to prevent the division of their extremely large collective farms."[30] Stalin asserted in his pivotal 2 March article, "Dizziness with Success," that one of the movement's principle mistakes was to "skip the *artel*' and leap straight away into the *kommuna*." The central problem, he claimed, was that in *kommuny* local officials "were already 'socialising' dwelling houses, small livestock and poultry."[31] He did not mention the fact that *kommuny* in many cases represented the largest farms. The Riazan episode suggests that the authorities' efforts to merge collective farms into larger entities (which at this point likely only existed on paper), contributed to the abrupt wave of departures that began on the eve of "Dizziness with Success."

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The March retreat signaled by "Dizziness with Success" brought an end to the government's initial efforts to create large farms. Doubts about such goals had been recently raised in the Central Committee. On 25 February, a commission chaired by Sergei Syrtsov, who had been vocal in his criticism of the "excesses of collectivization," recommended that "the territorial rearrangement of collective farms, including mergers and enlargements" be "put off to the end of the sowing campaign."[32] In the following months the press began a concerted attack both against "giant" collective farms and *kommuny*, during which many were officially disbanded. Land organization officials who had reallocated land for the large farms in January and February now had to repeat

[30] Ibid., 426.
[31] *Pravda*, 2 March 1930, 1.
[32] Danilov et. al, eds., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 2, 220.

their work. In Nizhegorodskaia province, for example, "by working without days off, often for sixteen hours a day," land organizers "were able in the course of two or three weeks to reallocate land to over 4,000 collective farms, now based on the land society or the village."[33] Both provincial and local authorities set the maximum size of collective farms at the level of the "large village" or the existing land commune.[34]

The spring 1930 decision to backpedal on the goal of enlarging collective farms had a significant long-term impact on how collectivization would be carried out. Collectivization henceforth would be based for the most part on increasing the number of collective farms, not on increasing their size. For example, in Western province on 1 March 1930 at the height of the first collectivization campaign there were 4,693 farms, each averaging one hundred households. Over the next few months the total number dropped to 2,626 and the average size to twenty-six households. By 1 January 1932 the average size of the farms in Western province was not much more, at thirty-one households, but now there were 18,403 of them.[35] Unfortunately administrative reorganizations make it next to impossible to systematically trace the size of collective

[33] R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 291.

[34] Mark Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz: Soviet Collectivization and the Transformation of Communal Peasant Farming, 1930-1941" (University of California, Los Angeles, 1991), 145, n. 146; see 107 for land societies (peasant land communes) converted into collective farms in 1928-1929. As Davies has written, "The abrupt change of policy at the end of February 1930 resulted in… the restoration of the viewpoint that the kolkhoz-village should be the basic agricultural unit." This vindicated those who had all-along argued that the collective farm be "determined by the historically established dimensions of the villages." Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930*, 43, 51-54. Decrees calling for the collectivization of entire communes, for example, date from the spring of 1928, and were issued frequently during the following two years. Atkinson has argued that the commune itself helped facilitate collectivization. *The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1930* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1983). For more on how Moscow pursued such a strategy from 1928, see Hiroshi Okuda, "The Final Stage of the Peasant Commune," in Bartlett, *Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia: Communal Forms in Imperial and Early Soviet Society*, 256-271.

[35] Budaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Zapadnom raione RSFSR*, 300, 352, 366.

farms by province or region through the 1930s and the 1940s.[36] In the USSR as a whole, the number of collective farms reached a high of 242,400 and remained in that vicinity until 1950, except during World War II.[37] The average size was sixty-seven households in the Russian Republic, not much larger than the average commune in the 1920s.[38]

There was wide variation within this average, however. The size of Russian villages was largely determined by geography, with smaller villages in the northerly forested regions, and larger villages in the southerly steppes. The variation therefore also reflected the type of agricultural, with larger villages located in grain growing regions. As Soviet geographers discovered, this pattern was repeated in the average size of collective farms.[39] And as of 1937, approximately eighty three thousand farms (or roughly one third of the country's total) fell into what one might call the "small farm zone," which was roughly equivalent to the "non-black earth zone" of the country.

[36] The Western territory, for example, was divided up in 1936, and therefore data for 1930 and 1932 do not correspond with that from 1937. In 1930 Riazan' was a region [*okrug*] of Moscow province; in 1936 it became its own province, but incorporated part of the black-earth Voronezh province.
[37] There was an increase in the total number when collectivization was carried out in Western occupied regions of the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs)
[38] Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 110.
[39] Sergei A. Kovalev, *Sel'skoe rasselenie; Geograficheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1963), 123; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 110.

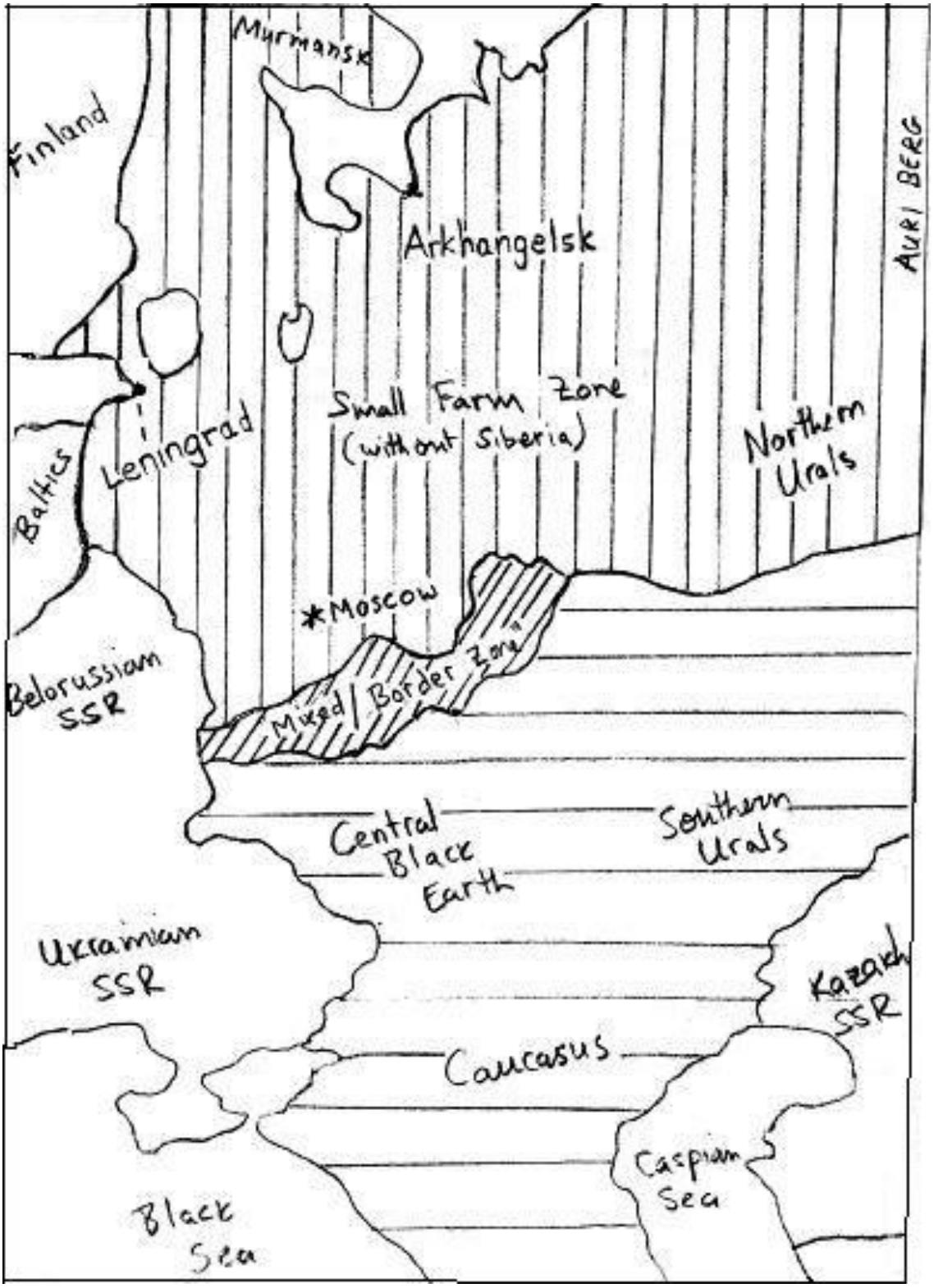



**Illustration 1. Sketch of "European Russia," indicating zones formed on the basis of average village size**

Table 1 shows the wide variation in the size of collective farms between regions of the Soviet Union.[40] Approximately forty percent of the USSR's collective farms were located in what one might call the "small farm zone," which in general was characterized by less than satisfactory soil conditions, shorter growing seasons and considerable amounts of forest. Collective farms were smallest, the data shows, in central, northwest and northern European Russia.

**Table 1. Number of collective farms and households by region of the USSR for 1937**

| | **Farms** | **Households** | **AVG** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SSSR** | 242,400 | 18,847,600 | 77.8 |
| | | | |
| **RSFSR** | 173,000 | 11,572,700 | 66.9 |
| Small farm zone | 97,599 | 4,041,700 | 41.4 |
| Small farm zone *without Siberia* | 83,012 | 3,187,700 | 38.4 |
| Mixed/border zone | 29,444 | 2,451,700 | 83.3 |
| Central Black Earth | 20,899 | 2,510,100 | 120.1 |
| Caucasus | 7,547 | 1,080,700 | 143.2 |
| No data | 4,569 | | |

The proportional distribution of households per collective farm, shown in Table 2, further demonstrates just how small many collective farms were.

[40] Table 1 and 2 are calculated from *Kolkhozy vtoroi piatiletki* (Moscow: 1939), Table 6. I have grouped provinces primarily according to the average number of households per collective farm, though I also take geography into consideration. The small farm zone includes the provinces of Kirov, Leningrad, Yaroslavl', Kalinin, Ivanovo, Moscow, Vologda, Smolensk, Tula, Arkhangelsk, along with the Karelian, Udmurt and Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR) and (from Siberia) Krasnoiarsk, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Omsk and the Far East. The mixed/border zone includes Voronezh, Orel, Kursk, Gor'ky, Riazan' and the Chuvash ASSR. Data is not available for the farms of the Perm and Yakut provinces, though I would expect them to both fit into the small farm zone. For more comprehensive data for provinces and other republics of the Soviet Union, see Appendix A.

**Table 2. Proportional distribution of households per collective farm for selected regions, including Riazan**

| | -15 | 15-30 | 31-60 | 61-80 | 81-100 | 101-150 | 151-200 | 201-300 | 301-500 | 500+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SSSR** | 6.4% | 18.5% | 29.8% | 12.8% | 8.8% | 11.8% | 5.5% | 4.4% | 1.7% | 0.3% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **RSFSR** | 8.4% | 22.2% | 30.8% | 11.9% | 7.7% | 10.0% | 4.3% | 3.3% | 1.2% | 0.2% |
| Small farm zone | 13.0% | 31.9% | 34.5% | 9.9% | 4.7% | 4.1% | 0.9% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Small farm zone w/o Siberia) | 15.3% | 34.2% | 33.9% | 8.6% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Border regions | 2.9% | 12.5% | 27.8% | 14.5% | 11.3% | 15.9% | 7.1% | 5.5% | 2.0% | 0.5% |
| Riazan | 2.1% | 12.0% | 24.7% | 14.0% | 10.5% | 16.3% | 7.4% | 7.4% | 3.9% | 1.7% |
| Central black earth | 1.0% | 5.8% | 18.4% | 12.8% | 11.7% | 22.0% | 12.7% | 11.2% | 3.6% | 0.5% |
| Caucasus | 0.3% | 3.5% | 13.2% | 10.2% | 10.8% | 21.8% | 15.3% | 16.5% | 6.8% | 1.0% |

In the "small farm zone," only seven percent of farms had more than one hundred households and just one percent over two hundred. Forty-five percent of farms had fewer than thirty households, and almost eighty percent had fewer than sixty. Riazan, located on the border between the black earth and non-black earth zones, had considerably higher than average sized farms (114 households) by 1937. Yet even in Riazan, thirty-five percent of the province's farms had fewer than sixty households, and a further twenty-five percent had between sixty and one hundred. Only 500 farms in the province had enough households to be considered large by the OGPU's standards from 1930 (200-350 households).

Building the new collective farms on the basis of the commune certainly would have made economic sense at the local level. One official report claimed that village collective farms "generally elected a competent administrative board [*upravlenie*] from among their members and oriented themselves quickly to the new tasks."[41] According to Danilov, the collective farms "inherited" from the former commune and its members all the necessary components for agriculture (land, tools, etc) and "communal traditions of mutual aid."[42] The transfer of land management from commune to collective farm, moreover, was in some cases not as rapid as commonly assumed. There is evidence that the collective farm and the land commune coexisted, in some instances even for a couple of years.[43]

The retreat from collective farm enlargement in 1930 made sense given the realities of Soviet agriculture in 1930, but it was not taken without hesitation. Officials were concerned about the impact that continuity with the past would have on the new farms. Officials often feared that the new collective farms would be dominated by the old leadership of the peasant land commune.[44] Historian Mark Tauger found that peasants in collective farms quickly "began to act as a group and defend their interests," not only "against encroachments by non-collectivized peasants," but also against "the regime."[45] The survival of the village community had thus created a basis for resisting future efforts to amalgamate collective farms.

[41] Cited in Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 106.
[42] Danilov, *Rural Russia Under the New Regime*, 202.
[43] Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz," 135-141.
[44] *Fitzpatrick, Stalin's Peasants*, 106.
[45] Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz," 160.

**Small Farms after Collectivization**

Despite the government's reversal in the midst of collectivization, the rhetoric of the large farm was not abandoned. In his main report to the June party plenum in 1930, Stalin maintained that there was only one way to solve the grain problem:

> The path of enlarging agriculture, the path of creating large enterprises, armed with contemporary technology … These enterprises will be state farms and collective farms. This is why it is our task to create state farms and merge small peasant households into large collective enterprises, as this is the only way to solve the overall problem of agriculture.[46]

Instead of tractors (of which there were said to be 37,000), the principle capital of the new farms was what had been expropriated during collectivization, which Stalin valued at 400 million rubles.[47] The Commissariat of Agriculture, which prepared a report on collectivization in connection with the plenum, readily acknowledged this state of affairs. In a very optimistic tone, they noted that on average collective farms had increased in size significantly since 1928. At the same time, they admitted that future economic growth would be based on "the rational use of existing means of production, for the most part peasant instruments."[48] Most of the new farms, in other words, would not have access to tractors and other agricultural machines.

Yet despite the rhetoric, the top leadership of the Soviet government ended up addressing the problem of the small, village-sized collective farms very cautiously. It seems to have learned from its volatile and, in the end, damaging campaign during the

[46] *16-i s"ezd VKP(b): Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1930), 35.
[47] Ibid., 32. Lynne Viola argues that the peasant response to collectivization "was of such a massive and destructive scale as to … cripple the potential of socialized agriculture in the long term." *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, 68.
[48] Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 2, 502

first six months of collectivization. A Central Committee investigation into the state of collective farms in 1934 revealed that provincial authorities were taking diametrically opposed measures to deal with questions of collective farm size. Officials from Kiev province, citing analysis that showed a correlation between economic weakness and the prevalence of "dwarf-like, weak" collective farms (averaging 88 households each), proposed liquidating individual homesteads [*khutory*] and resettling inhabitants into larger settlements. Conversely, representatives from the Siberian province of Ob'-Irtyshk explained their plans to ensure that every village have its own "independent collective farm." The head of Saratov province used the case of collective farm Kalinin to demonstrate that the single-village collective farm was an effective way to deal with inter-village conflict. The collective farm consisted of two villages—one Russian and one Ukrainian—which had incited conflicts that had "a devastating [*gubitel'no*] impact on the economy of the farm." Separating the villages and creating two separate farms had, according to the report, given local villagers a sense of ownership over their farms. They described the new farm as "their own" [*Ran'she byl kolkhoz ne nash, a teper' my organizovali svoi kolkhoz*].[49] While the notion of "ownership" should be understood in the context of the time, it seems clear that given the option between having an "enlarged one" and having their "own" [*svoi*], these villagers preferred the latter.

Citing these cases, the Central Committee delayed taking a stance on the issue of merging or dividing collective farms.[50] Provincial authorities, however, were presumably given leeway to work out the problem of collective farm size. The party committee of Western province, for example, responded to the Central Committee's

[49] Danilov et. al, *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 4, 237, 240, 265-271.
[50] Ibid., 329.

inconclusive decision by ordering the acceleration of a local project to resettle collective farmers from small settlements, including homesteads [*khutory*], to central collective farm settlements.[51] In the Belorussian SSR, statistics reveal that local authorities were carrying out amalgamation on their own. The average number of households per collective rose from forty-three in 1934 to sixty-one in 1935. "In general we feel pressure to merge collective farms," explained one official, noting that such measures were especially important there because thirty percent of peasants lived on independent homesteads [*khutory*]. In one district local officials had attempted to merge seventy-two collective farms into one collective. Investigations also turned up decisions by rural soviets to merge farms without the agreement of the local peasants, which then led to reversals of these mergers.[52]

The especially small size of collective farms in most of the non-black earth zone of the USSR continued to raise the most concerns among the leadership, and in December of 1935, the issue was addressed during a special conference held in Moscow dedicated to agriculture in these provinces. During the proceedings, Stalin interrupted a speaker who had mentioned that there were 14,500 collective farms in his province (Ivanovsk). "Are they large collective farms?" Stalin asked. And upon hearing that they ranged from "twelve to thirty households," he pressed the speaker on the question of whether the local settlements were large villages [*selo*] or small ones [*derevnia*], which prompted an admission that there were in fact collective farms with only "ten to fifteen households." "And there is a radius of two, three, even up to five kilometers between such villages," the Ivanovsk party secretary added. He then explained that

[51] Budaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Zapadnom raione RSFSR*, 534-536 (535).
[52] Ibid., 649.

such conditions made management of these collective farms extremely difficult for district officials, some of whom were responsible for "three hundred and sixty to four hundred collective farms." [53] Later during the conference representatives from Leningrad province added that they too had districts with three hundred collective farms, and that "a third" had at least two hundred. In such cases, they concluded, "it is clear that the districts cannot direct the work on collective farms."[54]

Two weeks after the conference, the Central Committee put forth its first statement on merging in the form of a brief decree that would become the legal basis for collective farm reorganization up until 1950. The law was very limited in its scope. First, it spoke of merging "extremely small" collective farms (those with between five and ten households), as well as resettling independent homesteads. It stressed that all mergers were to be carried out strictly on a voluntary basis. According to the decree, two-thirds of the collective farm membership of each collective farm involved was expected to approve of the merger.[55] This requirement put provincial administrators in a potentially very difficult situation: they were expected to merge collective farms, but were obligated to ensure that the decision be "voluntary."

Very little is known about the implementation of these attempted pre-World War II mergers. According to one historian, commissions were formed at the provincial level to work out further details, but I have found no further discussion or related

[53] Danilov et. al, *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 4, 646.
[54] Ibid., 654. There were also districts in Western region with over four hundred collective farms. Budaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Zapadnom raione RSFSR*, 491.
[55] RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 891, 185 (ob); (SSSR, 1935 no. 65, art. 250 from Fitzpatrick's timeline). The expectation (realistic or not) that mergers were to be voluntary was not new and followed the principles of the collective farm charter of March 1930. See, for example, the 5 January 1934 merger instructions for the Western province in Budaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Zapadnom raione RSFSR*, No. 96.

materials in published archival or secondary sources.[56] An inspector from the People's Commissariat of Agriculture reported to the Central Committee six or so months after the 1935 decree was issued that the agricultural administration had "absolutely no idea" how the reform was being "implemented in practice."[57] On 17 February 1937 the government ordered the northwestern provinces of Leningrad and Kalinin to merge approximately 1,000 farms each. Four days later the Leningrad authorities gave their respective districts three weeks to complete a list of 1,270 small collective farms to be merged. In this case, small was described as "up to 10 households." These mergers, also supposedly "voluntary," were to be completed by June.[58]

By the mid 1930s, the state had identified the small size of collective farms in parts of the country as a distinct problem. The solution—adopted first at the local level in some regions and then selectively supported by Moscow—was amalgamation of the smallest settlements and villages. This would be easier said than done.

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The government's difficulties merging collective farms during the 1930s and 1940s were closely tied to the issue of land reorganization. Just as collectivization had failed in the majority of cases to significantly increase the size of collective farms, it also had failed to radically simplify land distribution between neighboring rural communities. This process was known as "land reorganization," and it was delayed in 1930, "pending further expansion of the collective farms."[59] The following years were characterized by abuses and disputes at the local level, which were frequently resolved

[56] Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni,* vol. 5-1, 601. n. 57 by I. E. Zelenin.
[57] Danilov et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni,* vol. 4, 762.
[58] For the central decree see Ibid, vol. 5-1, 143. For Leningrad's response see N. A. Ivanitskii et. al., *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Severo-Zapadnom raione* (Leningrad: 1970), 368. Again, we know nothing about the results of these campaigns.
[59] Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz," 520.

by local authorities and collective farms in ways that were "ad hoc or arbitrary." According to Tauger, some collective farms even continued to organize their lands according to local customs—that is, according to the former land commune. As a result of such local practices, in 1935 "many if not most collective farms suffered from the same basic problems in land use that had troubled the village commune—inter-stripping of land plots, fields in long narrow strips, and land located far from the villages."[60] In 1935 the state made its first substantial effort to consolidate collective farm land holdings. But, as Tauger writes, "local officials and collective farms implemented [government decrees] according to their own priorities and goals." Officials "sought the appearance of success in implementation" while "collective farms looked out for their own interests, trying to acquire more and better quality land in more convenient locations."[61]

According to a 1936 article in a Soviet legal journal, the Soviet court system by and large was failing to carry out its duty of protesting flawed land reform, even in cases when the mistakes "grossly infringe on the land rights of collective farms and create new inconveniences in land use." In many cases, the author claimed, the deadline of September 1935 for the delivery of land deeds had passed uneventfully. And when deeds were issued, they were often based simply on existing land holdings. Many collective farms even went to the courts when they lost what they considered their rightful land, and in some cases there were "constant arguments over land."[62]

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[60] For a more detailed account based on Soviet agricultural journals, see Tauger, chapter. 8. Even in Kiev province in Central Ukraine, out of a total of 4,717, only maps of a few hundred collective farms were "more or less satisfactory" for land organization. "Commune to Kolkhoz," 538. According to Fitzpatrick, "many collective farms were still reportedly working their land in strips in the mid-1930s." *Stalin's Peasants,* 107.

[61] Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz," 546.

[62] V. Korenev, "Narusheniia zemel'nykh prav kolkhozov," *Sovetskaia Iustitsiia,* 1936, No. 6, 10.

Peasants were often dissatisfied with the results of land reform when they "ended up without land that they needed or saw as historically theirs," as Fitzpatrick put it.[63] In February of 1937, complaints and grievances led the government to return land in many regions that had been transferred to state organizations, totaling millions of hectares. While the government claimed that it had successfully carried out land reorganization in all collective farms by the end of 1937, this claim should be treated with skepticism, not least based on how convoluted and contested the process was.[64] Even in the agriculturally advanced Ukraine, Khrushchev claimed in 1946 that "up to a quarter of the collective farms still had sections of land located over five kilometers away."[65]

The ways that amalgamation and land reorganization were both intertwined (and inspired protest) are well illustrated by a case from Andreevka district, in Western province.[66] In a 1936 *Pravda* article, Andreevka district was criticized for merging as many as seventeen settlements into one collective farm, and for merging middle-sized as well as small collective farms.[67] In late June of 1937, this affair was unexpectedly drawn into the drama of the Great Purges, which led to a widely publicized rural show trial, and thus created a considerable paper trail. The Andreevka case was one of many rural show trials carried out in late 1937 that featured harsh accusations again district-

[63] Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants,* 108-110.
[64] Despite revealing the complex course of land reform in the early 1930s, Tauger—based on very limited evidence—agrees that the government "must have" eliminated many flaws in land organization by 1937. "Commune to Kolkhoz," 610.
[65] Emelianov, *Khrushchev: Ot pastukha do sekretaria TsK*, 241.
[66] Andreevka was the center of Andreevskii district. The town, currently the modern day equivalent of a rural soviet (*sel'skaia administratsiia*) is located in Novogudinskii district, in the northeastern part of the province of Smolensk, which made up the lion's share of the Western region. Andreevka was renamed Dneprovskoye on 1 August 1958, and according to Wikipedia, currently has a population of 758.
[67] Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 108.

level officials.[68] The principle culprit in this trial was Konstantin Vasil'ievich Rumiantsev, the district's chief land organizer [*glavnyi zemleustroitel'*].[69]

How had the seemingly innocent subject of collective farm mergers become a matter of "counterrevolutionary sabotage," as the prosecution claimed? Stalin's court system had become increasingly concerned with issues of land reorganization beginning in 1935, following the campaign to issue land deeds. In 1937—and in connection with the Great Purges—concern was notched up to an even higher level. In January, for instance, the chief procurator of the Soviet Union instructed the USSR's procurators to "ensure that the rights of collective farms are not violated; in particular, do not allow the reduction of collective farm land in the course of land reorganization."[70] By mid-1937 Andrei I. Vyshinskii, chief procurator of the Soviet Union, threatened this elite group that their failure to uphold the collective farm charter at the local level would be "punished severely," including the possibility that they would be removed from their positions and tried themselves.

The materials of the Andreevka show trial provide a unique picture of how amalgamation and land reform were interrelated during the 1930s.[71] The accused Rumiantsev had been responsible for writing up the merger plans in January of 1936,

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[68] For the debates about the role of these trials in the Great Purges and their impact at the local level, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces," *Russian Review* 52, no. 3 (1993); Michael Ellman, "The Soviet 1937-1938 Provincial Show Trials Revisited," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 8 (2003); and Roberta Manning, "Politicheskii Terror", in Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni, vol 5-1.* For an analysis of a rural show trial in Stalingrad province, see Tauger, "Commune to Kolkhoz," 557-572.

[69] Not to be confused with K. A. Rumiantsev, first party secretary of Western province who was purged in June of 1937.

[70] Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni,* vol 5-1, 73.

[71] As a result of the Stolypin reforms in the early twentieth century there was a high percentage of peasants living on independent homesteads in the Western province, and that the 1930s efforts at amalgamation such as in the Andreevka district intersected with orders to resettle peasants from homesteads to villages. There is however no mention of independent homesteads in the Andreevka case materials.

only a few weeks after the Central Committee's 19 December decree on extremely small farms. While not denying his participation, Rumiantsev later explained to the judge in repeated letters that he had been given only twenty-four hours to come up with the plan "on the basis of territorial markers, and with the goal of establishing collective farms of 50-100 households." He went on to explain:

> Whether this was the correct thing to do or not, I didn't know. I only knew that at the time this issue was critical to the fulfillment of a provincial committee decree, and that if I did not obey, or if I expressed opposition to the plan, I would have been removed from my post.[72]

The plan was then discussed in the party committee (some party members later claimed to have been ignored when they voiced their concerns about the plan) and was approved and adopted.[73] Party members later acknowledged that the plan "hung for quite some time in the office of the [district] first party secretary" while the party "rushed the merging of collective farms." Out of a total of 229 collective farms in the district, eighty four (or approximately one-third) were dissolved and merged with neighboring farms. Rumiantsev admitted that he participated in one merger of what he called a "*kulak* collective farm" consisting of seven households," which was merged with a twenty-three household farm. During the trial, the chairman of the court asked him, "why was it you who ended up merging the *kulak* farm with another collective farm?" "They… didn't want to merge," Rumiantsev responded, adding, "I didn't know that forcing collective farms to merge was a counter-revolutionary crime."[74]

[72] Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol 5-1, 423.
[73] Ibid., 315
[74] Ibid., 405.

The campaign had led to "mass complaints" from collective farmers, "signals" which presumably prompted the May 16 article in *Pravda* condemning the mergers in the district. As a result, provincial authorities decided to reverse the mergers.[75] During the division of these collective farms, however, the office of land organization used the opportunity to clarify the borders between farms. "Following standard instructions from the Commissariat of Agriculture," Rumiantsev explained in his letter to the court, it was "necessary to gather land, where possible, into a single allotment and straighten the borders."[76] Such "corrections," however, again prompted "mass complaints" and "raised tensions" between collective farmers, inspiring "rightful indignation."[77] Eyewitnesses called to the court testified to the anger of collective farmers when land had been unfairly reallocated. In one case, 40 hectares of one village's best lands were allegedly reassigned, and the new boundary was drawn such that "you have to cross three ravines and a stream" to get to the collective farm fields.[78] Rumiantsev's comments also suggest that conflicts between villages over land were not exceptional. In normal cases, he insisted, such inter-village complaints would be brought before a presidium of the district leadership [*raiispolkom*] for resolution.[79]

In the end, the defendants' letters of explanation were in vain, as were entreaties from their spouses written directly to Stalin. Their defense had argued "there was

[75] The divisions must have followed the 16 May 1936 article in *Pravda*. Rumiantsev mentions a request he sent in December 1936, about the urgent need to divide one specific farm, suggesting that the divisions were carried out over a number of months.
[76] Ibid., 424. Such practices and the resulting inter-farm conflict that ensued had caught the attention of the NKVD in Leningrad province, and there had also been interpreted as the work of a counter-revolutionary group led by the senior engineer of the land organization department. Their report was included in materials presented by Ezhov to the 1937 February-March plenum of the Central Committee, which marked the beginning of a massive purge of the commissariat of agriculture. Ibid., vol. 5-1, , 162-164. During the first five months of 1937, the NKVD arrested 2,116 officials throughout all the agricultural agencies, which caused a significant disruption in its workings. Ibid., "Vvedenie," 28-35.
[77] Ibid., 407.
[78] Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants,* 110.
[79] Danilov, et. al., *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 5-1, 424.

absolutely no criminal action by the accused [*net nikakogo sostava prestuplenia so storony ukazannykh obviniaemykh*]." Rumiantsev was given a ten year sentence. But the first party secretary of the provincial communist party reported directly to Stalin that there was very high public interest in and support for the trial, and mentioned resolutions from workers and collective farmers that called for the death penalty. "I suggest that you sentence the saboteurs of Andreevka district to be shot, and that you make the execution known in the local papers," responded Stalin in a telegram the next day, and the accused were subsequently retried, found guilty again and executed.[80]

Rumiantsev's case illustrates the tense atmosphere surrounding land distribution and redistribution in the 1930s. The district authorities and land organization officials rushed to meet government targets; they planned mergers based on a schematic view shaped by "territorial markers;" and they faced peasant opposition both during the mergers and during their attempts to carry out land reorganization when the mergers were reversed.

Though it is impossible to say how widespread such cases were, the conflicts at the heart of this case were certainly not unique. In the course of the purges, similar problems were found in the northerly province of Arkhangelsk. In 1938 a ranking land surveyor reported to the Ministry of Agriculture on the secret police's [NKVD] success in rooting out "enemies of the people," in particular a certain Tarasovsky, former district agriculture chief and head of a land-management detachment in the remote district of Pinega. Accusations against him included turning in unsigned land deeds with "muddled data;" intervening in the allocation of collective farm boundaries and surveying land based on "rough estimates" without instruments and on the basis of

[80] Ibid., 400-401.

"polling" locals; and other irregularities in land use typical of peasant land commune era organization. Moreover, his district was accused of "not guiding the subdivision of collective farms," which led to some farms receiving more land than others. The collective farmers had, it was further noted, complained as a result, but nothing had been done to remedy the situation.[81] Despite the government's efforts, these cases suggest that collective farms in the late 1930s were still riddled with the land irregularities that collectivization was supposed to stamp out.

And tensions over local land holdings continued to be important even in the 1940s, especially in forested regions where farms were particularly small. On the eve of the war, the government carried out a series of provincial amalgamation campaigns modeled on the Leningrad and Kalinin ones from 1937, this time in Kirovsk, Yaroslavl and Kostroma.[82] Following the war, a stream of complaints and requests to reverse these mergers began to arrive at the newly formed Collective Farm Council [*Sovet po delam kolkhozov*], based in Moscow.[83] According to a study carried out in 1947, many of the letter writers requested permission to reestablish "their original independent [*samostoiatel'nyi*] collective farm according to their old land use."[84] Though many of the requests had originally been refused, the volume of requests continued to increase, peaking in 1947. For example, investigators concluded that in the province of Kirovsk 3,354 farms had been merged with neighboring farms by 1946 (out of a total of approximately 10,000), and that as of June of 1947, 1,975 separate requests for divisions had been filed. In February and March of 1947, there had been 750 division

[81] L. Siegelbaum and A. Sokolov, eds., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 301-303.
[82] As far as I know these campaigns have never been studied.
[83] "O zhalobakh…," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 665, 32-34.
[84] "Spravka o razukrupnennii kolkhozov Tutaevskogo raiona Yaroslavskoi oblasti," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 891, l. 3.

requests in Yaroslavl' alone and there were many complaints from a wide range of non-Black earth collective farms.[85] Not surprisingly, the investigators concluded that "administrative measures," a euphemism for local abuses," had become commonplace and that collective farms had been merged without appropriate support from the communities.

The investigations sparked by the thousands of petitions requesting divisions again demonstrate the central place of village interests within the collective farm system. One of the basic goals of the investigations was to identify why collective farms were seeking to reverse amalgamation. The 1946 independent study that sparked the investigation questioned the economic benefit of mergers. It found that in Yaroslavl' province, in the majority of cases, merged farms were located far apart ("a couple of kilometers"), often divided by "forests, swamps, etc," and therefore the administrative reorganization had little impact.[86]

As in the 1930s, village conflict was also a critical issue. The author of one internal report in the Ministry of Agriculture in fact argued that the usual claims of geographic inconveniences were over-exaggerated. Drawing on his research in a single district of Yaroslavl', he argued that the "real motive" for the divisions was conflict over village resources and land distribution. The creation of an amalgamated farm meant rearranging land usage based on the number of workers [*vyravnivanie nagruzki brigad*] in each of the farm's new brigades (former independent collective farms), and concentrating the enlarged collective's livestock in a central and presumably superior

[85] RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 665, ll. 1-5 and RGAE f. 7486, op. 7(1), d. 891, ll. 277-284.
[86] The study was carried out by an economist and then forwarded to the Collective Farm Council. "Ob oshibkakh…," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7(1) d. 891, ll. 265-273. The argument that the mergers were not economically justified was taken up and expanded by the Soviet historian S. Dolgov in the late 1960s. See his "Razukrupnenie kolkhozov v pervye poslevoennye gody," *Problemy otechestvennoi istorii*, (Moscow, 1973).

facility. Such redistribution, he claimed, often led to conflict between villages. When good land formerly belonging to one collective farm, for example, was reassigned to another brigade, the villagers "began to express their dissatisfaction and requested to reestablish their former collective farm." Drawing on statistical data, he showed that collective farms had unequal resources and argued that the process of equalization inherent in the mergers benefited some villages to the detriment of others. This, he argued, was the real motive for dividing such collective farms. [87]

Instructions drafted by Collective Farm Council [*Sovet po delam kolkhozov*], a Moscow based organization created in 1946, implicitly acknowledged that conflict, between communities was a pertinent issue, and sought to obviate such problems by insisting on orderly procedures. For example, the instructions specified that "collective farm buildings such as barns, grain storages and others should not be relocated." In the case of divisions the instructions explained the need for all members of the collective farm to agree on "the distribution of lands and the division of property between collective farms… as well as the order [*poriadok*] of establishing compensation for property that cannot be divided." [88]

Individual reports also often highlighted the importance of inter-village conflict as an impediment to merging collective farms. Often collective farm chairmen were not

[87] "O razukrupnennii kolkhozov Tutaevskogo raiona Yaroslavskoi oblasti," ll. 3-17. As Dolgov points out, collective farms also had unequal taxation responsibilities. Collective farms with low number of workers and machinery in relation to the area of land designated for sowing, collective farms with a lot of land [*mnogozemel'nye kolkhozy*] were in an especially difficult situation. This was also an incentive for strong brigades to form their own collective farm. Some farms were willing to merge with weaker ones, as long as they could do so without taking their land-based tax obligations, which was unacceptable to the central authorities that established the yearly plan. In 1946-1947 the Ministry of Agriculture raised the question of reviewing the system or at least lowering obligations for such collective farms. Dolgov, "Razukrupnenie kolkhozov v pervye poslevoennye gody," 86.

[88] There are a number of drafts of the proposed law. "O poriadke ob'edinenia i razukrupneniia kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, 7(1), d. 891, ll. 233-260.

seen as impartial. One village complained that manure from the collective cattle was no longer being spread on their fields, giving "an undeserved advantage" to the closer fields of the other brigade.[89] The collective farm *Krasnyi udarnik* [The Red Shockworker] "must be divided," argued the chairman of one district executive committee in the province of Yaroslavl', "or else by fall there will be nothing left to divide. The collective farmers are leaving… Reprisals between the villages of Karimovo and Chizhovo, former separate farms, began from the first day they were merged." He continued, "The loss of discipline in a number of collective farms because of the distance between the villages and the collective farm center led to significant losses during the harvest of 1946, and in some cases the entire crop was left un-harvested."[90]

As a result of this investigation, the government retreated again on amalgamation. The Council of Ministers of the USSR decided in 1947 that the Kirovsk and Yaroslavl' executive committees should be forced to "liquidate mistakes made during amalgamation," which in practice meant restoring the collective farms to their pre-war boundaries.[91] And the revised procedures for merging and dividing collective farms drafted by the Council for Collective Farm Affairs was shelved, which once again meant accepting the fact of tens of thousands of small, "independent" collective farms.

[89] "Spravka o razukrupnenii kolkhozov Vladimirskoi oblasti," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1 d. 665, l. 37.
[90] "Spravka o sostoianii dela po razukrupneniiu kolkhozov v Kostromskoi oblasti," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 665, l. 37.
[91] Decrees of the Council of Ministers SSSR, 11 October and 4 November 1947, no. 3359 and 3719.

**Conclusion**

While "the typical Russian village of the 1930s was hungry, drab, depopulated, and demoralized," writes Fitzpatrick, "there was another village, happy and prosperous, bustling with people...." "Lovingly created in newspapers, movies, political speeches, and official statistics," this new Soviet village "was not life as it was, but life as good Soviet citizens hoped it was becoming."[92] The frequent claim that the Soviet Union had replaced the traditional village with "large farms" was one element of this propagandistic representation of Soviet rural life as *it was becoming*.[93] Even in the late 1940s, collective farms as a rule were based on existing village communities, which—in much of the country, in particular the non-black earth regions—were often small and remote. But the image of the new Soviet village was not just a matter of propaganda: many Soviet officials continued to believe in the high modernist vision of rural modernization. After the failures of 1930, the authorities proceeded cautiously, and focused their efforts on the smallest farms.

As cases from both the 1930s and 1940s show, the goal of enlarging farms touched on issues that were important enough to villagers to provoke heated responses. One of the most contentious issues was the distribution of local resources. An important implied benefit of amalgamation—the rationalization of land distribution between collective farms—threatened to alter historic patterns of village land use, and was the subject of bitter recriminations. Amalgamation also promised to benefit some communities more than others. Which former farm would be chosen as the center of the new collective? How would the new chairman guarantee fairness for each village?

[92] Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 262.
[93] Stalin repeated the claim in 1946. See his "*Speeches Delivered at Meetings of Voters of the Stalin Electoral District, Moscow*, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950), 37.

In sum, in the 1930s and 1940s the abstract goal of enlarging farms ran aground on the complex reality of the Soviet collectivized countryside. In an era of scarcity, neither the state nor the village was willing (or able) to proffer the investment necessary to make amalgamation meaningful. And this was the status quo in 1949, when the first party secretary of Ukraine, Nikita Khrushchev, again raised the idea of merging collective farms.

## Chapter 2:

## "Rattling Around in the Countryside:"

## Nikita Khrushchev's Rural Activism in Kiev and Moscow, 1949-1950

It must be openly stated that during the years of Nikita Sergeevich's absence from Moscow, we watched with envy, with real envy, how our Ukrainian comrades worked under his tireless supervision.

--Stalin-prize winning Boris Iofan at conference in Moscow [1]

Nikita Khrushchev, so the argument goes, secretly wanted to take away the Soviet peasantry's primary source of subsistence: their private family plot of land guaranteed by the collective farm charter of 1935. Political exile and former Menshevik Boris Nicolaevsky first made this claim in a 1951 *Soviet Studies* article entitled "The New Soviet Campaign against the Peasants." The article analyzed the then-ongoing collective farm amalgamation campaign, which he described as "Khrushchev's agrarian experiment." The true goal of the campaign, he argued, was to "stamp out all traces of individualism in peasants"—individualism that was above all expressed through the peasantry's attachment to their private gardens. At stake, Nicolaevsky claimed, was the fate of the peasantry as a class, and he predicted that as a result of the campaign the "vast majority of the population" would end up living in "barracks, doubtless differing

[1] Khrushchev was present. "Stenogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu vnutrikhoziaistvennogo zemlustroistva tsentrov kolkhozov i kolkhoznykh sel (25-26 July 1950)," TsAOPIM f. 3, op. 124, d. 191, l. 143.

little in architecture from those in concentration camps."[2] Nicolaevsky's article, which was written in December 1950 but published only in April of the following year, included a postscript noting that following a "secret and intense struggle…. Khrushchev had suffered a decisive defeat…. [and therefore] the peasant resettlement project, for the time being at least, has been abandoned." The implication, of course, was that Khrushchev's defeat had saved the peasantry from dramatic government measures.

This view that Khrushchev wanted to take away the family plot was tempered over the years but in the last two decades has had a resurgence. As evidence historians cite Khrushchev's own disparaging comments about the place of household agriculture on collective farms,[3] rural policies from his time in power,[4] as well as his role in the 1950 "agrarian experiment" that Nicolaevsky described. The fact that Khrushchev proposed legislation in 1948 that allowed collective farm general meetings the right to deport violators of labor discipline to labor camps has also been treated as evidence of his hostility towards the peasantry.[5] But reducing the size of the peasant private plot, while not objectionable to Khrushchev, was not a central factor when he first began to champion amalgamation in the Ukrainian Republic. Rather, he believed that the success of collectivized agriculture depended on greater state support for the modernization of farming.

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[2] Boris Nikolaevsky, "The New Soviet Campaign against the Peasants," (*Soviet Studies*, April 1951), 81, 92, 97.

[3] For examples, see Yurii Aksiutin, ed., *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Materialy k biografii*. Moscow: Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1989, 97-106, and Anatoly Strelyanyi, "The Last Romantic," in Nikita S. Khrushchev and Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 2004); among others.

[4] Karl Wädekin originally developed this argument in his 1973 monograph, *The Private Sector in Soviet Agriculture* (Berkeley: 1973); more recently see M. A. Beznin "Krestianskii dvor Rossiiskogo Nechernozem'ia v 1950-1965 gody," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* no. 2 (1992), 16-29.

[5] For an excellent and balanced account of the campaign, see Jean Levesque, "'Part-Time Peasants:' Labor Discipline, Collective Farm Life, and the Fate of Soviet Socialized Agriculture after the Second World War, 1945-1953" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003), 119-183.

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Nikita Khrushchev first took charge of Ukraine in January of 1938 after his rapid rise in Moscow, where he had gone from being a student party activist at Moscow's Stalin Industrial Academy in 1930 to Moscow city and then province party chief by 1934 and 1935 respectively. On his departure from Moscow, Khrushchev later recalled, Stalin told him, "right now the main thing for the Soviet Union is agriculture, the agriculture of Ukraine. You will have to set aside what's familiar to you and pay more attention to organizing collective farms…" "I tried to learn everything about farming," Khrushchev explained in retrospect, "I spent a lot of time traveling around Ukraine, visiting farms and villages, talking to agronomists and managers."[6]

But in the summer of 1941 Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Over the course of the war, each of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's 28,000 collective farms was completely or partially destroyed.[7] And the postwar recovery of agriculture was slow. Reconstruction efforts were focused on cities and industries[8] and in the winter of 1946-1947 the country experienced an unacknowledged famine while

[6] Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era*, 125.
[7] Ibid., 179.
[8] No one to my knowledge has studied the government's involvement in post-war rural reconstruction in Ukraine. An important source would be the Ukrainian Republican decree of 27 April 1945, "O stroitel'stve zhilykh domov kolkhoznikov, proizvodstvennykh postroek v kolkhozakh i kul'turno-bytovykh zdanii na sele," referred to in DAKO f. R-5, op. 3, d. 2589, l. 3. Khrushchev claimed that in the aftermath of the war, he resisted efforts by architects and planners to try to control the building process, and instead prioritized getting people into some kind of housing as soon as possible. "Let people build from whatever is available and however they can," he explained, "… It's easier for us to (in five years) take apart and rebuild a poorly built house than leave people an unecessary extra day in the pit that the Germans drove them into." N. G. Tomilina and Andrei Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva Tsveta Vremeni: Dokumenty iz lichnogo fonda N.S. Khrushcheva*, (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia", 2009), vol. 1, 179-192 (182). Also see his speech during a conference organized by the Department of Rural and Collective Farm Construction on 24 April 1946, the records of which can be found in RGANI f. 52, op. 1, d. 112, ll. 32-62.

continuing to export grain.[9] As Khrushchev later recalled, in those years "the absolute majority of collective farms were just dragging out a miserable, poverty-stricken existence."[10] Khrushchev saw this for himself in his native village of Kalinovka, in the Kursk province but only seven kilometers from the Ukrainian border, which he visited apparently on Stalin's suggestion in 1946.[11] The village was in ruins; there was no electricity, no machinery, and people were hungry. "He came right out to the fields where we were using cows to plow," one woman later recalled.[12] Khrushchev warned his own officials that peasants would be adamantly against using their own private cows to plough collective farm land, but insisted there was no other option.[13]

It is in this general context that Khrushchev began to experiment with rural development. The year 1949 marked a turning point in Khrushchev's tenure in Ukraine. His confidence no doubt was boosted by the fact that he had bested grain procurement targets for the republic yearly since 1947.[14] According to some observers, there was a growing cult of Khrushchev's leadership. At the Sixteenth Congress [*s"ezd*] of the Ukrainian Communist party in January 1949—the first one to be held in nine years—"glasses were raised in honor of two figures: Stalin and Khrushchev."[15] At the Congress Khrushchev took the opportunity to praise one particular initiative: the proposal by the district of Cherkassy to carry out a ten-year, district-wide plan of

[9] On the famine, see Nicholas Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946-47 in Global and Historical Perspective* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and F. V. Zima, *Golod v SSSR, 1946-1947 godov: Proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (Moscow, 1999). For a very brief but sympathetic summary of Khrushchev's organization of agricultural affairs in Ukraine, see I. Kozhukalo and Yu. I. Shapoval, "N. S. Khrushchev na Ukraine," *Voprosy istorii KPSS* 9 (1989), 94-95.
[10] Khrushchev and Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 314.
[11] Anatoly Strelyany, "The Last Romantic," in Nikita S. Khrushchev and Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 2004), 613. Kalinovka was located seven kilometers from the Ukrainian border, in Kursk province, Khomutovskii district.
[12] Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era*, 185.
[13] Emelianov, *Khrushchev: Ot pastukha do sekretaria TsK*, 238.
[14] Zhores A. Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture,* (New York: Norton, 1987), 153.
[15] Kozhukalo, "Khrushchev na Ukraine," 97.

"comprehensive redevelopment." While there were few specifics, Khrushchev noted that the plan included the resettlement of peasant families out of "old huts" and into new homes in new settlements. "This is not a far-off dream," Khrushchev claimed, "this is a real project that the collective farmers of Cherkassy have already begun." [16] Khrushchev, in fact, was referring to the soon-to-be widely publicized plans for the Stalin agrotown [*agrogorod*].

**Khrushchev and the Agrotown**

The term agrotown [*agrogorod*] dates to 1930.[17] In ideological terms, creating agrotowns was about "overcoming the inequalities between the city and the village," a firm Bolshevik tenet that has been traced back to Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* of 1848.[18] Collectivization itself was premised on the idea that backward rural Russia had to be transformed along modern, industrial lines. This explains in part why urban workers, the so-called 25,000ers, were sent to lead collective farms in early 1930. As historian Lynne Viola writes, "The reigning ethos pervading the experimentation on the collective farms in 1930 was that of the industrial utopia."[19] This was true even in literature: by 1930, "urbanist prose" had come to dominate over

[16] A version of the letter addressed to Khrushchev can be found in DAKO f. R-5, op. 3, d. 2589, ll. 3-16, and the excerpt from his speech is quoted on 99. The letter was published in *Pravda Ukrainy* on 24 February and *Kievskaya Pravda* on 25 February 1949.
[17] According to a Google Ngram search, as of 1 May 2012 the Russian term "agrogorod" [агрогород] first appeared in 1930.
[18] Luba Richter, "Plans to Urbanize the Countryside, 1950-1962," in *Soviet Planning; Essays in Honour of Naum Jasny*, ed. Jane Degras, Naum Jasny, and Alec Nove (Oxford,: Blackwell, 1964), 32.
[19] Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 153. For a later study focused on the "industrial utopianism" Soviet rural policy in the 1930s, see Mathew F. Oja, "The Quest for the Ultimate *Smychka*:" Stalinist Utopinism and the Industrialization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1941." Ph.D. Dissertation. Georgetown University, 1995.

the "antiurbanist" peasant utopian writing of the early 1920s.[20] Yet despite these sentiments, the goal of enlarging farms was abandoned during the violence of collectivization. Still, the idea of "urbanizing" the countryside retained its appeal.

The first planned agrotown was developed within the Timiriazev Agricultural Academy. "Working all out for three days and three nights," a committee created plans for a "socialist agrotown" for a newly created giant collective farm [*kommuna*] in the lower Volga province of Khoper. According to a newspaper report, the city was intended to house 44,000 persons divided into twenty-two blocks of apartments, with communal eating facilities, a library, gymnasium and solarium in each block. Existing settlements, at the time scattered over a radius of 15-20 kilometers, were to be resettled. In early 1930, however, the plan was abandoned.[21]

There were also a couple of rather well-publicized cases in the North Caucusus' Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic [ASSR] of Kabardino-Balkaria in the mid 1930s. These projects have not been studied to my knowledge, and as the only significant precedent, it is worth considering the details of one of them briefly. The largest project was at the collective farm Kirov in the village of Zaiukovo, located in a small valley on the right bank of the river Baksan.[22] A canal from one of the Soviet

[20] See Katerina Clark, "Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Soviet Case Studies," in Gary Saul Morson, ed., *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986), 235-236.

[21] The Khoper province is now part of the district of Uriupinsk, in northeastern Volgograd province. Yuri Larin was also sympathetic to the agrotown idea. According to historian R. W. Davies, there were some cases in 1930 of individuals being "transferred into a makeshift central 'agrotowns'." Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 42-48, 61. For an overview of the very meager accomplishments made in rural planning during the 1930s and 1940s, see Neil Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside: Policy Innovation and Institutional Decay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 97-101.

[22] There were supposedly plans to eventually build six agrotowns in Kabardino-Balkaria.

Union's first hydroelectric projects also passed through the village.[23] According to *Pravda*, planning for the agrotown was already underway in 1933.[24] In the summer of 1934, a team from the Commissariat of Agriculture led by the architect A. Osmolovskii visited the site. Not long after they sent plans from Moscow that were posted in the farm's community center [*klub*].[25]

So what was this agrotown? Reading *Pravda*, one envisions the complete transformation of the village, reminiscent of Stalin's claims at the 1934 party "Congress of Victors" that the "the old village with its church at the highest point" was being replaced by a new socialist village. In place of the "small houses of sun-dried brick" typical of the province, *Pravda* reported that 1,200 "separate apartments with their own bathroom, storage room and kitchen" were planned.[26]

However, other reports suggest that the project was more modest than *Pravda* claimed. According to the *Krestianskaia Gazeta* journalist Yakov Makarenko, who came with his family to live in Zaiukovo from January 1937 until the fall of 1938, the agrotown was in fact being built *alongside* the old village. When he arrived, sixteen houses "with all their finishings" had been built on a "spacious and almost even one hundred hectare field at the foot of a forested chain of hills." "They put us up in one of the houses of the Agrotown," he wrote of his arrival. It consisted of "two large comfortable living [*zhilye*] rooms, a hall, a kitchen and a pantry. I wanted to live in the

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[23] Yakov I. Makarenko, *Druz'ia, kakikh znal i liubliu* (Nal'chik, Poligrafservis i T: 2005), 8-9. Construction on the Baksansk hydroelectric station, which was part of the Soviet Union's (and Lenin's) original electrification plan (GOELRO), began in 1930 and the first generator was put into use on 20 September 1936, providing enough "electricity for the entire Republic, as well as to a number of mineral-water resorts." Ibid., 9. To date, two of its turbines have been in use since 1938. http://kirov.kp.ru/online/news/705832/. Accessed 29 October 2010. I thank publishers Viktor and Maria Kotliarov for helping me acquire a copy of this book.
[24] *Pravda*, 4 December 1933, 1.
[25] Makarenko, *Druz'ia, kakikh znal i liubliu*, 69-70.
[26] *Pravda*, 10 June 1935.

village [*v aule*], in a hut [*v sakle*], together with all the collective farmers. But my new friends were implacable: it is better in the Agrotown." Makarenko provides vivid details of the agrotown, "the first in Kabardino-Balkaria, and the first in Russia for that matter," he wrote. "From dawn to dusk for three years straight trucks and tractors made their way to and from the site… and hundreds of locals [he referred to them as *gortsy,* or "mountaineers," which was a commonly used term for many ethnic groups of the northern Caucasus province] dug the foundations, among other jobs." The houses were both practical and grand: made of hewn local stone,[27] they were single-storey [houses] for two families each, with a little backyard where one could build household structures, and lay out a fruit or vegetable garden." "At the entrance," he continued, "there is a wide porch with pillars, large bright windows and a tiled roof." Everyone was captivated by the project, which was "beautiful, spacious and light." Visiting musicians wrote a song entitled "Agrotown" that captured the "happy festivity." "In the *aul*," Makarenko reported, "people had begun to say that Moscow has reached Zaiukovo."[28]

By 1935 a reported one million rubles had been invested in the project, which the farm could apparently afford; that year collective farmers reportedly received ten kilograms of grain, six kilograms of potatoes, meat, and cheese per labor day, a huge amount by contemporary standards that suggest that the farm was very profitable.[29] "Are we running too quickly ahead?" Makarenko wrote rhetorically, a common phrase that—in the affirmative—suggested that one's actions were based on theory rather than

[27] Makarenko seems to have exaggerated this point. Provincial newspaper reports indicate that the buildings were made of brick. They also claim that the houses had running water. *Balkaria Pravda,* 18 September, 3; 3 November, 3.
[28] Makarenko, *Druz'ia, kakikh znal i liubliu*, 8-10, 69-71, 100. This was also the case at another Kabardino-Balkaria collective farm where an 'agrotown' was being built, at the village of Novoivanovka. A third agrotown was being built at a settlement called Kenzha.
[29] *Pravda*, 17 February 1936; *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, 3 November, 3.

concrete (usually economic) conditions. "No," he answered himself, "The idea of building the Agrotown was born entirely out of the economic development and cultural growth of the village."[30] On 23 March 1936 a passing traveler, author Mikhail Prishvin, noted in his diary "[the construction of] good village homes, like the ones that are common in German villages."[31]

There was a tragic ending to the story of the Kabardino-Balkarian agrotown. In 1937, an investigation uncovered higher than expected costs for "construction and the resettlement of peasants" and improper spending by a rural-planning agency within the Commissariat of Agriculture.[32] Like many other seemingly minor cases in 1937, those accused of making these mistakes were arrested as "enemies of the people." Betal E. Kalmykov, the provincial secretary of the communist party who according to Makarenko "considered the construction of the Agrotown his most important party duty," and who personally visited regularly during construction (it is likely not a coincidence that he was a native of that district), was also arrested in 1938.[33] According to Makarenko, who returned to the village in the 1960s, the Agrotown itself was destroyed by the Germans during the war.[34]

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[30] Makarenko, *Druz'ia, kakikh znal i liubliu*, 69-70.
[31] Mikhail M. Prishvin, *Dnevniki*, 23 March 1936. http://www.fedy-diary.ru/?page_id=5389 (Accessed 17 November 2010).
[32] The fact that the investigation mentioned "resettlement" is an important detail that warrants further investigation. It suggests that a component of the agrotown plan was the resettlement of small communities still residing in the nearby hills and mountains, something that Makarenko did not address.
[33] "O stroitel'stve agrogorodov v Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR i dr," RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 653, l. 253. Some Kabardins, including individuals from the village of Zaiukovo, were deported to places like Kirgizia and Kazakhstan during the Second World War. Makarenko, *Druz'ia, kakikh znal i liubliu*, 14, 69, 71.
[34] There is evidence that local interest in agrotown like projects continued to exist. For example, irrigation plans written up for the district of Ashtsk in Soviet Tadzhikistan included "resettlement activities, the organization of new cultural and economic centers [*kul'turnykh khozzhiltsentrov*]… [which would] absolutely transform the layout of cultivated land and make collective farm life more cultured and rich [kul'turnoi i zazhitochnoi]. See Abashin, "'Ideal'noi kolkhoz," 12.

As the Khoper and the Zaiukovo cases show, there was no common definition of an agrotown. While planners in the 1930 Lower Volga case seem to have literally conceived of constructing a rural city, the plan for Kabardino-Balkaria was more modest. The former was based on a collective farm in the making; in Zaiukovo, in contrast, the agrotown to a considerable extent reflected their economic capacity. One element that is striking about both of these cases, however, is that they owed their planning to architects in Moscow. Khrushchev's agrotown, in contrast, was firmly rooted in post-World War II Kiev.

Khrushchev's decision in January 1949 to promote rural construction and the resettlement of peasants from "old huts" into new homes was not taken on a whim. For one, it was part of the wider project of rebuilding the Ukraine following the war. But there was also a more specific reason: the resettlement plans were in fact being considered in connection with the planned creation of a vast reservoir in the area. The four villages designated for resettlement to the agrotown—Les'ki, Taldyki, Khudiaki and Lomovatoe—were also located in the designated flood plain. This in turn explains why the site was located on the high banks overlooking the Dnieper basin.[35] The creation of the reservoir, one of a number of such projects in the Soviet Union at the time, was the principle factor behind the agrotown proposal.

The decision to merge the inhabitants of four collective farms into a single urban-like settlement, however, added a new dimension to the project. By proposing to carry out rural modernization, Khrushchev aligned the project with the Bolsheviks' longstanding goal of "overcoming the inequalities between the city and the village."

[35] "Svodnaia poiasnitel'naia zapiska …k proektu general'nogo plana kolkhoznogo goroda im. Stalina," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 30, d. 2290.

But as it turns out, there was a very strong local incentive to do this: a wide range of specialists in post-war Kiev were actively involved in developing experimental rural construction techniques and principles. For them, the agrotown was an opportunity to put their ideas into practice.

The Cherkassy agrotown project in fact piggy-backed on a similar project developed in connection with yet another post-war environmental engineering project: the reclamation of the Irpen' flood plain located to the north-west of Kiev.[36] One of the project's goals was to set up an agricultural resource-base for the city, but it also included plans to create "new residential socialist settlements for the collective farmers."[37] The village of Demidovo was the first site chosen for the construction project and it was an exemplary agrotown project in all but name. As of January 1949 eighty-five new houses designed by architects from Kiev had already been completed.[38] According to one of the Soviet Union's most senior architects, Boris Iofan, who himself visited Demidovo at the time, the new village consisted of one and two-story "brick homes with a bathroom [*s vannoi komnatoi*] and running water."[39] Khrushchev even took his young son Sergei to visit the houses, which "in place of [traditional] straw had metal roofs, painted red… [*krashennye surikom*]." "Everything seemed foreign," Sergei Khrushchev later noted in his memoirs.[40] Both Demidovo and the Cherkassy were experimental rural-urban settlements. Indeed, a number of those involved spoke specifically about the link between them; as one put it at a conference, everyone

[36] It was in these same swamps that Khrushchev apparently caught the cold—which progressed to pneumonia—that led to widespread rumors that he would be replaced in the spring of 1947. Khrushchev and Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 689.
[37] Evgenii Kiselev, "Irpenskaia poima," *Pravda,* 10 February 1948, 3.
[38] S. Sevriuk, "Novyi oblik derevni," *Pravda,* 9 January 1949, 2. The construction site was sometimes referred to as "New-Demidovo" [*Novo-Demidovo*].
[39] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu vnutrikhoziaistvennogo…," l. 143.
[40] Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: Trilogiia ob ottse*, 3 vols, (Moscow: Vremia, 2010), 72.

involved in the Cherkassy agrotown was pleased to have the opportunity to "overcome the series of mistakes that they had made [at Demidovo]." Of particular concern, one participant noted, was "what might at first seem like trifles: small windows for ventilation [*fortochki*], indoor lavatories [*vnutrennie ubornye*], and so on."[41]

The central problem for the specialists involved was how to design a town that would appropriately balance rural and urban elements, a question that was raised with considerable urgency during a 1950 conference in Kiev, hosted by the Ukrainian Branch of the Union of Soviet Architects. Besides architects, there were a wide range of specialists who had a professional interest in the project, from agriculturalists to public health experts. They were principally concerned with ensuring that their expertise be incorporated into the model plan. They saw no need to incorporate the local knowledge of the people who would actually live in the town. This is not to say, however, that there were not disagreements among them. An academic from Kharkov, who insisted that the physical space of the agrotown must "speak the language of politics," emphasized the importance of having an "urban type" center of the agrotown. But a representative from a rural planning institute Giprosel'stroi, on the other hand, opposed the "dull and formal character" [*sukhoi i kazionnyi kharakter*] of the existing proposals. The "village-city" [*selo-gorod*] reminded her of "Paris," and she wondered aloud how difficult it would be to send your cow out to pasture "in such a grid."[42]

A central priority was to design a town that was sufficiently compact so as to be able to cost-effectively provide amenities such as water, sewage and electricity. This

[41] "Stenogramma soveshchania po obsuzhdeniiu proektov kolkhoznykh gorodov Cherkasskogo i Genicheskogo raionov v Soiuze sovetskikh arkhitektorov Ukrainy (13 July 1950)," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 24, d. 218, ll. 75, 90, 128.
[42] "Stenogramma soveshchania po obsuzhdeniiu proektov kolkhoznykh gorodov …," ll. 117, 132.

led to considerable debate over how houses should be designed. The representative from the Academy of Architecture suggested offering a range of housing options, from single houses to two storey apartment buildings. One benefit of the latter, he noted, was that they would enable central heating, and he claimed that a survey of collective farmers demonstrated that there was a desire for apartments. The doctor V. N. Kaliuzhnyi, from the Institute of Public Hygiene, argued simply that health concerns should not be sacrificed for the sake of cost. He also noted that there should be sewer systems for each house, that the houses should be oriented towards the East and have verandas, and that the kitchen should be separated from the dining room.[43]

The goal of creating a compact settlement, however, raised the problem of the peasant family's right to a private plot, as guaranteed by the collective farm charter of 1935. What the participants proposed was to locate part of the plot by the house and the rest in a separate zone. The plans put forward during the conference presented two variations of this model, based on a .15 hectare and a .075 hectare private plot located at the dwelling respectively. (The total plot usually ranged from .25 to .50 hectares). Most participants supported the larger variant, although an architect from the Kiev provincial administration, I. N. Dnestrov, argued that there was no basis for either variant and that it was premature to be making such decisions.[44]

Another typically high modernist feature of the plans was the principle of "functional zoning," which meant separating the residential part of the town from

[43] Ibid., ll. 52-56, 90-93, 128-130. Kaliuzhnyii did not explain why the Eastern orientation would be more advantageous than a Southern one.
[44] Ibid., ll. 5, 57-62.

centers of labor and production.[45] Experts also wanted the agrotown to be located off from the road rather than along it, or at a crossroads, as was traditionally the case.[46] The tight proximity in traditional villages between the "housing stock" and the collective farms' barns, sheds and other buildings, one doctor argued, had "prevented growth and made it difficult for sanitation norms to be maintained."

The participants also disagreed about resettlement itself. A number wanted to wait and see if the plan for the Kremenchug reservoir would be approved. Among them was an economist who forcefully argued that it would be a mistake (and against Soviet planning principles in general) to build a completely new settlement.[47] He insisted instead on reconstructing "carefully chosen villages so that they become cultural centers." He estimated that the cost of the proposed agrotown was twelve thousand rubles per person: "as much," he claimed rather unbelievably, "as it cost to rebuild the capital of Soviet Ukraine, including the construction of the Metro system." Finally, the head of one department in the Ukrainian Ministry of Agriculture was openly disturbed [*mne kak-to rezhet ukho*] by what he described as the prevailing "calm acceptance" [*so spokoinoi sovest'iu dokladchik govorit*] of plans to resettle two thousand collective farmers. "How are we to do that? Send the police and kick them out?" On the other hand, the doctor Kaliuzhnyii supported resettlement regardless of the reservoir plan on

[45] See Scott's discussion of what he calls "functional segregation" in the planning Brazilia, in *Seeing Like a State*, 104-127. For a discussion of this principle as it was developed in the following decades, see Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside*, 97-99.
[46] "Stenogramma soveshchania po obsuzhdeniiu proektov kolkhoznykh gorodov …," l. 128.
[47] The speaker was a doctoral candidate in Economics identified only as Bogorad. He claimed that decisions taken by the June plenum on urban construction and by the Central Committee in general on the reconstruction of Moscow urged architects and builders to "careful use existing infrastructure and resources [*sushchestvuiushchikh fondov*] and their full use while reconstructing towns." There were of course cases of building completely new urban centers in the 1930s, most famously the city of Magnitogorsk. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, 1997).

the basis of health concerns: the swampy villages, he claimed, made fighting malaria difficult.[48]

Perhaps not surprisingly, there was no effort to incorporate the opinions of the agrotown's future inhabitants in these planning discussions. At a later conference in Moscow, the architect Boris Iofan reported that while visiting Demidovo, he had heard "all kinds of arguments" about whether it was "convenient or not [for peasants] to live in a two-story house." Khrushchev, who was present, dismissed the comment: "Those were city-people thinking for the collective farmers."[49] In his view, peasants would approach any problem "rationally." If they had a guaranteed source of milk, he reasoned, they would readily give up their family cow, dress up and go to the theater.[50] Of course, Khrushchev was right in one sense: these were a lot of "city-people thinking for the collective farmers." But he was the one who had empowered the "city people," and he made no efforts to solicit the opinions of farmers themselves.

What did peasants actually prefer? This is a difficult question to answer. The traditional peasant home [*dvor*] had developed over centuries to reflect the specificities of rural agriculture in Russia. It had both important economic and cultural functions for the peasant family. From this perspective, the prospect of resettlement might have been terrifying. But as some accounts suggest, there may well have been significant generational divide over the best way forward. Collectivization, migration and the strain of war had had a profound impact on rural society in the two decades leading up

[48] Stenogramma soveshchania po obsuzhdeniiu proektov kolkhoznykh gorodov," ll. 63-69, 100-104, 120-127.
[49] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu vnutrikhoziaistvennogo..," l. 132.
[50] "Stenogramma plenuma Kievskogo obkoma," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 23, d. 5866, l. 65. In a 30 July 1948 report to Stalin, Khrushchev laid out in considerable detail his argument that peasants' cows should be purchased by the government in conjunction with the expansion of mechanized livestock farms. Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 2, 8-22.

to the 1950s.[51] The war likely had an even greater impact in areas of occupation, including around Kiev where these cases of resettlement were being considered.

For the experts engaged in the agrotown, peasant concerns were an important though secondary matter. They believed that it was their professional duty to raise the quality of rural life by providing amenities in a cost-effective way and by separating residential zones from the centers of agricultural production. They were attempting to balance what they saw as aesthetic, architectural and public health requirements with the interests of collective farmers. And as such the Cherkassy project needs to be considered within the broader context of similar modernization projects around the world.[52] Like other high modern projects of this period, the resettlement project was rooted in what were considered scientific ideas about human health and behavior. They understood in principle that the private plot was important to the peasant way of life and seemed sincere in their claims that simply dividing it would be an effective compromise for the sake of creating a compact settlement. Moreover, this case rested on the assumption that peasants were going to lose their existing lands regardless because of the creation of the reservoir. Under different circumstances, there might have been even stronger disagreements about the necessity of resettlement in the first place.

[51] For one of the most profound such accounts, based on its author's experience growing up in a Siberian village, see Valentin Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (New York: Macmillan, 1979).

[52] I am thinking of monumental government projects, like the Robert H. Saunders Dam on Ontario's St. Lawrence River that was built in the late 1950s, and which resulted in the resettlement of 6,500 people; or the Danish resettlement of indigenous Inuit in Greenland into newly built fishing towns beginning in the 1950s. Final Elders Report, August 31, 1995; http://www.opg.com/power/hydro/ottawa_st_lawrence/rh_saunders.asp. Accessed Nov. 8, 2010. Marie-Louise Deth Petersen, "The Impact of Public Planning on Ethnic Culture: Aspects of Danish Resettlement Policies in Greenland after World War II," *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1986), 271-280. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40316115.

**Khrushchev and Amalgamation**

Khrushchev had no faith in the ability of Soviet villagers to improve their lives on their own. But in the context of post-war Ukraine, this was not an entirely unfair sentiment. The material and human devastation of the war was incalculable. The peasantry needed state support, though arguably not in the form that it came. Khrushchev believed, however, that what collective farms needed above all was mechanization, scientific expertise and strong leadership.[53] All three elements could be provided externally rather than developed internally.

Most importantly, improving agriculture to Khrushchev meant "raising the cultural level" of collective farms. As he would later recall, "only very few collective farms back then—those engaged in farming at a higher cultural level—were able to provide for themselves somehow."[54] The term culture has multiple meanings; in this context, one of its meanings was certainly mechanization and the use of technology in general.[55] When the Central Committee initiated a three-year plan to expand livestock production, Khrushchev called on engineers to develop new technologies that could help mechanize the complex tasks associated with livestock production.[56] Indeed, Khrushchev's belief in the need for mechanization contributed to his public disagreement during the 1947 Central Committee plenum dedicated to agriculture with Pavel Doronin, the first party secretary of Kursk Province (incidentally, where his native village of Kalinovka was located). Their argument was over the organization of labor on collective farms: Doronin supported the "link" [*zven'ia*] system that assigned

[53] For a typical statement by Khrushchev about colletive farms as "complex enterprises," see Emelianov, *Ot pastukha do sekretaria TsK*, 249-250.
[54] Khrushchev and Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 314.
[55] On the link between culture and technology in the Bolshevik imagination, see Josephson, *Would Trotsky Wear a Bluetooth*, 33-48.
[56] "Stennograma plenuma Kievskogo obkoma (23 May 1949)," ll. 57-60.

relatively small pieces of land to groups of four to eight peasants, and offered incentives for improvements in productivity; Khrushchev advocated for the "brigade" system that, in contrast, was oriented towards large scale (and presumably mechanized) agriculture.[57] Both systems had their benefits, depending on local conditions and the type of agricultural production.[58] Khrushchev himself continued to use links in Ukraine, "depending on the size of the collective farm," which again suggests that the controversy over the link was really a debate over farm size.[59]

Raising the cultural level of collective farms also meant improving the leadership of the farm. There were two types of leaders, according to Ukraine's then minister of agriculture and an ally of Khrushchev, V. Matskevich: the typical one, who treated a farm as a "place to carry out the next agricultural campaign," and the correct one, who treated collectives as multi-profile enterprises that combined field crops and livestock.[60] As Khrushchev told a group of provincial party secretaries in November 1949, it was time to replace officials who "think that they can improve collective farms by sending in the police [*militsiia*]. The sooner we deal with them, the better it will be for the party and for our work."[61] Still, Khrushchev's insistence on promoting outsiders to leadership positions on collective farms, in particular those with successful track records in industry, suggested a significant distrust of the peasantry's ability to lead

[57] A. A. Danilov and A. V. Pyzhikov, *Rozhdenie sverkhderzhavy: SSSR v pervye poslevoennye gody* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 256-258. Another advocate of the link system was Politbiuro member A. Andreev, who himself delivered the main speech at the 1947 plenum.
[58] For more on the link system, see Dmitry Pospielovsky, "The 'Link' System in Soviet Agriculture," *Soviet Studies* 21, no. 4 (1970), 411-435.
[59] He stated this on 10 February 1949 in a long commentary on a draft proposal for increasing collective farm livestock rearing. RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 87, ll. 7-55, 11.
[60] "Priem korrespondentov u ministra sel'skogo khoziaistva Matskevicha (March 1949)," TsDAVO f. r-27, op. 17, d. 231, ll. 174-193 (184)
[61] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia sekretarei obkomov (2-3 November 1949)," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 23, d. 5861, l. 34.

itself. As he explained to his officials, peasants were always ready to follow as long as the leadership showed the appropriate dedication. To illustrate this point, he described a worker who had won over a collective farm in the 1930s "despite the fact that he was a Jew." ("That is also telling," Khrushchev explained, "because as you know peasants also have some prejudices.")[62]

Given his overall outlook on agriculture, it is not surprising that Khrushchev took to the idea of amalgamation. Above all, he saw mergers as a concrete step for improving successful farms. The Cherkassy agrotown though was to be based on the amalgamation of four collective farms, and this may have served as inspiration. Khrushchev first raised amalgamation in the spring of 1949, not long after publicizing Cherkassy's plan of district-wide redevelopment at the Sixteenth Ukrainian Party Congress. In all likelihood, his enthusiasm for the Cherkassy project contributed to his subsequent zeal for amalgamation. According to F. I. Dubkovetskii, chairman of the "millionaire" collective farm "Remember October," Khrushchev told him during a visit: "Isn't your farm a little too tight for you, Fyodor Ivanovich?... There's no room for a chairman like you to show what you can do" [*negde tam i razvernut'sia*]. "We don't want to merge with the others [*ostal'nye*]," Dubkovetskii replied, "We have a power station … and all they have are eight carts and a broken seeder." The local collective farmers also reacted unfavorably: "What do you mean merge," they said, "so that those Lanovtsy [their neighboring villagers] can pull us down."

Khrushchev did not leave the matter at that. He singled Dubkovetskii out a few weeks later during a meeting of the Kiev provincial party committee dedicated to animal husbandry. Mentioning that he had visited Dubkovetskii, he criticized him for

[62] "O kolkhozakh (15 October 1949)," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 23, d. 5866, l. 105.

his "backwardness in agronomy," and for not being "progressive" [*peredovoi chelovek*]. He also reminded his audience that "it is already proven, comrades, that the most efficient and productive enterprise are large ones: … large collective and state farms."[63]

Over the course of the year, Khrushchev collected data on the relationship between collective farms and villages, and in early November 1949, at a gathering of provincial leaders from across the Ukraine, he ordered officials to begin carrying out mergers. Garnering his data suggesting that there were villages with as many as five collective farms, he argued that mergers would be appropriate in many cases. He called for both assertiveness and caution, counseling officials to get out of the office and to visit the farms, to take active involvement and to ensure that the local "conditions were right." Always in a hurry, Khrushchev also wanted the process to begin straight away.[64]

In instructing officials on how to carry out amalgamation, he encouraged them in particular to exert social pressure. Each province was to "begin by holding meetings with the leadership from a couple of districts… We will criticize the backward districts… so that there is not only pressure from the provincial party committee, but also influence from their neighbors."[65] The same tactic should be applied at the collective farm level, he added. As Khrushchev himself had explained: "We will gather groups of ten farms, good ones and bad ones, so that the leadership of the good ones or

[63] "Stenogramma plenuma Kievskogo obkoma," ll. 58-60. To prove his point, he referred to a recently published article by "Professor Red'kin," a specialist on collective farmland organization, in *Sotsialisticheskoe zemledelie*, 22 May 1949. V. V. Red'kin published a book on collective farm land organization in 1945 and then on the organization of *sovkhozy* in 1959. His views on the topic were sharply criticized in 1965 by S. A. Udachin, the highly respected chair of the Department of land organization from 1945 to 1971 at the State University of land organization. See V. E. Kaplunov. "K voprosu ob ob"ekte prava zemlepol'zovaniia kolkhozov," *Pravovedenie*, 1967, No. 6, 113 – 117.
[64] He also noted that amalgamation would not be carried out in the newly collectivized western provinces of the Republic. "Stenogramma soveshchaniia sekretarei obkomov," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 23, d. 5861, l. 128.
[65] Ibid, l. 6.

of the good districts can come crashing down on [*zverski obrushilis'*] the directors of the bad farms, because they have to pick up their slack in order to fulfill the plan, and so on."[66] Gryza claimed that amalgamation would "absolutely" enable the party to install a "good chairman, so that we will have the influence of well organized collective farmers on those less organized…, [and of the] 'culture' of good farms on the more backward collectives."[67]

Yet if Khrushchev's primary goal was improving conditions for the best collective farms, an implication of the campaign was that weak farms might simply be shut down. Conveying Khrushchev's orders to a meeting of district officials, Kiev provincial party secretary A. A. Gryza explained that amalgamation was being carried out to "fulfill the Central Committee's February [1947] plenum decision on the question of liquidating backward farms."[68] "Not in the full meaning [*v polnom smysle*] of the word," he added, acknowledging the double meaning of the term liquidate, but in the sense of "pulling them up to the level of leading farms." Gryza's self-correction was indicative of an unstated assumption no doubt shared by many in the room: merging weak farms could very easily be seen as a process of elimination. Some of Gryza's other comments suggest this interpretation. He mentioned, for instance, that Khrushchev had encouraged them to "go ahead and finish with collective farm chairman who have long just been robbing the farms." And while explaining that the

[66] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia sekretarei obkomov," ll. 94-95.
[67] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia sekretarei raikomov partii i predsedatelei raiispolkomov oblasti," DAKO f. r-5, op. 3, d. 2453, l. 3.
[68] The resolution from this plenum was entitled "On the Measures to Build Up Agriculture in the Post-War Period."

province planned to merge three hundred farms, he commented: "That's not many, but as a consequence next year we will not have those three hundred backward farms."[69]

An investigation by the Collective Farm Council, prompted by a report from its Kiev representative, M. Gordienko, also suggests that amalgamation was perceived locally as a way of liquidating weak farms. On 1 January 1950 he sent a report to his superiors in Moscow describing what he called "mass, indiscriminate and baseless" [*massovoe, ogul'noe*] amalgamation of collective farms." He recounted, for example, the fate of three large collectives that were merged "so that, the "backward farms 'Zirka' and 'Chervonyi traven'" were "liquidated," and the remaining 562 households united in the collective farm Voroshilov. "The basic reason for the mergers was to "infuse" [*vlit'*] the backward farms into stronger ones, so that there are fewer backward ones." His report also reveals how rapidly the campaign had progressed. Based on his review of eighteen out of fifty-three districts, two hundred and fifteen farms were already designated for amalgamation.[70] When Kiev's party secretary Gryza learned of Gordienko's report he was furious and called for him to be fired for "sending long messages to Moscow about issues that Kiev could handle on its own."[71]

Indeed, this was a local affair. Khrushchev had personally advocated for merging collective farms and he administered the campaign directly. Moscow, it seems, was not involved. It is also clear that the meaning of the campaign was not unambiguous. On the one hand, it was purportedly intended to strengthen successful farms, such as Dubkovetskii's. But Dubkovetskii himself, as well as "his" collective

[69] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia sekretarei raikomov," ll. 2-15.
[70] "O massovom ob"edinenii kolkhozov v riade raionov Kievskoi oblasti," DAKO f. R-4810, op. 1, d. 37 10-12. Another copy is in RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 948, ll. 86-88.
[71] "Zaremba to Andreev," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 948, ll. 42-49.

farmers, were skeptical about merging with their less successful neighbors. On the other hand, amalgamation in practice was often seen as a process of liquidation.

**Taking Amalgamation to Moscow**

In early December of 1949 Khrushchev received a direct call from Stalin's chief deputy in Moscow, Georgy Malenkov. Stalin, Malenkov reported, wanted him to fly to Moscow immediately.[72] The abrupt request made Khrushchev nervous: "I didn't know what my status would be when I returned to Ukraine – or even if I would return at all," he later explained. But at their meeting on 10 December, Stalin joked that Ukraine had turned him into an agronomist, and invited him to return to Moscow to become provincial party secretary there. If Stalin did not already know, they probably also talked about the amalgamation campaign in Kiev and his interest in rural construction because within a matter of weeks, Khrushchev would begin amalgamating farms around Moscow.[73]

Khrushchev arrived in Moscow just in time to take a prominent part in Stalin's seventieth birthday celebration on December 21. In recognition of the jubilee Politburo members contributed themed articles to *Pravda* praising Stalin's achievements. Khrushchev's article was dedicated to Soviet internationalism, and it was published opposite a piece by Andrei Andreev, the chairman of the Collective Farm Council who in the post-war period had been one of the party's chief agricultural spokesmen. Andreev, quoting a February 1946 speech by Stalin, asserted that collectivization had

[72] Sergei Khrushchev claims that Khrushchev spoke directly with Stalin: "When can you come?" Stalin asked. "If it is urgent, then tomorrow." "Good, then come," Stalin concluded, and abruptly hung up. Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: Trilogiia ob ottse*, 56.
[73] According to the memoirs of Khrushchev's son, Stalin approved of Khrushchev's "pilot" construction projects in December of 1949. *Nikita Khrushchev: Trilogiia ob ottse*, 72.

made it possible to "blanket the entire country with large, collective enterprises."[74] But Khrushchev also mentioned agriculture, claiming that under Stalin's leadership both poverty and the "*kulak* cabal" had been overcome; that new technology had made the peasants' lot easier; and that in the Ukraine, agricultural production was steadily increasing. In person, Khrushchev may have also relayed the congratulations of nine thousand people who on the very same day attended the dedication ceremony of their home-to-be, the planned Stalin agrotown.[75]

As the new first party secretary of the Moscow Province, Khrushchev continued what he had begun in Kiev by encouraging the amalgamation of the "small, decrepit collective farms" around Moscow, only twenty percent of which had more than sixty households.[76] According to his assistant Shevchenko, who himself was sent to the countryside to investigate, the collectives around Moscow "bore grandiose names like Death to Capitalism, but had no machinery, no electricity, and few, if any males of working age."[77] He was frustrated by local practices he encountered in Moscow's collective farms. A few months later, for instance, he ordered his officials to "ban the practice of having brigade leaders go from house to house in order to send farmers to

[74] *Pravda*, 21 December 1950, 9.
[75] DAKO f. r-5, op. 3, d. 2589. Historians have claimed that Khrushchev presented the agrotown as a "gift" to Stalin (i.e. William Taubman, David Marples), and it seems to come from John Alexander Armstrong's *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961), 207. He cites a 17 January 1951 article in *Izvestiia* that mentioned that two "agrocities" "were founded … on Comrade Stalin's seventieth birthday." A translation of the article can be found in the *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 3, no. 3 (3 March 1951), 34-35. The decision to dedicate the agrotown on Stalin's birthday was taken at a gathering of party cells from all the collective farms involved on 10 December 1949 (coincidentally, it seems, the same day that Khrushchev learned of his promotion to Moscow). DAKO f. R-5, op. 3, d. 2589, ll. 56, 68. There was a second agrotown that I do not discuss planned in the Kherson province of Ukraine, located 30 kilometers from the town of Genichesk. Originally formed as a *kommuna* in 1921, the farm had grown to about 15,000 hectares and included 1,120 able-bodied workers spread among twelve settlements.
[76] Roy A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 52.
[77] Taubman's characterization is drawn from his interviews with A. Shevchenko in the early 1990s.

work [*zagadyvat' na rabotu*]… by the time [he or she] visits each house, it will be past noon. Outlaw this practice."[78]

But Khrushchev also noted that extortion and other forms of corruption were commonplace, and insisted that if these issues were not addressed, "we will not be able to strengthen collective farms." "For extortion we need to punish people," he explained, "we need to take their heads right off; not literally, physically, but remove them from the party and try them in court."[79] "Neglect is widespread in the collective farms," Khrushchev reported to his officials on 26 January 1950, and "I don't know how to pull them out of the ditch."[80] Khrushchev acted as if he did have a solution. He raised the topic of collective farm mergers at his very first plenum of the Moscow party, which resolved to make "merging small collective farms" one of the province's principle agricultural objectives.[81] He then sent a letter on behalf of the party to all district officials proposing that they look into merging small farms and then repeated his suggestions during personal visits to collective farms.[82] And on 8 March 1950, in the midst of the spring election campaign, he gave his first public speech advocating mergers.[83] By this time, however, it is certain that Khrushchev had already won support from Stalin for expanding the amalgamation campaign.

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[78] The phrase *zagadyvat'* is translated in Vladimir Dal's 19th century dictionary as to "send someone" [*posylat' kogo-to*] or "to give orders" [*rasporiazhat'sia*]. This is a great example of Khrushchev's famed use of village idioms.
[79] Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 1, 337-338. From RGANI f. 52, op. 1., d. 153, ll. 154-156.
[80] "Stenogramma zasedaniia (26 January 1950)," TsAOPIM f. 3, op. 124, d. 3, l. 69.
[81] Froim L. Aleksandrov, *Ocherki istorii Moskovskoi organizatsii KPSS 1883-1965* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochi, 1966), 624; *Moskovskaia Pravda*, 25, 28, 31 March 1950.
[82] The letter is mentioned in a report, RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 227, l. 14. Khrushchev attended a meeting of collective farm chairmen at Lenin Hills in January, for example, after which amalgamation there accelerated. TsAOPIM f. 3, op. 124, d. 9, l. 65.
[83] Nikita Khrushchev, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Kalininskogo izbirateľnogo okruga goroda Moskvy* (Moscow: 1950), 17-20.

The decision to pursue amalgamation on an all-Union scale was taken no later than February, 1950. There is no record of the decision, and it was likely made in an informal setting. To be clear, there was no plan for an all-Union amalgamation campaign before Khrushchev's arrival in Moscow.[84] In fact, in January and February 1950 the Ministry of Agriculture was actually developing legislation aimed at putting an end to what it saw as unlawful amalgamations that were being carried out here and there throughout the country. The Ministry considered amalgamation a covert way for provincial authorities to liquidate unsuccessful farms, a practice that went against the government's policy of expanding agricultural production. In early 1949, for instance, officials discovered that over the preceding couple of years in the Siberian province of Novosibirsk, "with the connivance of the provincial executive committee [*oblispolkom*]," two hundred and thirty-one collective farms had "been liquidated through mergers under the pretext of organizational-economic strengthening and land reorganization."[85] Subsequent research by the Ministry determined that the "unfounded liquidation of collective farms" was occurring throughout the country, from Central Asia to the northerly province of Vologda. The primary goal of such mergers, F. G. Ivanitskii noted in a report, was to decrease the number of "economically weak farms."[86] On 8 January 1950, the Ministry proposed to establish new rules to ensure

[84] V. P. Popov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia posle voiny: iiun' 1945 - mart 1953: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Prometei, 1993), 10-11. Referring to the Central Committee's province-specific merger campaigns in 1937 and 1941, as well as haphazard mergers in 1949, Jean Levesque speaks of "test" amalgamations. I found no evidence though that these mergers were seen as preparation for a broader campaign, or that they were "not nearly enough to satisfy the demands of the state-party leadership." "'Part-Time Peasants,'" 101-102.

[85] "O massovykh faktakh likvidatsii kolkhozov v Novosibirskoi oblasti," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7(1), d. 891, ll. 230-232.

[86] "Ob umen'shenii chisla kolkhozov v 1949" and "O poriadke ob"edinennia i razukrupneniia kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7(1), d. 891, ll. 159-171, 172-175. The northerly province of Vologda requested permission on 30 August 1949 to merge and resettle seventy small isolated collective farms. There were

that in the future there would be proper ministerial oversight over these activities.[87] Minister of Agriculture Ivan Benediktov approved of the need to "centralize authority over these issues."[88]

But then abruptly on 28 February, Benediktov personally ordered Ivanitskii to quickly revise his research in order to provide an overall justification for the merging of small collective farms, which the latter delivered on 6 March.[89] The report, entitled "On the Necessity of Merging Extremely Small Farms," reflected an abrupt change of priorities, while still expressing the Ministry's previous concerns that the process be carried out in an orderly fashion. In a matter of a few days the Ministry of Agriculture had gone from attempting to establish new rules governing the amalgamation process to advocating that it to be carried "in all provinces where there are a large number of small collective farms."[90]

While the exact sequence of events is unknown, sometime in February the Organizational Bureau [*Orgbiuro*] of the Central Committee also ordered the party's agricultural department to begin studying "the question of the economic condition of small collective farms." According to a later report, it had come to the attention of the *Orgbiuro*—of which Malenkov was chair and Khrushchev a member—that "small farms were failing to develop public sector agriculture and run it on the basis of modern technology."[91]

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1,203 collective farms in the province, the report added, that had no more than "five to twenty-five" households. "Dokladnaia zapiska," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 132, ll. 149-151.
[87] "Golubnichii to Benediktov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7(1), d. 891, p. 175.
[88] "Ob umen'shenii chisla kolkhozov v 1949," p. 170.
[89] "Ivanitskii to Benediktov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5731, l. 223.
[90] "O neobkhodimosti ob"edinenia chrezmerno melkikh kolkhozov," GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 2026, ll. 37-41. Or RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 225, ll. 45-59.
[91] "Yakushev to Malenkov," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 225, l. 1

The most important public sign of the new rural policy direction in Moscow was the publication on 19 February 1950 of an anonymous three-part article that trumpeted the superiority of large-scale collective farms, critiqued the practice of encouraging "links" in the province of Kursk, and assailed Politburo member and Collective Farm Council chairman Andrei Andreev in particular. (The article even disapproved of details in Andreev's article written in honor of Stalin's seventieth birthday, which had been published opposite Khrushchev's).[92] Without a doubt, the article demonstrated that there was high-level support for Khrushchev's ideas and that a decision to support amalgamation had been taken beforehand.

But who was behind the article? The critique was based largely on a recent investigation of Kursk province, carried out by a Central Committee Department of administrative oversight [*Otdel partiinykh, profsoiuznykh i komsomol'skikh organov TsK VKP(b)*]. The investigation had not originally been focused on the link issue. It included criticism of the province's slow post-war recovery: nine hundred families in the province, for example, were still living in dugouts and nine thousand in shared housing [*v podselenii*]."[93] The Department had also recently carried out a similar investigation of Chelyabinsk Province, which also resulted in the replacement of the leadership and had nothing to do with the debate over links. The authors of the 19

[92] The former party secretary of the Kursk province, Doronin, with whom Khrushchev had sparred in 1947 over the issue of the link system was also a member of the Collective Farm Council's presidium. Both Andreev and Doronin were present on 23 February when the Council discussed the 19 February article and both were included in the committee drawn up to draft a resolution on the subject. Zaremba, who had just returned from his investigation of amalgamation in Kiev, was also included on the committee. "Protokoly zasedanii Prezidiuma Soveta," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 9. It should be emphasized that this conflict seems to have been policy driven rather than a political rivalry. Andreev, though an old Bolshevik and long-time member of the Politburo, was not a member of what Khlevniuk calls the "ruling group" that made important decisions. See *Cold Peace*, 102, 204, n. 19.
[93] V. V. Denisov, *TsK VKP(b) i provincial'nye partiinye komitety, 1945-1953*, Seriia "Dokumenty sovetskoi istorii" (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 244-248.

February article, however, used the Kursk investigation as a pretext to indicate a broader policy shift away from links and towards large-scale agriculture, which was in line with Khrushchev's views. Khrushchev was clearly behind this initiative, but he could not have carried it out without help from Malenkov, who also benefited from the affair. Andreev's disgrace solidified Malenkov's place as Andreev's successor in agricultural matters. At the same time, the affair also raised Khrushchev's status in the same field, which might have presented a new political threat to Malenkov. Indeed, the conventional wisdom is that Stalin moved Khrushchev to Moscow in order to provide a counterbalance to Malenkov and his ally Beria. From this perspective, Malenkov had good reason to feel threatened.

**Conclusion**

In many ways, the consensus around amalgamation that was apparent by March 1950 represented a victory for up-and-coming Khrushchev. His strategy of rural modernization, based on the enlargement of collective farms, seemed to have won Stalin's support. Khrushchev's outlook, though, had developed in the specific conditions of post-war Kiev. To start, amalgamation was part of his plan to "raise the cultural level" of peasant farming through mechanization and installing what he perceived as more reliable leadership. To Khrushchev, the large number of small collective farms, often based simply on the traditional peasant commune of the 1920s—and greatly impoverished by the destruction of the Second World War—were above all an impediment to progress.[94] The strategy he adopted was the merging of collective

[94] On the correlation between the collective farm and the peasant commune, referred to in the 1920s in general as the "land society," see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

farms, which he thought could help successful farms and (at very least) reduce the influence of unsuccessful farms. At the same time, he also personally supported state directed projects of rural reconstruction, such as the Demidovo and the Cherkassy agrotowns.[95] Shaped by bigger projects of environmental engineering, these experimental projects provided a venue for specialists to consider how best to organize an urban-rural town of the near future. And Khrushchev would continue to support cooperation between urban specialists and collective farmers in Moscow province.

But there were other revealing parallels between how Khrushchev operated in Kiev and Moscow. In Kiev, Khrushchev had encouraged his officials to use amalgamation to exert social pressure on weak collective farms and their chairmen in particular. In Moscow, he took this approach one step further. For instance, on May 12 1950, at a provincial conference on amalgamation, he encouraged administrators to use the possibility of resettlement (that was then beginning to be discussed) to pressure collective farmers who were failing to fulfill their labor requirements. "This is important," he explained: "Spread a rumor [*pustit' slushok*] that we are not going to take everyone into the new (central) settlement; that we won't take those who don't work. Let them think about where they will go, because we cannot let them stay at the old location." And to raise the pressure even further, he reminded officials to mention that collective farm general meetings had the right to deport violators of labor disciplines. "I'm not suggesting that we begin deportations now; just remind them, that the [2 June 1948] Order is still in force [*deistvuet*]."[96] Khrushchev had championed this policy in 1948 as a way to increase discipline on farms, and the fact that he raised it as a possible

[95] Ibid., 245-299.
[96] Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, 337-338.

threat in 1950 underscores his willingness to very aggressively pressure the rural population.

Ironically, Khrushchev's success in getting Moscow to take on amalgamation marked the end of his authoritative position vis-à-vis the amalgamation campaign. After February, the legislation and administration of the now All-Union campaign would become the shared responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture of the USSR, the Central Committee agricultural bureau and Malenkov's agricultural bureau in the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. Although Khrushchev was in a powerful position to influence the country's top leadership, he was not in charge of Soviet agriculture. This position belonged to Malenkov.[97] While Khrushchev continued to lead the campaign for the Moscow province, and to publish in leading newspapers, his program of collective farm reform had been effectively handed over to the country's central party-state bureaucracies.

It was around this time that Stalin is said to have upbraided Khrushchev for "rattling around in the countryside." While it is tempting to read this—as Taubman does—as a sign of Stalin's disregard for rural problems, the message may well have been: let the central government handle the details from now on.[98] This interpretation, though speculative, makes more sense than the alternative if we accept that Stalin must have approved of amalgamation in principle at the very least by February 1950.

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[97] Georgy Malenkov not only ran the party's Central Committee secretariat but he was also the head of the agriculture and procurement bureau in the Council of Ministers, which was one of many institutional bodies created in February of 1947 to manage the economy. On their general role in helping to modernize economic decision-making, see Yoram Gorlizki and O. V. Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 52-58. Though I saw frequent references to the bureau's meetings and decisions during my research, I was unable to locate a specific collection of its meetings, materials or decisions within the Council of Minister's fond 5446 in GARF.

[98] Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era,* 227.

Yet even as consensus emerged for the idea of merging farms, there were many unanswered questions about the future of the collective farm. Would the new farms simply be conglomerations of former collectives based on the existing settlement patterns? Would the newly enlarged farm have a center? If so, how would it be chosen? And would the government help administer or regulate construction on the new farms? Would collective farm enlargement by accompanied by resettlement, as was the case in Cherkassy? Khrushchev had not addressed these questions in Ukraine. He himself had pursued amalgamation independent of his rural construction plans: Demidovo was being built in connection with efforts to turn the Irpen' swamps into a source of produce for Kiev and the Cherkassy agrotown were conceived as part of plans to establish the Kremenchug reservoir. Indeed, the Cherkassy agrotown was only made famous a month later, when *Pravda* published a front-page article entitled "The New Face of the Village." Thus the relationship between the agrotown and amalgamation at this point was tenuous at best. While there was agreement that farms should be merged, there was no consensus about how the enlarged farm should be organized.

## Chapter 3

### Seeing Like a Late-Stalinist State:

### Moscow's Role in the All-Union Amalgamation Campaign

Authoritarian high-modernist states […] attempt, and often succeed, in imposing [certain social arrangements] on their population [mostly] deduced from the criteria of legibility, appropriation, and centralization of control. To the degree that the institutional arrangements can be readily monitored and directed from the center and can be easily taxed (in the broadest sense of taxation), then they are likely to be promoted.

--James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 1998[1]

On 11 April 1950, the leading Soviet Communist party newspaper *Pravda* published a front page article that began by describing how thousands of villagers near the Ukrainian city of Cherkassy had gathered to dedicate a future agrotown in honor of Stalin's seventieth birthday. "In a few years at that very same spot," the anonymous author recounted,

> the glow of electric lights will blaze, the leaves of picturesque parks will flutter, the doors to the library and palace of culture will open and the shop windows of department stores [*univermagi*] will shine; only the grey stone with its gold

[1] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 219.

> letters will remind future generations of the old village, gone to the irretrievable past.[2]

It would be a "collective farm settlement of a new type," the editorial asserted, which would "provide all conditions for labor and rest." In June, a journalist for *Moskovskaia Pravda* described the Cherkassy project in no less uncertain terms: "Imagine the high bank of the Dnieper and along it a green strip of seventy hectares of orchards. In the centre of this strip, as if dissecting it into two powerful wings, are two straight, rectangular urban blocks." It would have "several thousand inhabitants, paved streets, and two thousand brick houses" equipped with "electricity, radio, running water, bath, toilet, a spacious entrance, a pantry, and other necessary service quarters."[3]

"At its most radical, high modernism imagined wiping the slate utterly clean and beginning from zero," writes James Scott, and that is exactly how Soviet newspapers described the Cherkassy agrotown.[4] Residential blocks, with one thousand houses a piece, were to completely replace the old villages. Great "green strips" of orchards, presumably surrounded by even vaster fields, would in turn replace the traditional field patterns. Only the "grey stone with its gold letters," which listed the villages that were to be abandoned, would remind the future visitor of the previous environment.[5] On paper, at least, the Cherkassy project fit Scott's description of a radical high modernist project to a tee.

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[2] *Pravda*, 11 April 1950, 1.
[3] Quoted in Luba Richter, "Plans to Urbanize the Countryside, 1950-1962," *Soviet Planning; Essays in Honour of Naum Jasny*, (Blackwell, 1964), 36.
[4] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 94.
[5] *Pravda*, 11 April 1950, 1.

Yet while the Cherkassy project was increasingly adopted as a symbol of the campaign, in reality it was shaped by very specific circumstances.[6] Most importantly, *Pravda* failed to mention the reason resettlement had been considered for the area in the first place was in connection with proposals to establish a hydroelectric power station at the Dnieper town of Kremenchug, thereby creating a massive reservoir that would displace dozens of villages as well as some towns. And as one economist explained at a conference in Kiev, the decision about whether to create the reservoir had not been made, and—he added—there is "opposition precisely because of the large area that will be flooded and the mass resettlement [that would be required]."[7] Thus, just as specialists debated the best way to organize life in the agrotown, there was growing doubt already in July 1950 about the political viability of this flagship project.

There was a similar gap between the rhetoric surrounding collective farm amalgamation and the realities of the campaign; it was a gap, moreover, that ultimately helps distinguish Scott's authoritarian high-modernist state from the late Stalinist one. Two publicly unacknowledged but critically important issues shaped Moscow's role in the campaign: political conflicts within the government and the state's weak operational knowledge of the countryside. In the end, both features impeded the state's ability to implement the high modernist ideas advocated at the time. The late Stalinist state was much less unified in its goals than one would expect, and had a surprisingly poor capacity to monitor its initial efforts to legally merge farms. This is not to say that the late Stalinist state was incapable of carrying out the high modernist vision of rural modernization being promoted at the time. Moscow did—(when Stalin insisted?)—

[6] For details about the Cherkassy agrotown, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[7] "Stenogramma soveshchania po obsuzhdeniiu proektov kolkhoznykh gorodov Cherkasskogo i Genicheskogo raionov v Soiuze sovetskikh arkhitektorov Ukrainy," TsDAHO f. 1, op. 24, d. 218, l. 124.

successfully carry out important large scale projects in this period.[8] In the case of rural modernization, the political will to overcome the state's internal conflicts and weaknesses was missing.

**Disagreements**

The disagreements over amalgamation emerged well before the official decree that initiated the campaign on 30 May 1950.[9] The decision to carry out the campaign, taken at the highest levels sometime in February 1950, prompted a rapid effort by the party agricultural department and the Ministry of Agriculture to carry out research and solicit feedback from provincial officials.[10] The subsequent reports in general showed regional support for the campaign, justified by either praise for their large farms or by a description of the poverty of small ones. It was not simply a matter of poverty, but a sense that many small collectives were beyond the orbit of Soviet culture. Small farms were said to be run by "inexperienced local villagers;" they suffered from "many infractions against the collective farm charter" and "weak labor and government discipline." Echoing long-standing Bolshevik notions about the petit-bourgeois nature of peasant life (beliefs which apparently were maintained despite collectivization), officials commented on the "especially pronounced tendencies towards private property" on small farms. The regional party secretary from Novgorod even claimed

[8] I am thinking, for instance, of the seven skyscrapers that were built in Moscow in this period, after the Central Committee ordered their construction in early 1947. For more on their planning and construction, see Nicholas Levy, "Citizens under Skyscrapers: Building Moscow's Stalin-era *Vysotki* and the Transformation of Soviet Urban Space," Unpublished conference paper, 2012.

[9] "Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) ob ukrupnenii melkikh kolkhozov i zadachakh partiinykh organizatsii v etom dele May 30, 1950," eds. Egorov, A. G., and K. M. Bogoliubov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow: Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1983), 217.

[10] "Yakushev to Malenkov," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 225, 1. For the names of many of the investigators, see f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1043, l. 116.

that many villagers "believe that it is better to live in a small collective. This is because everything is done 'within the family,' because they are mostly relatives." In their view, the proper gap between the official world of the collective and the private world of village life had collapsed. "Bookkeeping," they noted, "is carried out in private homes."[11]

These reports often expressed the view that the legal merging of farms was not a sufficient measure, and that it should be accompanied by further measures. The report from Voronezh, for example, which expressed very cautious support for amalgamation, emphasized that success would require significant state involvement. They based their judgements on a dozen or so mergers carried in 1948 and 1949 that had thus far provided few benefits (they had been carried out either because of labor shortages or in order to deal with intertwined land holdings). They recommended that amalgamation be carried out only after serious economic study and the establishment of five-year development plans for each potential farm.[12] In a number of instances, the regional leaders frankly insisted that amalgamation be accompanied by the resettlement of small villages.[13]

One might expect that regional officials, with their greater knowledge of local conditions, might have showed more reticence about measures such as resettlement and rural construction. Instead, they were some of the strongest supporters. Rather than be disillusioned by the difficult realities of carrying out rural reform, the countryside's very backwardness seems to have encouraged them to call for more decisive measures. As Scott writes, "the more intractable and resistant the real world faced by the planner, the

[11] GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 2026, l. 69.
[12] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 226, l. 47.
[13] GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 2026, 17, l. 71 and RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 226, ll. 25, 54, 81, 91, 93.

greater the need for utopian plans to fill, as it were, the void that would otherwise invite despair."[14] Regional leaders found themselves in just such a situation. Of course, they also knew the many weaknesses of small farms, and had their own interests in the campaign, as we will see.[15]

But while their opinions on how amalgamation should be carried out were considered, the final decision rested with Malenkov, one of Stalin's most reliable functionaries. By 1950 he was in effect running both the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers in Stalin's place, and the Ministry of Agriculture and the Communist party's agricultural department both answered to him. While historians have tended to concentrate on Khrushchev's more public role during the campaign, it was in fact Malenkov who was responsible for administering the campaign.

**Spring: The Struggle over Rural Planning**

On 25 April 1950, two weeks after the *Pravda* editorial about the Cherkassy agrotown, a conference dedicated to rural construction held in Kiev unanimously approved an address to Stalin outlining what participants saw as their accomplishments and near-term goals. Paying the obligatory homage to Stalin's leadership, they asserted that the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine was not only about restoration, but also about assuring the "successful resolution of one of the most important tasks of Communist development – the liquidation of the inequality between town and village." Their guiding principle, they added, was to build "quickly, inexpensively and

[14] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 96.
[15] The position of regional officials is examined in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, based on a case study of the Arkhangelsk province.

beautifully," and they referred specifically to the Cherkassy agrotown, located just one hundred or so kilometers to the southeast of Kiev.[16]

While it is tempting to trace this call for rural urbanization back to Khrushchev's rural construction advocacy in Ukraine, the fact that Stalin had received a very similar address more than a year before from a similar conference held in Moscow (February 1949) suggests that ideas about rural construction were more widespread. The 1949 conference also focused on the reconstruction of collective farms in war-torn provinces; the difference was that this latter conference was dedicated to provinces of the Russian Socialist Federative Socialist Republic [RSFSR], rather than the Ukrainian SSR.[17] But the language was strikingly similar. The participants' goal, they wrote, was to "realize the long-term reconstruction of the collective farm village, to recreate its basic form [*oblik*] to account for the new cultural needs of the Soviet peasantry." And they also spoke of fulfilling the "great plan" of "liquidating the inequality between town and village."[18]

What both letters shared was the belief that rural construction should be carried out according to state guidelines developed by experts. In the 1949 letter, for instance, the participants resolved to "ensure that rural construction only be carried out according to diagrams that adhere to architectural and planning rules." And the 1950 letter asserted that the "superiority of carrying out construction according to plans" had "become unmistakable for all collective farmers in Ukraine." Both letters speak to the

[16] This event is discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. For the letter, see "V. Ivanov to Stalin," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 224, ll. 37-42.
[17] Twenty-two of the twenty-eight representatives were from provinces that had been occupied during World War II. RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 135, ll. 8-11.
[18] A December 1944 decree of the Governing Council of the Union of Architects on Collective Farm reconstruction stated clearly that their goal was to create "collective farm villages that are better than those that existed before." Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside*, 99.

fact that in the post-war Soviet Union, the practice of building in villages according to such plans (which were designed, it should be added, to guarantee not only architectural principles, but also sanitary norms and fire codes) could not be taken for granted.

The seeming similarity between the letters, however, masked important differences in the state's involvement in rural construction in Ukraine and Russia. In 1946 responsibility for rural planning and construction had been divided into republican directorates and the Ukrainian SSR was allowed to increase funding for collective farm planning. This was not the case for the Russian Federation. As early as 1948, the Russian Republic's rural construction directorate began to regularly lobby for permission from the government to allow it to similarly fund rural planning, but without success.[19]

Moscow's reticence to fund rural planning helps explain the official response to the two letters. The 1949 letter had been sent to Stalin with the hope that it would be published. But A. Kozlov, who headed the party's agricultural department and answered to Malenkov, first evaluated it. He did not approve of the proposal: "the resolutions… are too general and non-specific," he explained in a note to Malenkov, "and it is not clear from the letter who will be fulfilling these commitments, as they were adopted at a conference of administrators [*rukovodiashchie rabotniki*] and not in

[19] This was a complex issue. On measures in Ukraine, see the decree of 14 May 1948 no. 862 "O meropriiatiakh po obespecheniiu plana sel'skogo i kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva po Ukrainskoi SSR na 1948 god." On 20 January 1949, a decision was taken that called for collective farms themselves to pay for planning measures, entitled "Ob obespechenii selenii Ukrainskoi SSSR proektami planirovki na 1949-1951 g.g." According to a report, "paying for such projects is very expensive for collective farms, and as a result conflicts between collective farms and planning organizations are occurring, leading to court proceedings, and kolkhozes are charged large sums of money on court orders." For these references, and the report, see "Benediktov to Malenkov," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 135, l. 74. For more on the resolution of this debate in favor of allowing Ukraine to fund planning activities, see RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 573, 330-336. On the division of rural construction into republican directorates, see Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside*, 99. On the directorates efforts to increase its profile from 1948 on, see GARF f. a-259, op. 6, d. 6491, l. 23

the collective farms, where in practice rural construction is carried out." Kozlov's criticism, in other words, rested on the assumption that state employees had no place in rural construction; their resolutions were meaningless because—according to Kozlov—collective farm construction was the exclusive responsibility of the farms themselves. The letter was not published.[20] The 1950 letter, written just as the all-Union amalgamation was getting underway, was also dismissed. Stalin forwarded the letter to Malenkov, who started writing on the margins, then crossed out his incomplete comments and sent it to the archive.[21] The problem with the letter is that it too implied that rural planning—having supposedly been proven superior in Ukraine—should be introduced across the country. Malenkov, it seems, opposed allowing the government to fund what had become the norm in Ukraine.

In principle, Malenkov was not against the type of rural modernization that Khrushchev and others advocated. In fact, in 1950 the government carried out its own version of "rural reconstruction" in selected territories, mostly those that had been annexed by the USSR during the course of the Second World War. While such cases of "sovietization" deserve more study, there are important parallels with the amalgamation campaign. On 22 April, for instance, the Council of Ministers approved plans to carry out the resettlement of villages on the Karelian Isthmus (*Karel'skii peresheek*) separating Leningrad from Finland, which had been occupied by the Soviet Union in 1944. The plan consisted of the resettlement of independent households and the creation of entirely new settlements. Leningrad province received six hundred and fifty thousand rubles for the planning and development of the new settlements and another

[20] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 135, l. 11.
[21] "V. Ivanov to Stalin," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 224, ll. 37-42.

million rubles for relocating, restoring and building new administrative buildings, schools, hospitals, first aid centers, houses for specialists as well as for establishing parcels of cultivated land [*agrouchastki*]. On 17 July 1950 Leningrad reported that the new farm centers had been selected in all the enlarged farms of the province and that local architects had taken up planning the new settlements.[22] The provincial party secretary also requested that the government explain how they should respond to requests from collective farms for permission to alter private plots in the new settlements.[23]

Moscow's support for such measures in select Soviet borderlands was presumably because the areas had already experienced a great deal of resettlement.[24] On 23 July 1950 the Council of Ministers also approved plans to resettle small settlements with less than twenty-five households in the newly collectivized provinces of Western Ukraine. Seven-year loans of two thousand five hundred rubles were credited to each household to help them pay for the disassembly, transport and reassembly of their houses, and collective farms were credited six thousand rubles each to pay for plans for the enlarged settlements. The decree, which also called for these provinces to be provided with additional timber, nails and coal, was signed by Stalin.[25] Similar measures were also taken in July 1950 for the province of Crimea, where the ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatar population had taken place in 1944.[26] Finally, on

[22] On the plan, see RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 229, ll. 76-109.
[23] GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 3562, ll. 72-74.
[24] Indeed, the decision to resettle the area was made originally by the State Defense Committee on 12 June 1945 (No. 9958), which was confirmed by a Council of Ministers decree. For a reference to the decision, see GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 3562, ll. 72-74.
[25] RGANI f. 89, op. 57, d. 6.
[26] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 224, ll. 54-55.

3 January 1951 the Council of Ministers agreed to release credit for the resettlement of two thousand seven hundred households in the border provinces of Karelia.[27]

Such measures may have raised hope that comprehensive rural planning measures would be taken in the Russian heartland, but Moscow remained reticent. On 24 June, for instance, Malenkov received a request from the northerly province of Kirovsk for permission to resettle ten thousand very small settlements, many of which were single-family homesteads.[28] While there was no official response, someone clearly informed the provincial administration that their request was not welcome. Ahead of the 17 July meeting of Malenkov's agricultural bureau designated to discuss the proposal, Kirovsk provincial officials "admitted that it would be necessary to review their request" and they dropped the matter.[29]

Rural reconstruction, in short, was not out of the question in 1950. What troubled Malenkov was the question of how it might be applied in the country's heartlands. Khrushchev, apparently with Stalin's support, had managed to question the status quo by pressing for amalgamation, resettlement and rural construction around Moscow.

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The initial decision about whether or not to incorporate reconstruction and resettlement in the amalgamation campaign was taken in early April, almost two months before the official all-Union campaign began on May 30.[30] On Malenkov's order, leading agricultural officials including party secretaries from the provinces of

[27] L. I. Vavulinskaia, *Kolkhoznoe krest'ianstvo i gosudarstvennaia politika v seredine 1940-kh - kontse 1950-kh godov (na materialakh Karelii)*, (Petrozavodsk, Karel'skii nauchnyi tsentr RAN: 2010), 69.
[28] For the report to Malenkov mentioning the request, see f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5732, ll. 277-281. The Ministry of Agriculture wrote that they were sending specialists to look into the situation.
[29] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 224, ll. 62-63.
[30] At the time, mergers were already being carried out based on local initiative in a number of provinces.

Yaroslavl' and Velikoluzhskii met to make final comments on the draft decree on amalgamation, which had been written by the Ministry of Agriculture.[31] In his resulting report on the meeting to Malenkov, party agricultural department chief Kozlov noted that suggestions had been made for "land reorganization [within the enlarged farms] and the relocation of homes and other buildings," and also that "these activities be paid for by the government." Not surprisingly, Kozlov recommended that these and a few other suggestions not be included in the draft and instead that the government should decide such issues on a case-by-case basis.[32] Malenkov apparently agreed.

As amended by Kozlov and Malenkov, the final version of the 30 May 1950 decree on amalgamation provided no vision of how enlarged collective farms were to be organized. It emphasized the management of the mergers themselves, which were to be carried out across the entire country. Mergers were to be carried out democratically (a two-thirds vote of the membership of each collective farm required), and the decree warned against turning the reform into a "campaign." The property of each former collective was to pass to the enlarged farm subject to inspection committees [*revisionnyie komissii*]. Emphasis was placed on providing machinery to the new farms and the promotion of agricultural specialists.[33]

However, despite Malenkov's reticence, many of those involved believed it was just a matter of time before further measures were taken to assist the new farms. The author of the decree himself, F. Ivanitskii of the Ministry of Agriculture, captured a

[31] Dunmore's supposition that Khrushchev's Secretariat in the Central Committee composed the legislation turns out to have been wrong. See *Soviet Politics*, 94.
[32] "Kozlov to Malenkov," GARF f. 5446, op. 80, d. 2026, ll. 70-71.
[33] For the text of the resolution, see A. G. Egorov, et. al., *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s''ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, (Moscow: 1983), Vol. 8, 214-217. For an English translation of the text, see Robert Hatch McNeal, *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), vol 3, 254-256.

widely held sentiment when he wrote in a note to his chief Benediktov: "the merging of collective farms, which is now taking place, is just the beginning of this project. The most important measures will be the revision of earlier crop rotations and the relocation of farms," activities that he noted were already being carried out "haphazardly" [*po-raznomu*] at the local level.[34]

Khrushchev also increasingly identified with a more activist position. In two influential *Pravda* articles published weeks after the decree (21 June, 24 June), he argued that "it was time to responsibly complete the mergers," by which he meant "helping farms better organize their brigades, carrying out land reorganization, and getting new construction going." "With help from the collectives themselves," he added, "members from small villages can relocate their homes and other buildings to large settlements and reconstruct them there. And then gradually, as the collective farm grows, large buildings with amenities [*blagoustroennye doma*] can be constructed."[35] According to Khrushchev the mergers had thus far only occurred "on paper" [*formal'no*]; the real work remained to be done.[36]

Khrushchev made good on his rhetoric by supporting such measures through his position as first party secretary of Moscow and the surrounding province, and in particular by encouraging ties between Moscow and Kiev. In mid-May 1950, for example, the province's newspaper *Moskovskii Bol'shevik* reported on the construction of Khrushchev's first rural construction project in the Irpen' lowlands near Kiev,

[34] "O proekte postanovlenia po ob"edineniiu melkikh kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5734, l. 81.
[35] The two articles were republished as "Ob ocherednykh zadachakh kolkhozov i MTS v sviazi s ukrupneniem melkikh sel'skokhoziaistvennykh artelei," a copy of which is stored in RGASPI f. 397, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 1-46.
[36] This is how Moscow province chief agronomist Malygin paraphrased Khrushchev's statements. "Stenogrammy soveshchanii rabotnikov mestnykh sel'khoz organov po voprosam organizatsionno-khoziaistvenogo ukreplenia ob"edinennykh kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 902, ll. 45-46.

prefaced by a quote from the (deceased) futurist poet V. Mayakovskii: "Here will be a garden-city!"[37] Three days later the same newspaper published an open letter to the Soviet Academy of Architecture from the enlarged collective farm Dimitrov, located close to Moscow, asking for help in redeveloping their central settlement.[38] And in June an agricultural delegation made up of chairmen from collective farms in the Moscow Province visited Ukraine where (among other things) they "learned in detail about plans for a couple of agrotowns, construction of which has already begun."[39] In turn, a delegation from Ukraine to Moscow in mid-June included F. Dubkovetskii, chairman of the collective farm where Khrushchev had first raised the prospect of amalgamation. In Moscow he met with Khrushchev, visited local farms and spoke at a provincial conference of agriculturalists.[40]

By the spring of 1950 there were already clear signs of a division over rural construction. On the one hand, Khrushchev publicly and provincial authorities behind the scenes were already calling for more state involvement in collective farm reorganization. Malenkov and Kozlov, on the other hand, seem to have taken a clear stance against increasing state investment in the countryside, in particular in the RSFSR.

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[37] "Selo Demidovo," *Moskovskii Bol'shevik*, 21 May 1950. For more on this project, see Chapter 2 of the present dissertation.

[38] "Zdes' budet kolkhoznyi gorod," *Moskovskii Bol'shevik,* June 27. The Academy of architecture sent representatives to the village (Miachkovo) and subsequently developed plans for them. On September 5 a meeting of Moscow architects resolved to help collective farms around the city by providing plans for two hundred and fifty settlements. For reference to the decision during a conference, see TsAODIM f. 3, op. 138, d. 211, l. 126.

[39] "Sela budushchego," *Moskovskii Bol'shevik*, June 22.

[40] Fedor Dubkovetskii, *Rozhdionnye oktiabrem*, (Moscow, Sel'khozgiz: 1957), 117-118. "Soveshchanie predsedatelei kolkhozov Moskovskoi oblasti," *Leninskii put',* June 25. For another exchange that included a visit to Irpen', see Petr Ivanovich Arzhikov, *Our Collective Farm: Notes of a Collective-Farm Chairman*. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 73.

**Summer: The Undergoverned Countryside**

At one level, the campaign was constrained by the government's reticence to increase its investment in the countryside. But at the same time, it was also limited by its weak influence in the countryside, which can be illustrated by one of the first controversies about implementation.

On June 5, less than a week after the campaign had begun, the Ministry of Agriculture received a serious complaint from collective farms in the district of Rzhevskii in the north-western province of Kalinin. The senior instructor sent to investigate reported ten days later (directly to the deputy Minister of Agriculture, S. G. Khoshtaria) that the complaint was fully justified. Preparation for the campaign had begun, we learn, as early as April. Indeed, many provinces had followed Khrushchev's example in Moscow by initiating amalgamation on their own. In the Kalinin province, the provincial agricultural administration began by distributing instructions to the districts. A land organizer (Smirnov) then developed plans for Rzhevskii district, in which he proposed reducing the number of farms in the district from two hundred and sixty to one hundred and twenty. The district party committee, however, was not satisfied, and the plan was revised to reduce the number to seventy. Mergers were then carried out crudely, with local officials using threats and fraud to ensure the mergers. In one meeting, collective farmers were told that their procurement quotas would be raised if they refused to merge, and in another case "the local 'representative' of the MVD had taken the names of all those who opposed the merger, after which the decision to carry out amalgamation was entered as unanimous in the meeting minutes."[41]

[41] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 230, ll. 55-69.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, the Rzhevskii case was a disturbing development that underscored their lack of control and threatened to discredit the campaign, which was supposed to be a popular movement. But were the events typical of what was happening elsewhere in the country, or an exceptional case? The inspector seemed to think such cases might be more widespread because he proposed the Ministry publish a new set of guidelines explaining how to correctly carry out amalgamation in order "to eliminate such mistakes."[42] Benediktov reported the Rzhevskii affair to Malenkov, and the provincial administration was eventually reprimanded.[43] The case was also mentioned in a general report on the campaign, which would be passed subsequently on to Stalin. But there seems not to have been any systematic efforts to better monitor the situation. In September, the newspaper *Sotsial'noe zemledelie* forwarded Malenkov excerpts from letters that they had received, which they described as "signals about mistakes" taking place during amalgamation. In one case, a local prosecutor [*prokuror*] threatened, "If you do not agree to amalgamate, then tomorrow I will seize [*opishu*] your property and bring you to court." According to the complaint, he followed through with his threat: a few weeks later a procurement agent arrived and without warning "seized the property of those collective farmers who had minor outstanding debts." In another case, only eighteen out of five hundred members were said to have voted for the district's chosen candidate for chairman. The district party secretary Zlobin addressed the crowd: "Who is for Soviet power?" "Of course everyone

[42] Ibid., 68.
[43] The politburo passed a resolution criticizing Kalinin province on August 1. For a reference to the resolution, entitled "O nedostatkakh v rabote Kalininskogo, Kaluzhskogo i Kirovskogo obkomov VKP(b) po ukrupneniiu kolkhozov," see Ibid., 69. For an insightful discussion of the term *razbazarivanie* in relation to collectivization, see Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, 69-70.

raised their hand," the letter continued, after which Zlobin declared that "Iudin had been elected unanimously."[44]

On the same day that Benediktov reported about the Rzhevskii affair, he also raised a second issue with Malenkov that likewise underscored the government's poor ability to control the campaign. "Having decided on amalgamation," Benediktov explained, some collective farms "are squandering [*razbazarivaiut*] farm property and agricultural products, or are simply giving them to collective farmers."[45] Evidence that such problems were not isolated was delivered in July, when Riazan, Kostroma, Yaroslavl' and the Latvian SSR all reported similar occurrences. In "some" collective farms, explained party secretary of Riazan Larionov, "livestock, produce and money is being squandered on organizing open-air celebrations, with alcohol, after general meetings dedicated to amalgamation." For instance, one collective farm had spent four thousand rubles, one hundred and fifty-nine kilograms of flour, sixty-three kilograms of millet, and seventeen kilograms of honey, all of which was collective farm property. The farm had also slaughtered its best bull. (To make matters worse, a district party secretary had participated in these apparent celebrations). Such instances of squandering collective farm property, accompanied by drinking, had occurred in collective farms in at least seven other districts, he added.[46] Kostroma also reported similar facts in "a few small collective farms before amalgamation" in a number of districts and noted that the process of accounting for the transfer of property had not been completed "in a number of collective farms." One small farm, for instance, had freely given collective farmers grain, traded away their best cows and sold eight pigs in

[44] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 230, ll. 85-120
[45] "To Malenkov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5732, ll. 277-281.
[46] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 228, ll. 11-24.

exchange for wine.[47] Though it is impossible to be sure, these events seem to have been manifestations of local customs.

They were threatening to central authorities, however, and there may indeed have been cases of active resistance to the campaign. In Yaroslavl', for instance, some party members were up in arms about the campaign. "I will die before I allow amalgamation," one reportedly stated, and the province also reported hay being set alight.[48] Though it only had a few reports of such activities, the Politburo addressed the matter with the assumption that such problems were more widespread.[49] And if history was any example, they had reason to be concerned: the "squandering" of livestock had been a widespread phenomenon during collectivization with devastating effects for the country's agricultural sector. According to Lynne Viola, it represented "an act of massive sabotage of the new collective farm system."[50] Thus it is not surprising that on 31 July the Politburo issued a party circular explaining that it had learned that "in a number of provinces," "neglectful and careless" collective farms directors, "playing on the petit-bourgeois feelings of the political undeveloped collective farmers" had allowed the "slaughter of collective farm livestock." The Politburo ordered provincial authorities to investigate specific cases quickly and to harshly punish those responsible

[47] Ibid., ll. 72-80.
[48] Ibid. ll. 21-32. For Latvia, see Ibid., ll. 38-41.
[49] A comparative analysis of collective farm grain and livestock holdings might shed further lights on this topic. It is worth noting that the Russian historian V. I. Dolgov, working with archival documents in the late 1970s, noted that capital expenditures in collective farms in 1950 and 1951 were "great" [*velikie*]. In 1951, 21.5% of collective farm production expenditures went for the purchase of seeds and fodder and 30.2% on the purchase of productive livestock. Unfortunately he did not provide comparative data. I. V. Dolgov, 34-35 (referring to RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1190b, ll. 181, 206, which I have not viewed).
[50] Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin,* 69. On the economic impact, see Ibid., 70-71, 75-79.

[*privlekat' k strogoi otvetstvennosti*], and to prevent the "pilfering, wasting, or selling off" [*rastaskivanie i razbazarivanie*] of property on the merged collective farms.[51]

Visible and politically sensitive examples of consumption and redistribution of collective farm property may have been just the tip of the iceberg. Provincial and central authorities simply had no effective way to measure "the delivery of assets [*priem sredstv*] from the small farms," as one report labeled the activity.[52] The process was supposed to be carefully monitored by an audit commission [*revisionnaia komissia*], but bookkeeping in many collective farms was in a pitiful state.[53] A report on the topic of property transfer by the Collective Farm Council, which claimed to draw on data from 1,840 enlarged collective farms (about two percent of farms *after* amalgamation) from 122 districts, is striking for both the evidence it presented as well as that which it lacked. For example, when discussing the education levels of bookkeepers on collective farms, it found that out of 472 farms, 67.5% of the accountants had "no special training." Eighty-eight were found to have not completed the fourth grade. And no reason was given for the reduction in the sample. It is likely that the researchers simply did not have such data for the other 1,068 farms included in the overall survey, let alone for tens of thousands of others. [54]

The report focused on the province of Ivanovsk, where the property of twenty-three (out of 106) amalgamated farms had been transferred without "revisions… or proper security [*sokhrannosti*]." In eighteen farms, no property transfer had been

[51] Published in V. V. Denisov, *TsK VKP(b) i provincial'nye partiinye komitety*, doc. no. 54. Referring to the same document, Popov also cites Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Archive of the Russian President, henceforth APRF) f. 3, op. 30, d. 159, ll. 69-71

[52] V. Chuvikov, "O nedostatkakh v organizatsii ucheta v shchetovodstve v ukrupnennykh kolkhozakh (22 February 1951)," f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2071, l. 230.

[53] This point was restated in a follow-up directive issued on July 17, discussed below (22-23). See *Direktivy KPSS i Sovetskogo pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam* (Moscow: 1957), 534-536.

[54] Chuvikov, "O nedostatkakh v organizatsii ucheta," ll. 220-239.

carried out at all. In one case, they found that "all material valuables and documents of the merging collective farms were taken personally by the chairmen without any inspection and without any proper paperwork [*bez sostavleniia akta*]." Without presenting any figures, the report also noted that "a significant amount of inventory was stored in peasant households … without oversight, that inventory frequently went missing, was pilfered and prematurely written off …;" and that "all sorts of barns and sheds were taken apart for wood [*rastaskivaiutsia na drova*]." "Similar cases of neglect [*zapushchenosti*]," it concluded, "are occurring in many collective farms in the Provinces of Novosibirsk, Mogilev, Tambovsk and the Moldavian SSR." The report also described "serious damage to collective livestock rearing … in a significant number of collective farms." As an example, it noted that in twenty inspected collective farms in four districts of Tambov, there was absolutely no documentation establishing the real reason why an undisclosed number of livestock had died, or explaining who was at fault.[55]

The situation was similar at the provincial level in Arkhangelsk: officials were concerned about the transfer of property, but had no systematic data on the losses. A multi-district conference held in late 1950 found that "some" liquidated collectives took the opportunity to divvy up [*raspredelit'*] collective farm property such as the farms' seed stocks, the insurance account, animal feed and animals among collective farmers. Thirty tons of hay was reported to have been distributed in one district, and five tons in

[55] Ibid., ll. 227-228. Cases from the Kaluga province received particular attention. An investigation by the Collective Farm Council in 1951 found that the province had failed to establish order in the transfer of property from former collective farms, and also discovered "new facts" of the misuse of collective farm funds. See "Protokoly zasedanii Soveta po delam kolkhozov za janvar' - iiun' 1951," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 226-228.

a single collective farm in another district.[56] The chairman of the Arkhangelsk executive committee himself raised the issue in early 1951, drawing on cases from Krasnoborsk district. He explained that frequently there was a substantial gap between the initial decisions to merge and the actual creation of a new administration for the enlarged farm. In effect, the farms had been left "without leadership," as the former administration had ceased working before a new one had been established. This had led to "serious weakening of labor discipline in numerous collective farms, embezzlement and the theft of farm goods." In some cases, collective farmers avoided work for days on end, he claimed, because there was no one in charge. Some collective farms distributed their seed and insurance stocks according to labor days. "All too often the transfer of property stretched on for months and inventory was not verified, which bred disorganization in the accounts of the enlarged farms." It also often meant that managers of the former collective farms continued receiving a salary, "while waiting for the transfer of their assigned property."[57] In one of the few specific cases described, one new chairman explained that, because the chairmen of the former farms were not locals, they had spent freely. As of 1 September the income of all the former farms was 548,600 rubles, while they had already spent 980,000 thousand.[58] Finally, officials would later acknowledge that most districts failed to account for the transfer of property.[59]

[56] "Spravka o khode ukrupnenia," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 100, ll. 28-41, 34.
[57] "Doklad predsedatelia oblispolkoma tov. Minina V. na pervoi sessii oblastnogo Soveta," (5 January 1951), l. 13; GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3377, l. 13.
[58] GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3426, ll. 52-55ob.
[59] In early 1951, the deputy chairman of the executive committee Vlasov stated in a meeting that the failure to carry out revisions was a typical problem in a number of districts and called for investigations. "O nedostatkakh v organizatsii ucheta i kontrolia za sokhrannostiu obshchestvennoi sobstvennosti v kolkhozakh Yemetskogo raiona," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3426, ll. 73-77. Concern was raised in particular in July of 1951 when one district delivered only seventy-six pigs, claiming that the remaining

Moscow, in short, was receiving very meagre data about the progress of the campaign and therefore had limited means to judge what was happening on the ground. Despite its uncertainty about how the campaign was being carried out, the party's agricultural department remained cautiously optimistic. Evidence that events were not going according to the plans were acknowledged but treated as exceptions. In late July, for instance, a report from the province of Kuibyshev was forwarded by Malenkov to a number of high ranking officials. It included two provocative comments from collective farmers. One M. Kolokol'tsev was reported as saying,

> I don't think we should be talking about merging with other farms, but about splitting our farm into three. The bigger the collective, the worse off we are. If only we had more workers and fewer tractors and combines, we collective farmers would live better. If only because we give all our grain to the government in exchange for the [MTS' work].

And an accountant from another collective reportedly said in the midst of fellow farmers, "when collective farms were first created there was a practice of merging a couple of them into one, but nothing good came of it: everyone wanted to eat, but tried to work as little as possible… Nothing good will come of amalgamation."[60] The Latvia SSR also reported in late July as well that successful farms were objecting to mergers with poor ones.[61]

On August 24, however, Kozlov filed an upbeat report on amalgamation, which included the number of amalgamated farms by province. (The number of farms in

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1,442 had either died or been sold. "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)" (11 July - 12 July 1951), GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1035, l. 8.
[60] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 229, ll. 118-120.
[61] Ibid., ll. 38-41

Arkhangelsk, for instance, had been reduced by approximately one third, and the average size of collective farms in the district had, not surprisingly, increased proportionally). Kozlov also claimed that collective farms "everywhere" [*povsemestno*] were creating construction brigades, but he only provided evidence for the Moscow and Leningrad provinces. In 1949, he pointed out, there had been 1,618 construction brigades; now there were 1,955, an increase of twenty percent (One suspects though the party's decisions to carry out rural reconstruction in Leningrad province's Karelian Isthmus influenced these figures; Moscow only had 805 brigades). The creation of brickworks, he claimed, had also taken off [*razvernulas'*] "in Ukraine and the provinces of Leningrad, Riazan, Ivanovsk and in other provinces." But he had no comprehensive data. One question that had been raised by officials, he added, was about the possibility of "reducing the size of private plots." He stated that it was the opinion of the party's agricultural department that such questions would be "best resolved on a case by case basis."[62] In this case as in others, it seems that Malenkov's preferred way of dealing with difficult issues was to play it safe, perhaps even by ignoring them.

**Fall: The Pressure Builds**

Malenkov's wait and see, "case by case" attitude created an atmosphere of deep uncertainty within the government. But rather than spell caution, government bureaucrats treated the political vacuum as an opportunity to seek their own institutional interests. Even when decisions were taken, there was often bureaucratic resistance, leading to new conflicts.

[62] "Kozlov to Malenkov", "O khode vypolneniia postanovleniia TsK VKP(b)" (24 August 1950), RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 229, ll. 171-175.

The prospect of a bolder campaign of rural modernization promised a new level government involvement in the countryside. One office with much to gain from such a decision was the Russian Republic's Department for rural and collective farm construction [*otdel po sel'skokhoziaistvennomu i kolkhoznomu stroitel'stvu RSFSR*], as well as the Council of Ministers for the RSFSR itself.[63] Beginning in March the RSFSR made repeated attempts to raise the status of their department [*otdel*] to that of a Ministry (of Rural Construction).[64] Benediktov, however, believed that the Ministry of Agriculture was best suited to manage rural construction. In August and October he made two proposals for the department to be transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture. Not surprisingly, Benediktov's proposals were opposed by the RSFSR, which led to a bureaucratic power struggle that lasted into 1951.[65]

The Ministry of Agriculture itself continued to develop a wide range of proposals, but Malenkov's party agricultural department prevented them from being implemented. Instructions on selecting the new center of the farm, on working out a general plan, and on constructing new buildings and settlements, for instance, all delivered on June 24, were not included in a Council of Ministers decree on July 17, which was issued to provide some follow-up guidelines for amalgamation.

And there were great difficulties implementing the measures that were included in the decree, the main goal of which was to promote land reorganization with the goal

[63] In contrast to Ukraine or Belarus, for instance, the RSFSR did not have its own capital, communist party or international representation. It was greatly overshadowed by the all-Union Soviet party and state apparatuses in Moscow.
[64] "Vypiska iz Protokola No. 12," GARF f. A-259, op. 6, d. 6482, l. 43. For subsequent materials see Ibid., ll. 7-26.
[65] Khrushchev himself was said to have opposed Benediktov's measure, and instead "raised the issue of strengthening [the directorate itself]. GARF f. a-259, op. 6, d. 6477, ll. 42-45, 70-72. The proposal was entitled "O meropriatiiakh po uluchsheniiu dela stroitel'stva proizvodstvennykh pomeshchenii v kolkhozakh." For further materials on this issue, see in GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 3674, l. 125 and RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 224, ll. 139-159.

of "eliminating existing problems [*nedostatki*]."[66] For instance, the decree authorized the exchange of equally sized plots of lands between collective farms and the Ministry of Forestry. (Plots transferred from the state forest were to be no more than one hundred hectares).[67] At the local level this was a controversial decision, however, leading local timber organizations to protest and the Ministry of Forestry to insist that forestry transfers only be carried out with their agreement on a case-by-case basis. To support their argument, they cited a study showing collective farms—which had received the rights to a total of 72.6 million hectares of forestry—were abusing regulations to the point that the "timber supply was running out" [*zapasy drevesiny istoshchaiutsia*] and that special forests, for instance those planted to protect fields from erosion, were disappearing. It is not clear how these protests affected events at the local level. After a delay of five months, the party's response to the request was to state that there was no need to change the law because "local timber organizations were being involved in the land transfers to the necessary extent."[68]

The July 17 decree also authorized the engagement of specialists from other Ministries and departments to make up for a shortage of land organizers throughout the country. Winning authorization though was just one step in the tedious process of mobilizing the provincial bureaucracies. In fact, Benediktov ended up presenting the proposal in a more detailed form in December. Specialists with the appropriate skills were to be transferred from their current positions to land organization brigades for a period of one year. To help ensure that the order would not be ignored, Benediktov

[66] The decree is republished in Malin V. N., and A. V. Korobov, *Direktivy KPSS i Sovetskogo pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam: 1917-1957 gody; sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1957), vol. 3, 534-536. The decree also dealt with some financial issues.
[67] "Ivanitskii to Benediktov (O khode vypolneniia… 17 iiulia)," RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5747, ll. 234-239.
[68] "Bovin to Malenkov" and "Kozlov to Malenkov," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 218, ll. 197-199, 212

insisted that important ministries such as state security, the army and the navy not be exempt from having to provide cadres. He also requested a pay raise for land organizers, which he claimed was one and a half to two times less than what specialists were paid for equivalent work in other ministries. The difference had led to a high turnover and a "sharp deficit of land organizers working in agriculture," despite the "high number of graduates in the field."[69] Malenkov approved the proposal in principle on 14 December and assigned a Council of Ministers committee to review it and to report on 31 December. Early in 1951 a version of the proposal was approved, but the final version may have differed significantly from Benediktov's draft.[70]

The measure then had to be taken up at the provincial level.[71] Arkhangelsk, for example, was ordered to mobilize "fifteen to twenty" specialists working in other industries immediately and to put them to work in district agricultural offices for a period of one year. Again Ministries objected to losing workers that were described as essential to their work.[72] Assessing the impact of these measures is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is fair to say that they were beyond the capacity of the province, even with the extra land organizers. One of the first priorities was to provide new land deeds to the enlarged farms, a process that involved "eliminating deficiencies in land use," "merging arable land into large sections" and "selecting and allotting plots for the future collective farm settlements." The district of Niandoma in Arkhangelsk, for instance, was expected to carry out land reorganization for fifteen collective farms by 1

[69] "O merakh po provedeniiu zemleustroistva v ukrupnennykh kolkhozakh," GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 3674, ll. 210-217.
[70] Ibid., 206; According to materials from provincial archives, the decree was issued as Sovmin SSSR no. 296, and it gave provinces until 15 March 1951 to mobilize specialists for land organization. See GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3440, ll. 11-12.
[71] "O meropriiatiiakh v sviazi s ukrupneniem melkikh kolkhozov (protocol no. 3)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 874, l. 103.
[72] GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3440, ll. 15-43.

May, in time for the sowing campaign. In late February, the district secretary wrote to Arkhangelsk explaining that, "due to the fact that there were no maps for any of the enlarged collective farms," he could not fulfill the plan. In particular, he noted that the single land organizer in the district had only one assistant, who was "unable to travel to the collective farms, because she was breastfeeding." In response to his request for two land organizers, Arkhangelsk replied that it could only send one, and that they would have to share him with the neighbouring district.[73] Such problems reflected an overall lack of resources in Arkhangelsk, as in much of the country. According to the director of the local offices of the administration for rural and collective farm construction, for example, in the entire province there was only an "insignificant amount" of standardized blueprints for barns, and "absolutely no technical paper, drafting instruments or even technical or reference materials." The party administration for the province had a total of seventy-four cars in 1950, sixteen of which needed repairs; to make up for the shortage, they also had ten motorcycles, nineteen bicycles and thirty-four horses.[74]

Just as it did for land reorganization, the Ministry of Agriculture also developed increasingly specific legislation related to resettlement and collective farm construction. In October it held a conference aimed at "getting opinions from comrades in the periphery" on questions related to resettlement.[75] The group approved of a plan to have

[73] Ibid., ll. 264, 269-71, 296.
[74] See "Otchety, dokladnye zapiski, perepiska s Sovetom Ministrov RSFSR, SSSR … po kolkhoznomu stroitel'stvu," GAAO f. 2063 op. 1 d. 3429, l. 192 and "O nalichnom kolichestve avtomashin, loshadei i dr. vidov transporta na 1 ianvaria po Arkhangelskoi oblastnoi Partorganazatsii," RGASPI f. 17, op. 76, d. 1325, ll. 18-21.
[75] For example, "Predlozheniie o sselenii melkikh kolkhozov i o poriadke sselenii khoziastv rabochikh i sluzhashchikh, ne sviazannykh s kolkhoznym proizvodstvom," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1058, ll. 158-162 and "Stenogrammy soveshchanii rabotnikov mestnykh sel'skokhoziaistvennykh organov po voprosam organizatsionno-khoziastvennogo ukreplenia ob"edinennykh kolkhozov," f. 7486, op. 7, d. 902.

resettlement carried out no later than 1955, as part of each collective farm's proposed long-term plan. Once such a plan was adopted, moreover, all construction in villages designated for resettlement was to be forbidden. Various forms of state help for resettlement were also discussed. In November, Ivanitskii drafted a specific decree that—if approved and issued—would have granted collective farm general meetings the power to provide partial or complete resettlement assistance from the collective farm for "needy collective farm families," including "the families of those who had died during the Great Fatherland War, invalids, the elderly, large families, etc."[76] No such measures, it is worth repeating, had been approved by the leadership.

But by the fall of 1950, many clearly assumed that the government would provide some sort of assistance to the enlarged farms. In part, this was because of the modernist rhetoric that surrounded the campaign. But it was also because there were departments within the government who saw in the campaign an opportunity to expand their activities; others, on the other hand, were threatened by the potential changes.

**Malenkov's Gambit**

There was another significant new development in the fall, however: on 20 September 1951 the government began to estimate the cost of carrying out mass resettlement. Malenkov's bureau of agriculture and procurements, it seems based on the paper trail, initiated this process.[77] What is not spelled out is why this was done. Was Malenkov's bureau actually considering carrying out resettlement on a mass scale? Given Malenkov's previous opposition to rural reconstruction, this seems unlikely. The

[76] "O sselenii melkikh kolkhoznykh nasenennykh punktov v krupnye kolkhoznye tsentry," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1057, ll. 205-207.
[77] Referred to in "Bovin to Kozlov (4 Ocober 1950)," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 218, ll. 204-208 (208).

evidence suggestions that Malenkov was intending to use the figures to discredit Khrushchev.

The initial order by Malenkov's bureau of agricultural and procurements created a committee to determine how much more timber would be needed for construction in enlarged collective farms for every province of the country. Then, in November the RSFSR department of rural and collective farm construction calculated what would be required to relocate small villages and single-family homesteads; it was their findings that would be used to compose a final report on the issue, which was presented to Malenkov in December.[78]

What is most striking about the final report is the rate of resettlement that it was based on: villages with 1-15 households were to be resettled one hundred percent; 16-30 households: seventy-eight percent; 31-60 households: fifty six percent; and 61-100 households: twenty-one percent. Why they had considered resettling settlements at such an extreme rate, including ones with up to one hundred households, was not explained. Not surprisingly, the conclusion of the report was that resettlement "would require an enormous loss of labor, financial resources, and construction materials."[79] According to "merely rough estimates," it was calculated that in the Russian Republic alone 2.3 million households would need to be resettled and for the Soviet Union as a whole, the number was 3.7 million, or "eighteen percent of households in the country." Thirty to fifty percent of households in the northwest would be relocated and a stunning sixty percent and sixty-five percent in the Smolensk and Kirovsk provinces

[78] GARF f. A-259, op. 6, d. 6491, ll. 20-47.
[79] For the early draft, see "O raschetakh sviazannykh s provedeniem rabot po ukrupneniiu kolkhozov," GARF f. A-259, op. 6, d. 6491, ll. 12-16. For the final draft, "O sselenii melkikh nasenennykh punktov i stroitel'stve krupnykh blagoustroennykh kolkhoznykh sel," GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 3848, ll. 1-26.

respectively; thirty to thirty-five percent in the central zone and forty percent in the Moscow province; and twenty-three percent in Central Asia. In fact, these numbers were quite similar to what former Menshevik and political exile Boris I. Nicolaevsky estimated in December of 1950, which had led him to conclude that "more peasant houses will be destroyed by Khrushchev's agrarian experiment than were lost due to the German invasion."[80] The cost for relocation was estimated at 16.5 billion rubles.

If carried out in this form, this resettlement project would by any measure have been one of the twentieth century's most ambitious and most destructive projects of social engineering. But was such a plan ever seriously considered?[81] And if so, why had its authors set such high rates of resettlement? The RSFSR rural construction department's original analysis, which strongly reflected their own institutional interests, was completely divorced from reality. Relocating existing structures in the coming five years, it asserted, would require "400,000 dedicated workers" and building new objects would require a further 800,00, "or roughly ten percent of the overall amount of able-bodied collective farmers, which is definitely realistic [*vpolne real'no*]," they added.[82] Such measures, it noted, were just the beginning, as "it is well known, that the absolute majority of homes and collective farm structures are old [*ustareli*] and that they will have to be replaced with new, planned buildings in the near future." The rural construction department thus seems to have believed that such a project was possible. But they certainly had their own interests. There is no question that the plan bolstered

[80] See his "The New Soviet Campaign against the Peasants," 92.
[81] Writing much later, Ivan Benediktov claimed that it was Khrushchev who had suggested carrying out mass resettlement and construction throughout the Soviet Union. See B. Litov, ed. "I. A. Benediktov o Staline i Khrushcheve," *Molodaya gvardia*, no. 4 (1989), 58. For more on this publication, see Chapter 5 note 57 of this dissertation.
[82] "O raschetakh sviazannykh s provedeniem rabot po ukrupneni kolkhozov," GARF f. A-259, op. 6, d. 6481, l. 31.

their case for increased funding and responsibility, something they had been long been fighting for.

The text of the final report to Malenkov, however, strongly suggests that the authors were split over the issue of resettlement, and that the proponents of resettlement were outnumbered by those strongly opposed. The report presented a very weak explanation of why these issues were being considered. It gave examples, for instance, of huge collective farms (twenty-two settlements) and highlighted the case of Kirovsk province, where 2,460 enlarged farms were spread out among 16,456 settlements. The lack of guidance from the government, it also noted, was causing some problems, but the examples were trivial. For instance, the report noted a conflict between the membership of the collective farm Timiriazev and the provincial party committee over whether to resettle peasants into three large settlements or into a single one. In other words, the report acknowledged that amalgamation had created new problems for collective farms, but only in a cursory way.

The report also ended in an unusual way, as if to include a dissenting opinion. "If [resettlement] were to happen," the conclusion began, "we would recommend the following." What followed was a series of suggestions that contradicted the radical assumptions behind the entire report. The last section proposed, for instance, that "resettlement be carried out on an individual basis" and "only based on the efforts of the collective farms themselves." It was also recommended that there be "no specific deadlines or targets;" that "the issue of improving collective production should be the deciding factor in choosing how many large settlements to build;" and finally that it be carried out so as "not to harm the basic productive activities of the collective farms and make maximal use of existing infrastructure, and that (with approval of two-thirds of

the collective farm meeting) the private plots can be reduced in size in the "residential zone" near collective farmers' homes with the rest of the land located close to the settlement." The weak position of this "dissenting voice" was emphasized by a final comment that was given in lieu of a draft proposal: "in case the outlined suggestions on the question of resettlement will be approved, then, based on that, it would be possible to flesh out [*vyrabotat'*] a draft decree."[83] In other words, it ended with a weak call for a fundamentally different resettlement plan, which reflected the view of technocrats who wanted to affirm the state's role in guiding rural construction, but who did not necessarily want to turn the process into a massive campaign.

Officially, Malenkov played a neutral role, but the cost calculation and the report—initiated it seems on his request—had been shaped in a way that was consistent with his opposition to government involvement in the campaign. He read it over and put two small check marks by the issue of expenses, and another check mark by a recommendation to carry out the resettlement of "single family homesteads and settlements with few households" over the course of two to three years.[84] He now had exactly what he needed to end the calls for greater state assistance to the amalgamated farms: evidence that rural reconstruction as supposedly envisioned by Khrushchev and others was foolhardy adventurism that the state could not afford. It was New Year's eve, 1950. Stalin had just returned from a three-month vacation on 21 December. Perhaps the ambiguity about the campaign would finally be resolved. He set a date of January 17 to discuss the report within his bureau. Khrushchev, who was continuing to advocate rural construction in Moscow, was not informed of the meeting or the report.

[83] "O sselenii melkikh naselennykh punktov i stroitel'stve krupnykh blagoustroennykh kolkhoznykh sel," ll. 1-26.
[84] Ibid.

## Conclusion

There was much that was Promethean about the rhetoric of rural transformation in 1950, but those who were actually involved each had their own concerns and interests. Khrushchev's ideas about rural reconstruction were adopted selectively. While the state undertook the legal amalgamation of collective farms on a mass scale, it was unwilling to provide any support for collective farm reorganization. This decision reflected disagreements behind the scenes over what role the government should play in the countryside. Despite the seeming enthusiasm for the campaign among technocrats and increasingly in the press—inspired most notably by Khrushchev's ongoing public support for rural construction—Malenkov and no doubt other "fiscal conservatives" seem to have held the upper hand.

Instead of controlling expectations, Malenkov let the enthusiasm behind the campaign take its own course. This may have been because the idea of creating agrotowns, which promised in one way or another greater investment in the countryside, likely helped mobilize actors at all levels to support the campaign. Indeed, the evidence of economic chaos on collective farms that began to be reported as early as June 1950 suggests that the government needed all the positive portrayals of the campaign that it could get. At the same time, the evidence suggests that Malenkov did not take seriously the proposals for rural investment and resettlement. He was opposed to rural reconstruction from the beginning. And by September 1950, he gradually began accumulating evidence that would put the campaign in a bad light. These efforts would intensify in the early months of 1951.

The underlying problem for authorities in Moscow was that they had only a limited degree of control over how the campaign was actually being implemented. Direct responsibility for implementation fell on the shoulders of provincial and district-level authorities. At this more local level, abstract, high modernist ambitions were weighed by local leaders against their own concerns.

## Chapter 4

### "To capitalize on all the benefits of amalgamation:"

### The Second Collectivization in Arkhangelsk Province

Bereznik… your hour has come and your time is up… We'll live in our grandfather's house no more, befriend the dirt and roaches… the old must cross the river to learn how to live from us. Now is the time, I think, it's within our sights to build our own bright collective farm town…

--Excerpt from Ivanov's poem "The Collective Farm City."[1]

On New Years eve, 1951—just as Georgy Malenkov was sitting down to review his resettlement expense estimates—the local daily of Ustiansk district in the province of Arkhangelsk featured a series of glowing reports from Bereznik, a village located forty kilometers up the frozen Ust' river from the district's main administrative center, Shangaly. "An agrotown will be built here," read the headline. The article revealed plans to reorganize the collective farm *Soiuz* [The Union], which had recently been created on the basis of three former collective farms. It now consisted of 253 member households living in eight small villages, "scattered around the entire territory of the collective farm, at a distance of up to eleven kilometers from each other."[2] The outlying villages were to be abandoned as part of a four-year resettlement plan that would

[1] Excerpts from the poem "*Kolkhoznyi gorod*" by Ivanov, published in *Udarnaia Brigada*, 31 December 1950.
[2] "Pereustroistvo sela," *Udarnaia Brigada*, 31 December 1950.

concentrate the collective farm's human and material resources in one site: the new Bereznik.

The article and an accompanying sketch suggested that the new Bereznik would completely replace the current village.



**Illustration 2. Sketch of the proposed Bereznik agrotown, December 1950**[3]

The agrogorod would consist of approximately three hundred houses, placed along parallel tree-lined streets and interspersed with public spaces: a community center [*klub*] and an administrative building for the county and the collective farm; a park, a tiny rectangular forest and an oval-shaped field for sports. The houses were situated so that each would have access to a narrow field, presumably for private gardens. Finally, the farm itself was located apart from the village, and both would be provided with

[3] Ibid.

electricity.[4] The proposed transformation of Bereznik thus reflected the basic model of collective farm settlement planning supported by Soviet architects and rural planners.[5]

The plan represented a radical break with the status quo in Arkhangelsk, as it would have in most of rural Russia. It harkened directly back to the heady days of 1929 and early 1930, when many Soviet planners with "urbanist" ideals hoped to subsume traditional village communities within large, industrial-style collective farms. These hopes were dashed during the course of collectivization, which as a rule was based on subordinating existing communities to the new order. Up until 1950, the majority of collective farms were "collectivized villages."[6]

Two decades after collectivization, the agricultural sector in Arkhangelsk was in crisis. Signs of "backwardness," not to mention poverty more generally, were widespread among the province's 1,799 collective farms. In the fall of 1948, for example, a young agronomist assigned to collective farms in his native district was struck by their "savage barbarity:" "On the farm there were thirty half-starved cows and as many calves… and the twelve pigs ran around like wolves…. Besides the chairman of the farm there was not a single able-bodied man on the farm." The chairman explained to him that if he released grain for the pigs the collective farmers "would simply take it home."[7] Many of the basic aims of collectivization remained unfulfilled. In parts of the province domestic animals were not even kept in barns. In 1951 in the district of Kargopol', for example, only four percent of cattle, ten percent of sheep, six

[4] *Udarnaia Brigada*, 31 December 1950.
[5] For more detail on the elements of this model, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[6] See Chapter 1 of the present dissertation.
[7] Nikolai Mikhailovich Zuev, *Vyshel ia iz derevni*, (Arkhangelsk: Pravda Severa, 2001), 23-26.

percent of horses and six percent of pigs were housed in barns [*typovye pomeshchenia*]. The rest were in "very overcrowded and unequipped peasant homes."[8]

The idea of remaking Bereznik through resettlement and reconstruction was tied to the all-Union collective farm amalgamation campaign, which Nikita Khrushchev had championed in the spring of 1950. In theory, the all-Union amalgamation campaign was an exemplary project of state "simplification," to use James Scott's terminology. Planners expected that it would make the countryside more "legible" by correcting boundaries between farms, simplifying and standardizing crop rotations, and settling peasants in ordered housing. Yet the high-level, behind-the-scenes disagreements in Moscow over the scope of the campaign left provincial leaders with little guidance and few resources.[9] While there were voices of support for increasing the government's role in planning the enlarged collective farms, guiding construction, and carrying out resettlement—as exemplified in the Bereznik agrotown project—in January of 1951 the party-state hierarchy in Moscow had still not approved such measures.

The political infighting in Moscow meant that local dynamics would play an essential role in the course of the campaign. And in Arkhangelsk, the most pressing factor was a developing labor crisis in the countryside. In this context, amalgamation came to be seen locally as a way to liquidate farms deemed too small or remote, with the hope that newly enlarged farms could make more efficient use of existing resources. Eliminating small farms turned out to be a rather straightforward process. But when it came to consolidating the newly enlarged "collectives," provincial and district authorities faced insurmountable challenges.

[8] "Stenogramma tretiego plenuma obkoma VKP(b) (15-16 March 1951)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1031, l. 128 ob.
[9] See Chapter 3 of the present dissertation.

**Facing up to decline in the countryside**

The prospect of amalgamating collective farms in Arkhangelsk province was first raised among the provincial leadership during a party plenum held in mid April 1950. Word of Khrushchev's efforts to merge collective farms in Moscow province had reached Arkhangelsk. The meeting had been called to discuss "shortcomings in our work with personnel," particularly in the countryside. The speaker at the plenum, the party secretary responsible for agriculture, framed the discussion around the party's broader goal of "providing, in the near future, an abundance of foods" for the population. This could be done, he argued, through building on the province's most successful collective farms, which were all large, "complex" [*mnogootraslevye*] enterprises. His foremost example was the collective farm *Soiuz* at Bereznik, in the remote district of Ustiansk, where "in the last few years the collective farm built a hydroelectric station, radio station, two mills, and a frame saw, and also organized brick production and a mechanical flax treatment operation." He also stressed the features of what he saw as the province's most successful farms: they had, for instance, "breeding farms" and "produced high quality grains, herbs, and seeds, etc." What held the province back, he argued, was that a third of their collective farms had "less than one hundred hectares of sown land" and that "more than three hundred" had "fewer than thirty households each."[10]

Secretary Kuchepatov proposed that the province carry out amalgamation. Referring to Nikita Khrushchev's election speech from 7 March 1950, in which he had

[10] "Stenograficheskii otchet plenuma no. 8 obkoma," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 868, ll. 74-80. In fact, the number was 378, much closer to four hundred than it was "more than three hundred." Kuchepatov did not mention that relevant fact that over three-quarters of the province's farms had less than two hundred hectares of sown land. "Doklad predsedatelia oblispolkoma tov. Minina V. na 1 sessii oblastnogo Soveta (5 January 1951)," l. 4.

first publicly advocated amalgamation, Kuchepatov explained that collective farmers around Moscow had already begun merging their collective farms, and added that Khrushchev "had defined this as a progressive phenomenon." In this speech, Khrushchev had justified the need for amalgamation above all in terms of technological progress and rationalization.[11] While mirroring some of Khrushchev's themes, Kuchepatov also, however, stressed the need to reduce how much collective farms spent on their administration, meaning the farm's chairperson, bookkeeper, storekeeper, and so on. Reducing the number of farms would implicitly free up such employees for field work. When several collective farms had been merged a few months earlier (and independently from events in Moscow) in Arkhangelsk's Priozernyi district, the justification had been based overwhelmingly on concerns about manpower. According to the official request, the merger would foster not only "the opportunity for the expanded mechanization of manual tasks," but also the "better use of the labor force and a reduction in waste on managerial-administrative pay, as well as the release of some of the collective farmers from their managerial-administrative responsibilities in order to reinforce field brigades."[12] The underlying concern in this case about labor resources could not have been more clearly emphasized, and Kuchepatov shared such concerns.

Kuchepatov focused his analysis on the lack of qualified leadership in the countryside, rather than labor problems in general. This was consistent with the plenum's focus on party personnel, but it was also a more tactful way of addressing the

[11] Khrushchev, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Kalininskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga,* 17-20.
[12] "Zakliuchenie (3 March 1950)," GAAO f. 3474, op. 1, d. 1390, ll. 3-4. There were a total of 1,600 collective farms in the province prior to amalgamation.

controversial issue of labor shortages.[13] Carefully laying out his case, Kuchepatov drew on fragmented pieces of information to highlight one aspect of the labor problem: the lack of sufficiently qualified leaders.

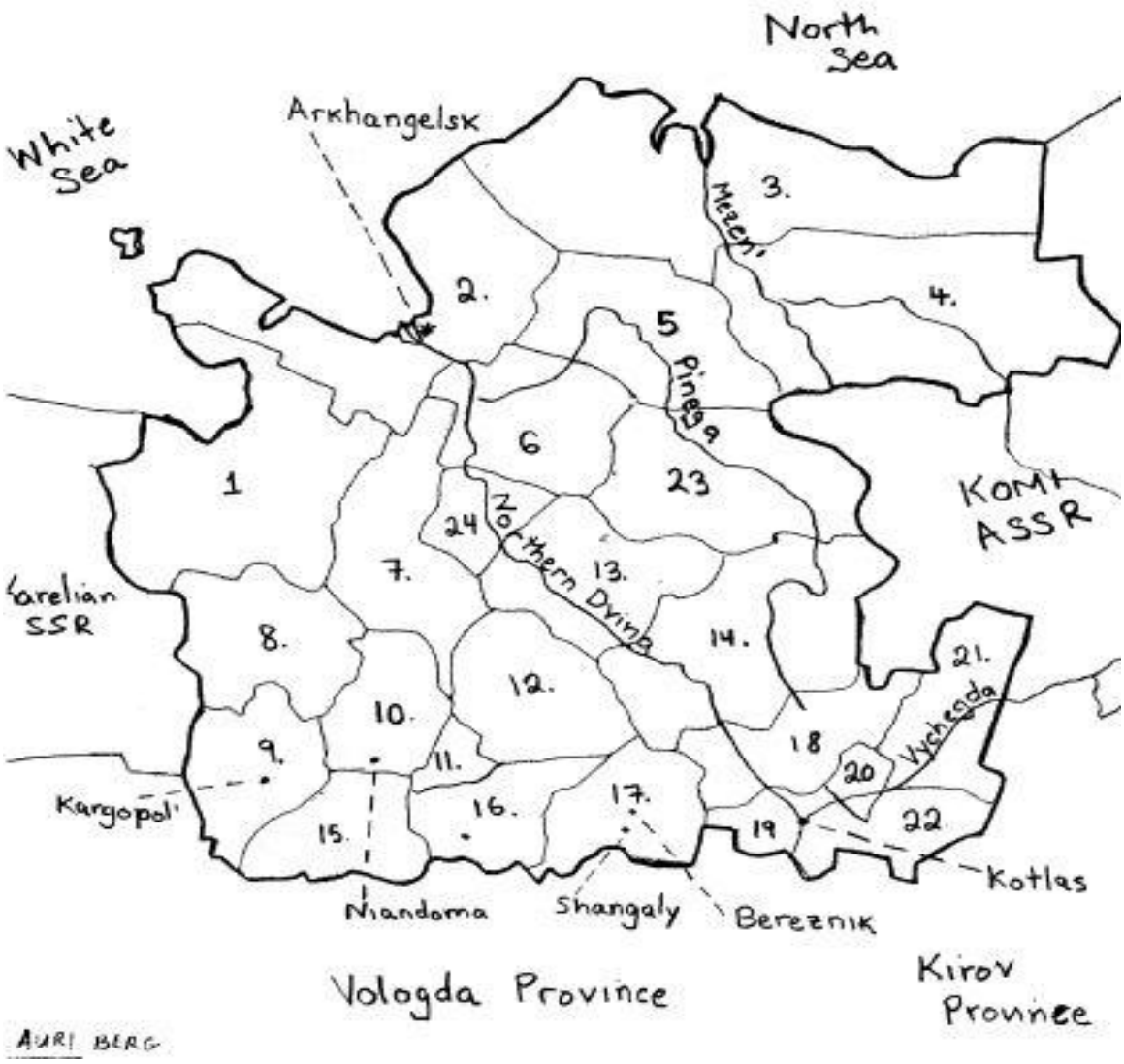



**Illustration 3: Arkhangelsk Province; seas, major rivers and selected sites[14]**

[13] Soviet leaders were adamantly against acknowledging that labor shortages were a significant problem. And those that made such claims were frequently accused of failing to properly organize and inspire the available labor force.

[14] The districts are: 1. Onega, 2. Primorskii, 3. Mezen', 4. Leshukonsk, 5. Pinega and Karpogory, 6. Kholmogory and Yemetsk, 7. Plesetsk, 8. Priozernyi, 9. Kargopol', 10. Niandoma, 11. Rovdinsk, 12. Shenkursk, 13. Vinogradovskii, 14. Verkhne-Toemskii, 15. Konosha, 16. Vel'sk, 17. Ust'iansk, 18. Krasnoborsk, 19. Kotlas, 20. Sol'vychegodsk, 21. Yarensk, 22. Vilegodskii.

The fact that large farms would require capable, qualified directors, he argued, put the province in a difficult position, because only four percent of collective farm chairman had more than an elementary education and ten percent had no education whatsoever. But Kuchepatov focused particularly on the very telling problems with brigade leaders. "In a number of districts," he explained, "it is considered an absolutely normal phenomenon when brigade leaders are diverted [*otvlekaiutsa*] from their brigades for extended periods of time." As he put it, they "worked seasonally, in other words from spring to fall." Speaking of a few collective farms specifically, he concluded that "during the winter period the administration of brigades is nonexistent [*rukovodstvo brigadami obezlichivaetsia*]."[15] Kuchepatov was of course referring to the widespread practice in Northern provinces of employing collective farmers in forestry. "Obviously under pressure [*nazhim*] from the province," explained one very frank rural soviet chairman from Onega district during a gathering in Arkhangelsk, "our district bosses literally take everyone from the collective farms for timber collection."[16] Both men and women were recruited to work either directly in the forest or on the rivers as log drivers. There were cases of collective farm chairmen being threatened with arrest "as saboteurs" [*kak sabotazhniki*] if they failed to meet their quotas in due time.[17] And the government set these quotas, apparently, with little consideration for whether collective farms could afford to meet them. For example, in 1950 in Arkhangelsk province collective farmers—both men (starting at age sixteen) and women (starting at

[15] "Stenograficheskii otchet plenuma No. 8 obkoma," ll. 74-80.
[16] The chairman's frank phrasing was vigorously crossed out of the transcript and replaced with more neutral language. "Stenogramma oblastnogo soveshchaniia predsedatelei sel'skikh sovetov (10-11 October 1950)," f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3098, l. 185.
[17] "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," l. 73.

age eighteen)—were required to complete 110 days worth of work in forestry between 15 October and 10 April, after which he or she could return to the collective farm.[18]

The origins of the labor shortages reflected both the impact of the Second World War as well as the two-decade old trend of increasing migration from the village to industrial and urban centers.[19] As one official concerned about the existing system put it, the country's collective farms had been treated as a "bottomless source of labor reserves" rather than as an "independent agricultural enterprise, requiring a certain defined labor force."[20] This was certainly the case in Arkhangelsk where, year after year, the collective farms continued to be a primary source for workers in industry. As the agronomist Zuev described, based on his experience at the time, "despite the fact that collective farmers did not have passports, they were regularly employed" in positions outside of agriculture.[21] Throughout the post-war period and the 1950s, collective farms repeatedly appealed to have their members returned, to no avail.[22]

By the end of 1950 it was increasingly being acknowledged within the province that Arkhangelsk had a labor crisis. In January of 1951 the first party secretary wrote directly to Stalin about the dire lack of manpower in the province, which had lost

[18] The exact terms were specified by the USSR's deputy Minister of Timber and Paper Industries for the 1950 campaign at an October gathering of rural soviet chairmen in Arkhangelsk. Both men and women over the age of forty were exempt from these requirements. The collective farm administration had no right to alter who was mobilized. Ibid., ll. 49 ob., 244-252.

[19] The best study of postwar Soviet rural demography is O. M. Verbitskaia, *Naselenie rossiiskoi derevni v 1939-1959 gg.: Problemy demograficheskogo razvitiia* (Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2002).

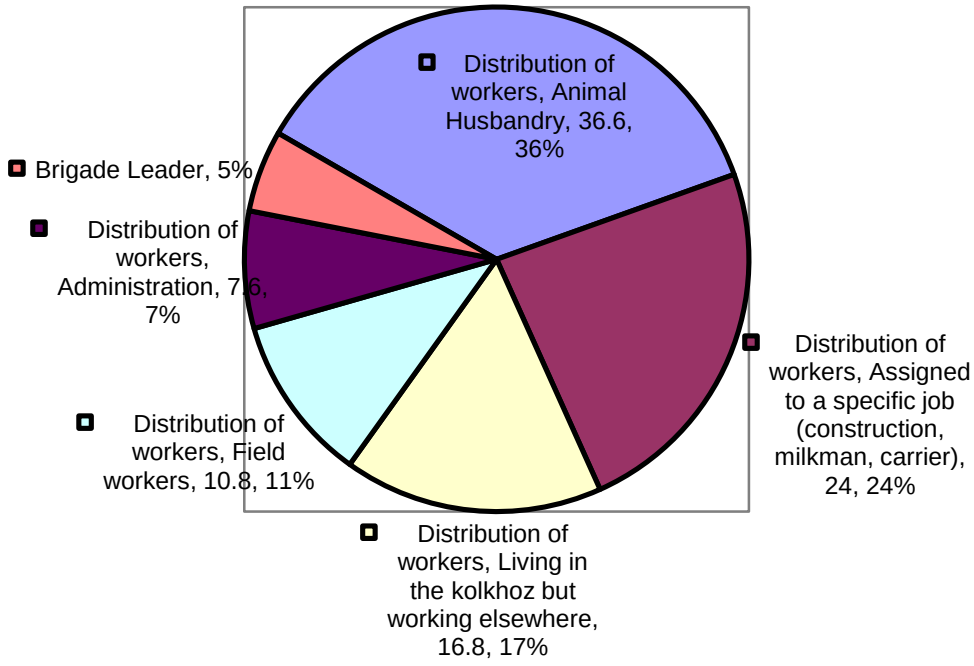
[20] Discussed in O. V. Gorbachev, "Organizovannaia migratsiia iz sela Tsentral'nogo Nechernozem'ia vo vtoroi polovine 1940-kh - 1960-e gody," *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (2003). The official was from the Ministry of Labor Resources, which took over labor recruitment in 1951. From RGAE f. 1562, op. 7, d. 1057, ll. 251, 235-37, 242.

[21] Zuev, *Vyshel ia iz derevni*, 26. The widespread notion that peasants received passports under Khrushchev is a widely repeated myth. Villagers were only guaranteed passports in the 1970s.

[22] For an assessment of the various ways that villagers made do in the margins of collective farm society in this period, see Jean Levesque, "'Into the grey zone:' Sham Peasants and the Limits of the Kolkhoz Order in the Post-War Russian Village, 1945-1953," in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 103-120.

54,000 able-bodied workers between 1940 and 1951, while at the same time, he explained, the "amount of work that is carried out by machine remains largely unchanged."[23] In 1951, a total of only 95,812 able-bodied workers remained in the provinces' collective farms (69% of which were women).[24]

**Table 3. Distribution of able-bodied workers in Arkhangelsk collective farms**




As the diagram shows, even during the summer months when most workers returned from the forests, only approximately one out of every ten of these workers was

[23] "Report based on Latunov to Malenkov (27 January 1951)," GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 2055, l. 27.
[24] "Spravka (12 May 1951)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3429, l. 106.

regularly assigned to work in the fields. In total, only half of the able-bodied workers were involved directly in agricultural work. To make up for these shortages, approximately 20,000 "non-able-bodied" workers, mostly consisting of children and the elderly, were assigned to field brigades. The situation was much worse during the winters. For instance, during the winter of 1950-1951, "there were almost no able-bodied workers in any field brigade." "In many provinces," the report continued, "even those responsible for the farm's animals were sent" to work in the forests and "in some provinces as many as fifty percent of the brigade supervisors" as well.[25]

Two reports from 1949 that assessed weak collective farms in the Niandoma and Kargopol' districts provide a very telling picture of how some collective farms had declined during the 1940s. Most had few able-bodied workers, were sowing less acreage and collecting much less hay. In Niandoma, shortages had also led the collective farms to hire outside workers, and the average labor-day payment for the remaining collective farmers had dropped on average from forty-nine kopeks to thirty-six, and from .9 kilograms of grain to .48. The situation was very similar in a quarter of Kargopol' district's 104 farms.[26] The results of these two studies led to a further investigation of fifteen collective farms in both provinces, which confirmed the above conclusions and highlighted particularly disturbing cases. In one collective farm, for

[25] "O vypolnenii postanovlenia Soveta Ministrov ot 19 Aprelia 1948 po Arkhangelskoi oblasti," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1109, 152-169 (150). As one collective farm chairman put it in 1951, "The majority of our livestock farmers [*zhivotnovody*] have been with us since the days of collectivization. In the last few years … some are beginning to retire [*vykhodiat iz stroia*], but there are no young people to replace them." "Stenogramma tretiego plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," l. 75.

[26] In Niandoma, thirty percent of the arable land was no longer being worked by 1948, and forty five percent of the hayfields were not being cut. While fifteen of hayfields had not been cut in 1940 in Kargopol', forty percent was not cut in 1948; there twenty-nine percent of arable land was not being worked in 1948. And while there had been 1,610 able-bodied workers there in 1940 (forty-three percent of the population), in 1948 only 848 remained (thirty-nine percent). "Niandoma i Kargopol'," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1 d. 882, ll. 178-189.

instance, "due to the lack of able-bodied workers, the collective farm yearly resorts to hiring agricultural day laborers 'on the side.'"[27] In 1948, such expenditures came to 11,538 labor days in 1948, while the collective farmers themselves worked only 5,149 labor days. Some farms had experienced ruinous declines in their workforce, the most striking being the collective farm Kirov (which had not even been one of the initial farms studied). In 1940 the population was 342; in 1948, only fifteen people remained, eight of whom were considered able-bodied workers.[28]

One category of collective farm, those based on former "special settlements," faced the most critical labor shortage problems and required attention from authorities.[29] These settlements had been established in the midst of great hardship by "kulak" families deported to the North during collectivization, and about sixty of them in Arkhangelsk province had been converted into collective farms in 1939-1940.[30] In December of 1947, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) removed movement restrictions from the settlements and granted the remaining population passports. Many residents returned to their homelands, including, for instance, the majority of the inhabitants of the collective farm Beria, in Niandoma district. In January of 1950 the

[27] Such day laborers were likely villagers who had managed to free themselves from their own collective farm but had not found work in industry. On this phenomenon, which was on the rise in the post-war period, see Levesque, "'Into the Grey Zone," 111-112.

[28] Ibid. Collective farmers were paid proportionately based on the number of "labor days" they accumulated. Some jobs were worth more labor days than others. In the end, however, many collective farms simply did not have enough resources in cash or in-kind after making their deliveries to the state in order to pay their employees anything near what could be considered a "living wage." As one rural soviet chairman from Onega put it, "These days it's not a secret that our collective farmers aren't overly enthusiastic [*ne ochen' stremiatsia*] about collective farm life, because the value of labor days is very low." "Stenogramma oblastnogo soveshchaniia predsedatelei sel'skikh sovetov," l. 185.

[29] They are often referred to in local documents as settlement farms [*poselkovye kolkhozy*]. On the origins of these settlements, see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[30] Lists by district and an untitled map of these settlements are displayed in the permanent historical exhibition at the Arkhangelsk Provincial Museum of Natural History [*Oblastnoi Kraevedcheskii Muzei*] (as of July 2011).

district appealed for help from the province, claiming that the farm only had enough grain to feed its animals until 20 February, and that there would be no seeds for spring planting. Efforts had been made to convince twenty-two residents who had long worked in other industries to return to the farm, "but almost all of them do not want to go back to the collective farm, and some are even selling their property and leaving for Ukraine," to their "homeland," as one report put it. Of the twenty-one people remaining, only three were able-bodied and of working age, while the rest were in their 60s or 70s and/or disabled, "living off of their pensions and other benefits."[31]

The rapid decline of these farms put authorities in a very difficult situation, as there was no legal mechanism for dissolving collective farms. One possible solution was to merge such farms with their neighbors. But this proved very difficult, because nobody wanted to take responsibility for the special settlements' land holdings, which were as a rule considered a burden rather than a resource. In the district of Karpogory,[32] there were three former special settlement collectives, located from eighteen to forty kilometers away from the nearest historically settled [*starozhil'cheskie*] villages. They were, "in other words, deep in the forest." Here too, the reason why their neighbors refused to take responsibility for their lands was that the fields (former forest) were of poor quality, and their natural hayfields were located still further up river, from five to thirty kilometers. According to the district party committee's report, despite OGPU directed efforts to improve the land, these three collectives had not had a crop of grain or potatoes since 1940, the year they became collective farms. "Every year the harvest

[31] "Zhukov re: Kolkhoz imeni Berii," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 901, ll. 18-22. Collective farmers did not receive state benefits, unless it was for military service or a disability.
[32] Karpogor is a northly district of Arkhangelsk province, not to be confused with Kargopol', located to the southwest.

was subject to frosts, and thus each year they received seed supplies from other collective farms in the province." The farmers lived, the report claimed, "off the government [*za schet gosudarstva*]," "off wage labor in forestry," and "off their private plots and family livestock." The majority of the inhabitants had been called to the front, most of whom did not return, and after 1947 movement restrictions were lifted. By 1950, only seventy three individuals, primarily the elderly, were "eking out a pitiful existence." Karpogory authorities had thus urged the province to liquidate these collectives, but their requests had been repeatedly rejected "for reasons unknown to us." "Month by month the situation is getting worse," the district chairman reported, and "the collective farms are liquidating themselves."[33]

There was a precedent, moreover, for using amalgamation to solve critical labor problems. For example, the largest of these farms (the Dzerzhinsky collective farm) had been created on the basis of a merger first carried out by the MVD in 1945 and finally approved by Moscow in the fall of 1949. In that case, a farm called *Novyi put'*, [The New Way] that was located 92 kilometers from the district center at the settlement of Pachikha had been liquidated. The "settlers," who came from Ukraine, Belorussia, Crimea and the Caucasus, arrived in 1930 and were forced to build their own dwellings and cut swaths of land out of the forest on the banks of the Pachikha River to establish arable land for farming. Regular spring floods and frequent frosts, however, made farming very difficult. And during the winter of 1944-1945, the farm "survived a major food supply shortage" which "threatened to kill off all the livestock." The farm took loans from the district, which then had to be covered by "farms based on historically settled villages" [*starozhil'cheskie kolkhozy*] from around the district. Moscow first

[33] "Vetoshkin to Andreev (11 August 1951)," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1109, ll. 195-197.

pressured the province to reestablish *Novyi put'*, but an investigation in 1948 found that by then only eight families remained even in the destination farm. There was no one left, it turned out, to send back to *Novyi put'*. Finally, in October of 1949, Stalin's deputy M. Pomaznev approved the province's request to transfer thirty-seven hectares of tillage, 248 hectares of hay and eighty-five hectares of pasture over to the government.[34] Thus it is not surprising the amalgamation campaign was perceived as a potential solution to these intransigent cases.[35]

Similar efforts had been made in neighboring provinces, but they were not always successful. There too, the MVD's decision in December of 1947 to end passport restrictions led to the rapid depopulation of these collectives (677 out of 972 families had left within a couple of months). In response, the province officially requested that these lands be turned over to the state and that the "seeds, agricultural equipment and financial resources" of the farms be distributed among economically weak collective farms. Moscow, however, was skeptical. A government inspector reported that between 1933 and 1947 these farms had been some of the most successful in the province. According to his investigation, they were well-equipped with farming and transport equipment, regularly fulfilled their procurement quotas, and on average paid their members over two rubles and one kilogram of grain per labor-day, much higher than neighboring farms and even high in comparison to averages across much of the USSR. They were particularly noted for having "initiated vegetable growing" [*zachinshchikami ovoshchevodstva*] in the area. In the end, Moscow ordered Vologda to

[34] "Reshenie ispolkoma Kargopol'skogo raisoveta (14 September 1948)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 2915, ll. 152-158.
[35] Some of these farms had already been merged in the early and mid-1930s, when amalgamation was also used to solve labor problems. For some cases see Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, 152-153.

reestablish the farms, designating 215,000 rubles to provide support for new settlers.[36] A similar series of events occurred in Komi province.[37]

Labor shortages in the countryside and the dramatic decline of many collective farms, in particular the special settlements, were local concerns that could be addressed through the amalgamation campaign. Amalgamation had the potential to redistribute the workforce more effectively and to create stronger enterprises that could also justify maintaining a workforce. Merging collective farms could also serve as a useful force in consolidating farms that did not make economic sense, whether because they simply did not have the human resources to be maintained or because they were a drain on resources. And there was a historical precedent for such activities, though it was well known that Moscow was opposed to any activities that could be construed as efforts to reduce the province's agricultural obligations.

According to official internal reports [*svodki*], some collective farmers also saw amalgamation as a solution to labor problems. The collective farmer Brataev stated at a meeting, for instance, that "amalgamation will bring great joy [*bol'shaia radost'*], especially for our collective farm. If we had enough of a labor force [*bylo by u nas dostatochno rabochei sily*], then we would more successfully handle the established targets, but since we don't have enough, we can never finish our work in time and are forced to give over our hayfields to the neighboring farm." Another collective farmer, a certain Kopylov, put it simply: "In our collective farm all the collective farmers are occupied with animal husbandry, as well as administration. There just isn't anyone to

[36] The archive retains a draft of the order that was to be signed by Stalin. "Dokladnye zapiski predsedatel'ia Soveta po Vologodskoi i Saratovskoi oblastiam o sostoianii byvshikh spetsposelencheskikh kolkhozov, o strukture dokhodov," RGAE f. 9476 op. 1, d. 1781, ll. 73-135.
[37] "Kulagin to Council of Ministers (23 February 1951)," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 474, ll. 205-232.

work in the fields. In an enlarged farm there will be more people."[38] Of course this last claim was based on the assumption that enlargement would rationalize the farm's workforce enough to increase the number of field workers.

Other collective farms, however, had little reason for optimism. The membership of the collective farm *Novyi stroi* [The New System], of Niandoma district, for instance, had decreased from 192 in 1940 to only forty-eight after amalgamation. Over the decade the average labor days had been worth 200-300 grams of grain and five to ten kopeks, a small fraction of what a successful farm would pay. In a letter to the district party organization, the newly elected chairman requested that he be replaced. The district's response came on 6 December 1950. The district party secretary simply "warned [him] not to panic, not to fear that the situation was hopeless [*nichego ne sdelat' i nichego ne vyidet*]. Rather, you must find the courage and strength, to fill yourself and all the collective farmers with the faith that, if not within a year, then within a maximum of two years the farm will grow."[39]

Five years after the war, the Arkhangelsk countryside still had not sufficiently recovered. Indeed, many villages had declined even further as able-bodied people sought work in timber and other industries. Field work on many collective farms was carried out almost exclusively by youth and the elderly. For this reason, it was inevitable that provincial authorities would see amalgamation as a potential way to address these pressing issues.

[38] "Report from Ustiansk (August 1950)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 906, ll. 74-77.
[39] "Perepiska s sel'sovetami i kolkhozami," GAAO f. 2165, op. 2, d. 185, l. 71.

**Arkhangelsk's Amalgamation Campaign**

The all-Union decree on amalgamation was first published on 30 May 1950 and the provincial party committee responded by ordering seven districts to present their own proposals for amalgamation.[40] On 16 June the provincial administration published its own decree on amalgamation. It soon became clear, however, that the campaign would be much more sweeping.[41] At the provincial party conference (6-8 July 1950) the slow progress of the campaign came under general criticism and the party secretary for agriculture Kuchepatov who only a few months before had first proposed amalgamating collective farms in the province was removed.[42] By the end of July the province had set a goal of merging 1,495 out of a total of 1,799 farms and as of 1 August they had amalgamated 535.[43] Even this was still considered "slow progress," according to a report by the Minister of Agriculture.[44] Only by 1 January 1951 was the plan almost fulfilled: 1,411 farms had been consolidated into 461 enlarged ones.

The process of selecting farms for amalgamation depended on how well the district authorities knew their territories, which were spread out over hundreds of kilometers and were crisscrossed by swamps, rivers and dense forest. Many farms were

[40] Egorov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, 217. "Spravka by Sumarkov," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1000, ll. 42-44. The districts were: Vel'sk, Kotlas, Vilegodskii, Priozernyi, Kholmogory and Yemetsk, Primorskii. These were the province's most central districts, with the exception of Priozernyi.

[41] How Moscow increased the pressure on Arkhangelsk during the campaign is not clear. But a number of provinces set much higher quotas at this time. Voronezh province, for example, issued a decree on 28 June calling for the completion of amalgamation "by the end of autumn." See "Report from Voronezh (21 July 1950)," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 227, l. 70.

[42] "Protokol piatoi oblastnoi partiinoi konferentsii (6-8 July 1950)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 862, l. 9. The fact that the province was "running late" [*zapazdyvaem*] with amalgamation was acknowledged by the first secretary of the provincial executive committee, V. Minin. "Stenograficheskii otchet piatoi oblastnoi partiinoi konferentsii," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2 d. 863, l. 152.

[43] There were 1,799 agricultural collective farms in the province. A Ogarkov, "Severnaia derevnia v poslevoennyi period: 1946-1960," Unpublished manuscript, 1993, 10. There were a further 84 non-agricultural collectives.

[44] "Ivanitskii to Benediktov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1032, ll. 1- 25 (2).

inaccessible during the spring and fall and very few had any means of communicating with the district center at these times. The new chairman of one of the largest farms in Kargopol' district wrote to an agricultural administrator in Arkhangelsk: "Your visit to Kargopol' made me chairman of the farm, which I had never expected, but now that it is the case, the only thing to do is work." The kolkhoz, he explained, was "as you well know, large." It is "weak economically and there is a very small labor force." Located thirty-five kilometers from the district center, the chairman worried about being able to deliver the required 250 tons of grain, potatoes and vegetables. He asked that the province pressure the district to sell him five horses and thirty to forty cart harnesses. He also asked for the province to make forty rubber boots available for sale to the collective farm, which would "significantly improve the situation on the farms; without them there is no way to attract good workers."[45]

The poor quality of the maps from the period, which at best only provide rough outlines of collective farm lands, underscores the likelihood that these amalgamation decisions were based on only a limited understanding of local needs.[46] The following illustration, from an unpublished archival map of one district from 1951, is typical of the maps I found in Arkhangelsk. The primary features of the map are villages, roads, rivers, and district boundaries. The straight solid lines are meant to reflect the general boundaries of the enlarged collective farms, but their names are not included; sprawled across them is the phrase, "collective farm lands."[47]

[45]"Krekhalev to Ogarkov," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1098, ll. 98-101.
[46] This claim is based on the maps that I came across during my research. See, for example, GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 3, d. 581, ll. 28, 62 (late 1950s) and GAAO f. 2063, op. 1 d. 3489 (1950).
[47] The collective farm im. XVIII s"ezda VKP(b) is named on the map, perhaps because it consisted of "special settlements."

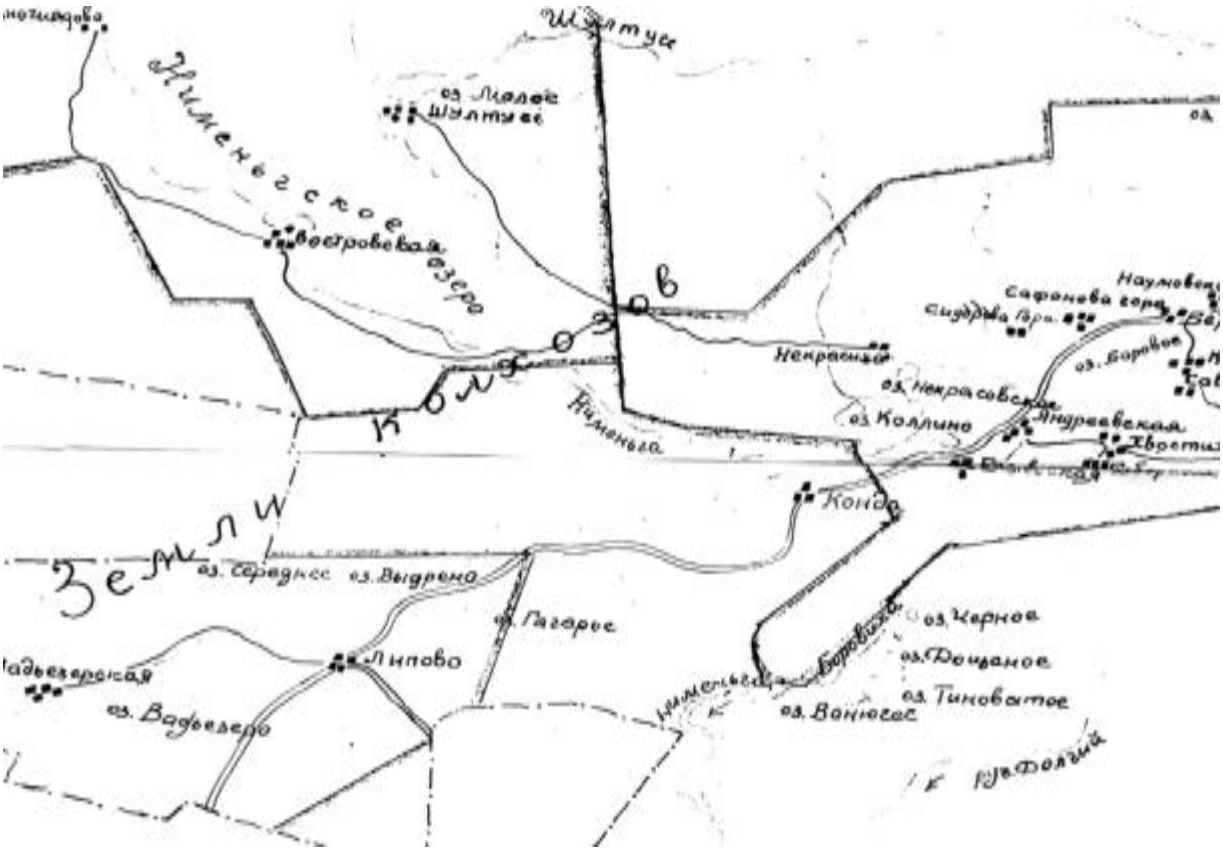



**Illustration 4. Excerpt of a 1951 map of Niandoma district, Arkhangelsk province**[48]

Occasional maps of enlarged collective farms included the names and boundaries of the former collective farms, as well their respective hay fields and forests. Figure 2 is of the enlarged collective farm K. Marx, which consisted of five former farms located on both sides of the Vychegda River in Lensk district. The map was drafted by a land organizer and signed by the deputy head of the district agricultural bureau and the chief agronomist of the district.

[48] GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3489, l. 12.

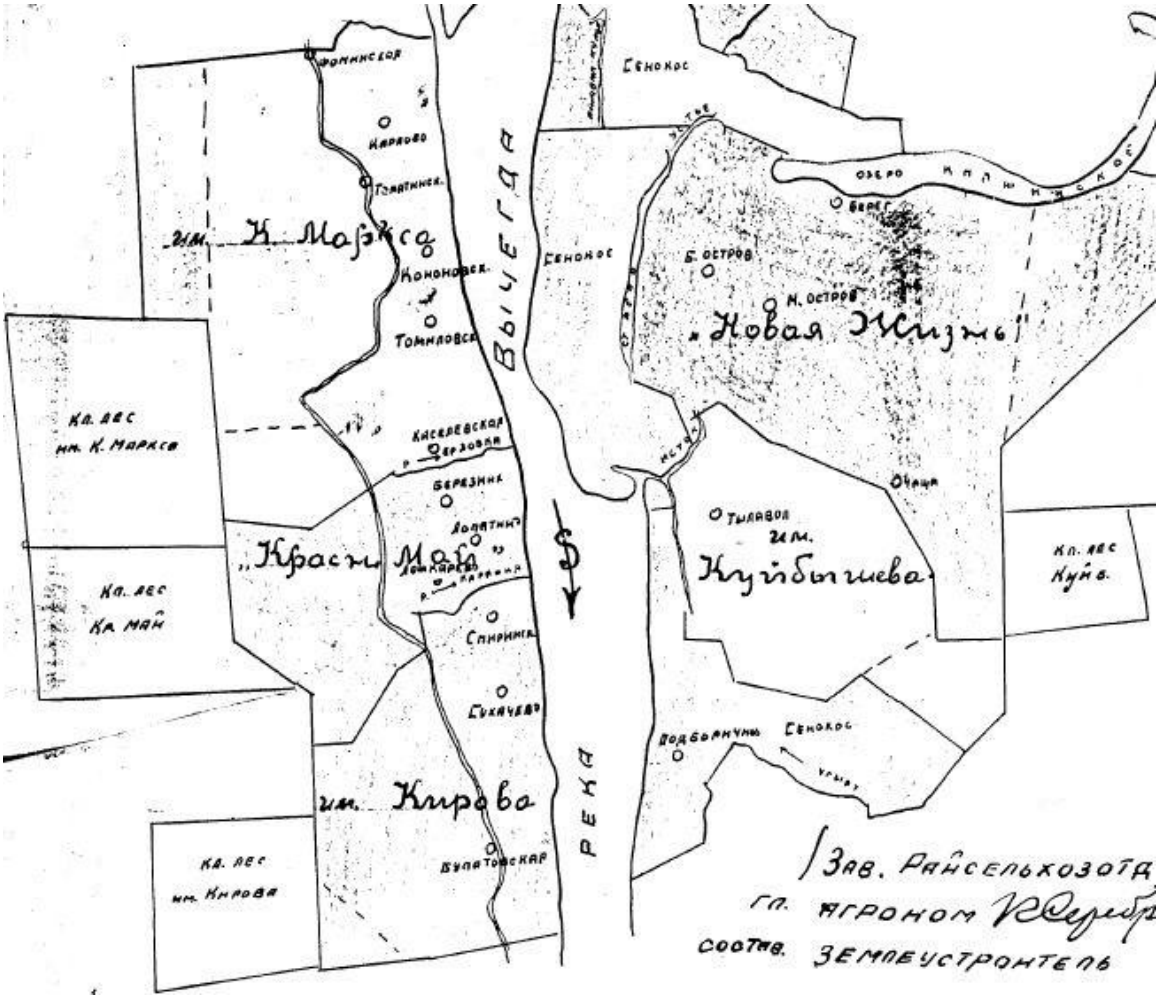



**Illustration 5. Excerpt of a map of the enlarged collective farm Karl Marx**[49]

District authorities selected which farms were to be merged, and were then responsible for ensuring that the local collective farmers approved their decision. In spite of the possible enthusiasm of some farmers, there is considerable evidence that the farm membership was forced to acquiesce to the proposals despite doubts or opposition."[50] Official complaints reached the Collective Farm Council in Moscow,

[49] GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1292, l. 23. The map shows is based on the boundaries between collective farms and fields as it was in 1949 before amalgamation. On 14 April 1951, the Lensk district secretary requested that the enlarged farm be divided into two because of communication problems caused by the river Vychegda.

[50] M. A. Beznin, T. M. Dimoni, and F. Ya Konovalov, *Severnaia derevnia v XX veke: actual'nye problemy istorii* (Vologda: Legiia, 2000), 112-113. For further cases, see A. A. Popov, A. F. Smetanin,

including one from Arkhangelsk that was listed but not preserved. In a case from Vologda where collective farmers opposed the merger, district officials forced them to continue the meeting for two straight days. As the collective farmer I. I. Gusev reported, "We sat in the meeting all day and through the night…. and despite the threats, pressure and duress twenty-one participants refused to vote."[51] Some district party officials interfered in the course of the meetings and then falsified the meeting minutes.[52]

Not surprisingly, amalgamation was carried out in an ad hoc manner. Frequently the enlarged farms were divided by rivers which made communication through much of the year impossible, leading some to request to be separated later. And amalgamation was not limited to the smallest farms. As Table 4 shows, the percentage of collective farms with 31-60 households decreased more than any other category (from 41.3% to 14.7%). There was a dramatic increase in the number of farms with over one hundred households, from less than ten percent to over fifty percent. At the same time, even after the campaign approximately nine percent of farms had no more than thirty households (down from twenty-three).[53]

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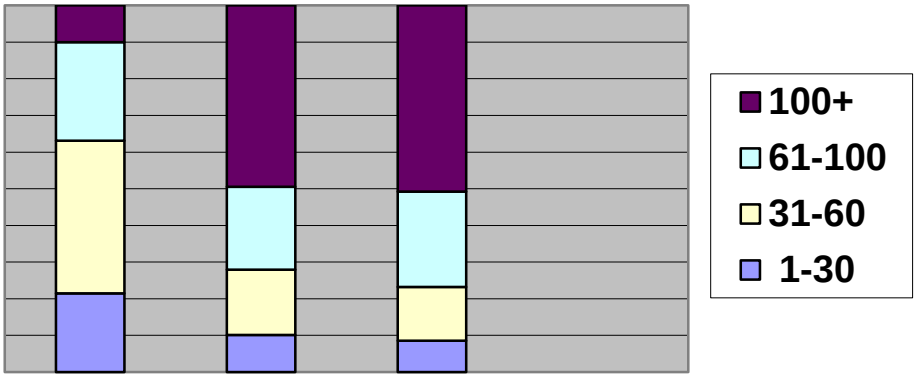
and A. N. Turubanov, *Sovetskaia severnaia derevnia v 60-e - pervoi polovine 80-kh godov* (Syktyvkar, 1995), 69-75.

[51] "Obzor pisem i zhalob, postupivshikh v Sovet po delam kolkhozov v 1950-1951 g.g. po voprosu ukrupnenia kolkhozov," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 118, l. 44.

[52] Ibid., l. 108.

[53] "Dokladnye zapiski k itogam godovogo otcheta po oblastiam RSFSR," RGAE f. 1562, op. 324, d. 4099, l. 3.

**Table 4. Proportion of collective farms by number of households**




The rushed campaign also created many very cumbersome farms that were often spread out over dozens of kilometers based in dozens of settlements. Some of the largest in Arkhangelsk, for instance, were collective farm *Khrushchev* in Krasnoborsk district, which incorporated forty-seven settlements, and *Krasnoe znamia* [The Red Banner] in Kargopol' district, which consisted of 252 households living in twenty-seven settlements spread across a "radius of twenty-four kilometers."[54] While comprehensive data is not available, the following examples are representative of general trends in the province. In 1950, fifty-five of the Lensk district's sixty-four collective farms were merged, creating nineteen new farms. On average, each enlarged farm consisted of eleven settlements (the largest – sixteen, and the smallest – three) and 119 households. Collective farms in the district of Rovdinsk reportedly consisted of "nine or ten

[54] "Krekhalev to Ogarkov," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1098, ll. 98-101.

settlements," and in Vinogradovskii they averaged about twelve settlements, the largest consisting of twenty-six.[55]

The Arkhangelsk leadership spent the first month of the campaign in a race to keep up with Moscow's quotas for enlargement. However, as the campaign progressed, there were signs of dissonance between the way Moscow perceived amalgamation and the way the provincial leadership did. An interesting example is the local reception of the Central Committee's circular of 31 July, which was issued after Stalin was informed of the uncontrolled slaughter of collective farm livestock that a number of provinces reported.[56] Officials were also ordered to continue amalgamation in such a manner so that "there be absolutely no possibility of pilfering, wasting, or selling off [*rastaskivanie i razbazarivanie*] the collective property of the merged collective farms."[57] The Arkhangelsk leadership, however, took the decree in an entirely different direction. Rather than pressuring their subordinates to establish greater control over the enlarged collective farms, they instead pressured them to do more to make amalgamation meaningful. They told district subordinates that simply "fulfilling compulsory deliveries [of grain, milk and produce] to the state"—duties that were considered the first law of collective farming—would no longer be considered sufficient. Instead, they wrote that "their work [would] be judged" above all on their success in expanding collective production on the enlarged farms.[58]

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[55] "Rovdinsk (19 December 1950)" and "Vinogradovskii" GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 907, ll. 69, 77-78.
[56] These events are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of the present dissertation.
[57] Published in V. V. Denisov, *TsK VKP(b) i regional'nye partiinye komitety*, doc. no. 54. Referring to the same document, Popov also cites APRF f. 3, op. 30, d. 159, ll. 69-71.
[58] "O khode raboty po ukrupneniu melkikh kolkhozov (8 August 1950)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 874, ll. 154-159.

In the following months, Arkhangelsk took further steps towards reorganizing the large farms. On 22 August 1950, for example, in a critical review of Sol'vychegodsk district's management of their enlarged farms, the party ordered them to "organize the planning of collective farm centers," to "take measures to correctly re-allocate the collectivized herd" and finally to "help collective farms put together long-term economic development plans."[59] Moscow had not ordered such initiatives. And in a similar party bureau review, the district of Vel'sk was criticized for failing, among other things, to "carry out long-term perspective planning for the development of the collectivized sector." As a result, the bureau concluded, "in many enlarged collective farms agricultural equipment and labor resources are being used according to the old borders of the previously existing collective farms." Vel'sk was ordered to "review measures to develop the collectivized sector of the enlarged collective farms" as well as to "help the farms to very rapidly carry out land reorganization work, to choose the location for a new collective farm center, and to "plan and implement [*vvedenie i osvoenie*] correct crop rotations."[60] Then, on 12 September the bureau approved a request from the exemplary collective farm *Soiuz* of Ustiansk district for special help in reorganizing their farm. It also ordered the provincial party newspaper, *Pravda Severa*, to provide wide coverage about *Soiuz*.[61]

The provincial authorities pursued these measures in significant part because of the thus-far disappointing results of the campaign in their province. Their predicament is well illustrated in a meeting of the party bureau on 20 November 1950, which was attended by a visiting Central Committee official, I. T. Vinogradov. The topic of

[59] "Protokol zasedaniia biuro obkoma No. 8," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 875, l. 33.
[60] "Protokol zasedaniia obkoma No. 20," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296 , op. 2, d. 876, ll. 63-65.
[61] "Protokol zasedaniia biuro obkoma No. 12," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 875, ll. 104-108.

discussion was a report on the work of the party cell in the newly enlarged Voroshilov collective farm, which now boasted 653 households; 24,800 hectares of land; and a population of 1,800 spread over forty-two settlements. Vinogradov was one of the first participants to respond to the presentation. He was shocked:

> I get the impression that you do not have an amalgamated farm; what you have is just a collection of collective farms, bundled together under a single leadership. The brigades have not changed; nor has the technology, the labor force, the horses; you sow just as you always have, and you plow for the winter just the same… There is no unified collective. Construction continues in the old settlements. … [and] there is not even a basic idea of how to develop the farm. I recommend that the proposal be rejected.

Arkhangelsk's first party secretary, Ivan Latunov, responded directly. He explained that the report was presented as an example "to show all party organizations of amalgamated collective farms through our decisions exactly what they should focus their attention on." He then went on to lay out what he saw as their "fundamental goals," starting with (first and foremost, he claimed) organizing the labor force in the new collective farm: "You cannot continue to base your collective farm on these forty-two settlements," which "of course [makes it] impossible for the farm leadership to maintain constant oversight…. You are going to have to relocate these settlements, because there simply must be a center, an economic center." Both the Central Committee representative and the first party secretary agreed that the status quo was unmanageable.

Vinogradov's claim that the Voroshilov collective was not an "amalgamated farm" was not quite accurate, however. The first stage of amalgamation—and

undoubtedly the easiest one—was the matter of merging the administration of involved collectives. In fact, this meant disbanding existing collective farm management teams (the chairman, bookkeeper, and so on) and "electing" a new team. The collective farm Voroshilov had accomplished this task. The fact that the collective had otherwise changed little would not have been surprising to local officials, because Moscow had provided few guidelines or resources for consolidating the farms. Knowing well enough the local geography, Latunov used the opportunity to insist on the inevitability of resettling some settlements.

District officials raised the issue of resettlement with increasing frequency throughout December. As one report summarized (by capitalizing the entire sentence), "Even after amalgamation many small collective farms in fact continue to live their former independent lives and there is not any kind of improvement in their organization." The report, which summarized the views put forward at a multi-district gathering on amalgamation, expressed concern that such a situation could "discredit the idea of amalgamation [*diskreditirovat' delo ukrupnenia*]."[62] Some officials were concerned about the increased distance between supervisors and workers on the enlarged farms. As one Lystsov from Kotlas noted in November, the collective farm *Put' k kommunizmu* [The Path to Communism] included a small village with just three workers, located about a kilometer from its nearest neighbor. "They will work very poorly," he explained, "because they are not under the supervision of the managerial eyes of a brigade leader [*rukovodiashchego glaza brigadira*] or other workers."[63]

[62] "Spravka o khode ukrupnenia (po materialam soveshchaniia v g. Kotlas i proverki v Kotlasskom i Krasnoborskom raionakh," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1000, ll. 28-41.
[63] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia (20-22 November 1950), GAAO f. 3474, op. 1, d. 1356, l. 79.

With growing support for resettlement, the province decided to endorse resettlement in early January, despite not have received any orders from Moscow. According to the plenary speaker, provincial executive committee chairman V. Minin, the primary reason for the decision was the many shortcomings in the amalgamation campaign thus far. Even the "completely obvious," "immediate and easy to organize actions" without which "it is difficult to imagine normal operations in merged collective farms" had not been completed. In fact, he argued, most of the merged collective farms "lived their old independent lives… arithmetic sums of yet unconnected small collective farms." In contrast to the current state of affairs, he argued that the goal of amalgamation was to create "an organic unity, a unified farm" "following a unified work plan." To do this, he continued, "collective farms would have to resettle small settlements to the new farm centers. And we can not consider this simply as a long term goal, by the way," he added, "resettlement must start as soon as the spring of 1951." Amalgamation without such measures was "senseless."[64]

On the very same day *Pravda Severa* published its account of the collective farm *Soiuz*'s decision to resettle "all the villages and homesteads [*khutory*] of the former small collective farms" into the new farm center and future agrotown, Bereznik."[65] On 7 January, the secretary from Ustiansk district triumphantly proclaimed in *Pravda Severa* that in his district "the divide between city and village was fading away, as agricultural labor was turning into a variant of industrial labor."[66] Of course, these were forward-looking statements of hope and enthusiasm. So far, amalgamation had only

[64] "Doklad predsedatelia oblispoloma tov. Minina V. na 1 sessii oblastnogo Soveta (5 January 1951)," ll. 1-53.
[65] "Pereustroistvo kolkhozogo sela," *Pravda Severa,* January 5, 1.
[66] "Pervaia sessiia oblastnogo soveta deputatov," *Pravda Severa,* January 7, 1.

merged three local farms into a single one centered in Bereznik and freed up five administrative positions ("saving" the farm 2,158 labor days).[67]

While the province publically trumpeted their vision of Bereznik, behind the scenes they took steps to address failing collective farms. One of the province's first concrete measures in the following days was to make a special request regarding the struggling special settlement farms. The idea of using amalgamation to deal with them (he referred to them as "self-liquidating") had first been raised by Minin in October. He suggested that "amalgamation be carried out in such a way that these "resettlement farms" be included "within the orbit, or domain" of larger farms.[68] The province now proposed to resettle thirty-six of them and to re-categorize their land as state forest. Doing so would free the province from the responsibility for ensuring the land's cultivation. Internal government correspondence reveals that in February of that year, in the midst of the amalgamation campaign and with the idea of resettling villagers in central collective farms still in the press, the Central State Planning Agency (*Gosplan SSSR*) supported their request with only minor conditions.[69]

And resettlement continued to be discussed in relation to the labor problem. The issue was raised in mid March 1951, during a plenary debate that centered on problems in agriculture.[70] "Over the last twenty or so years our collective farms have not built barns … and to this day collective farms livestock are still kept in the homes of

[67] "Na puti pod"ema v ukrupnennom kolkhoze 'Soiuz'," *Udarnaia Brigada,* 25 August 1950, 2.
[68] "Stenogramma oblastnogo soveshchaniia predsedatelei sel'skikh sovetov (10-11 October 1950)," l. 261.
[69] "Comments by Demidov (17 February 1951)," GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 2055, ll. 6-8.
[70] In the early months of 1951, Arkhangelsk was reviewed by the Politburo and received poor marks. Perhaps in connection with this, on 8 January the Central Committee sent Saveli Loginov, one of its instructors, to Arkhangelsk and four days later he was elected as the second party secretary. "Stenograficheskii otchet vtorogo plenuma Arkhangelskogo obkoma," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1029, l. 2.

collective farmers," explained the director of the province's agricultural bureau. In his response, first party secretary Latunov expressed his optimism that "amalgamation and the resettlement of small villages" would "create all the conditions necessary" for providing enough workers for cutting and transporting timber. The district secretary from Kargopol', who described his labor shortages in some detail, also insisted that amalgamation "could not be considered finished." They both believed that resettlement would increase the availability of workers, presumably because the labor force would be considered more manageable. There were skeptics, however, who were by now less hopeful about how much of a difference amalgamation would make. The district secretary from Sol'vychegodsk instead suggested requesting that Moscow resettle collective farmers from outside the province "in order to reduce our serious labor deficit." But Latunov refused to consider any special requests: "we write [to Moscow] almost every week, asking for everything. But [in the province] we are not even close to using all of our resources, both in forestry and in agriculture; we have many reserves, many possibilities." There was still hope it seems, that amalgamation, which the province was planning to discuss again at a provincial forum in the following weeks, would help further enable these unused "reserves."[71] (Indeed, in September 1951 Latunov made two new proposals aimed at alleviating the province's labor problems: he proposed reducing the number of household livestock that peasants could have and requested limiting the number of collective farmers sent to work in forestry for the

[71] "Stenogramma tret'ego plenuma obkoma VKP(b)" (15-16 March 1951)," ll. 16, 43ob, 49ob, 59, 139.

1952-1953 season {river drivers to 2,000-3,000 and timber procurement to 10,000} and mobilizing four hundred youth and industrial workers to help on the collective farms.[72]

The fact was that the amalgamation of collective farms alone—without resettlement—had provided little relief to labor shortages. Despite the elimination of many number of administrative positions across the province, an investigation by the Collective Farm Council representative in Arkhangelsk revealed that in fact there was only a minor reduction in staffing. The "overwhelming majority" of collective farms "continue to pay for almost the entire amount of storekeepers, storage guards and letter carriers on hand."[73]

As the spring sowing season approached, the Arkhangelsk leadership waited with keen anticipation for Moscow to announce its support for resettlement and other measures. Like others throughout the country, they were anxious about what would come next. But the lack of certainty also created anxiety. "My heart is lifted," wrote D. N. Vasiliev from the Kalinin province, "when you learn how quickly the enlarged collective farms are developing [*krepnut*]. There's such a desire for a better life!" Just as in Arkhangelsk, the farms in Kalinin province had changed little, according to Vasiliev: "The farms and the brigades are exactly the same as they were in the small collectives. Each one has the same workers, the same pieces of land, the same equipment, the same draught cattle [*tiaglo*]." "The only difference thus far," he added gloomily, "is that in the former small farms the harvest was protected [*oberegali*], but now everything's been abandoned to the whims of fate [*vsio brosheno na proizvol sud'by*]. The livestock feed in the crop fields [*v khlebakh*] every day, but no one does

[72] I found no evidence that these proposals were approved in Moscow. "Labor request (October 1951)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 3429, ll. 40-41.
[73] "O vypolnenii postanovlenia Soveta Ministrov ot 19.IV.1948 po Arkhangelskoi oblasti," ll. 152-169.

anything to prevent such beastliness." Merging farms, it seems, had upended the existing order without creating a new one, and many awaited direction from above. "[Officials] don't even visit the farm. They are all just sitting in their offices. All we have is stagnation [*Poluchilsia zastoi*]," he explained.

A letter from a certain N. V. Filatov shared the seeming insecurity about how the campaign would evolve. "Above all we are wondering how things are going to proceed. Everyone here says something different: some say that in 1951 we will not be paid according to labor days and that regular salaries will be implemented. Others say we are going to be resettled into a single settlement, and for this reason no one is building anything and no one is preparing their gardens [*ne podgotavlivaet ogorodov*]. We're all in a bewildered state because we don't have any certainty [*nichego opredelennogo ne znaem*.]"[74] The amalgamation campaign, these two letters suggest, had upset the usual rhythms, raised expectations, but thus far had brought no positive results.

**Conclusion**

Provincial authorities in Arkhangelsk, as elsewhere, showed interest in amalgamation well before the campaign first began, but when Moscow initiated the all-Union campaign they accelerated their efforts. This first stage involved legally merging formerly independent collective farms and establishing a new administration. Pressure from Moscow for numerical results had a particularly negative impact on the process, which was carried out in a haphazard manner, based on district officials' rough

[74] "*Svodka* to Andreev, Kozlov and Benediktov of letters mostly from September 1950," RGASPI f. 17, op.

knowledge of the rural landscape. Collective farm meetings were used to rubber-stamp decisions, rather than an opportunity to assess the prospects of the mergers. Up to this point, the system had worked like an effective dictatorship: orders from above were implemented as thoroughly as possible, given local conditions.

But once this initial process was completed, the provincial administration played an increasingly independent role. Namely, they began to consider the possible benefits and demands of amalgamation, in particular the opportunity to confront their worsening labor crisis. Two measures were most appealing: the reduction of current collective farm administrators (chairmen, bookkeepers, and so on) and the resettlement of villagers in small, remote villages to larger settlements. In this way, at the provincial level amalgamation was not just an abstract process of filling orders but a potential solution to pressing problems. From the perspective of Arkhangelsk, the campaign represented an opportunity to make needed cutbacks to an over-extended and declining agricultural sector *and* to focus investment in select farms, such as the one at Bereznik. The guiding principle here was not high modernist ambitions; rather, the local leadership was guided by their awareness that many of their collective farms were in crisis. In many cases, resettlement was perceived as imperative.

In Arkhangelsk, the notion of "enlargement" was a misnomer that in fact masked the fact that the campaign represented a process of contraction. Indeed, the campaign's primary accomplishment by early January 1951 was the liquidation of 950 farms, which in effect meant firing their chairmen and turning the former collective into a brigade of the nearest remaining farm. This process of seeming "labor rationalization" was one of the principle ways that the regional leadership sought to benefit from the campaign. Not surprisingly, however, the cut-back had only limited

results, leading to calls for greater state involvement in reorganizing the new farms. Indeed, in February of 1951, there was still hope for further state support for measures like settlement planning, construction, electrification, mechanization and resettlement. The final verdict, however, would be made in Moscow. And even Malenkov, who was officially in charge of the campaign, was unsure about what would come next. The final decision would have to be made by seventy-one year old Stalin.

## Chapter 5

### Dizziness with Success? Stalin's Enlarged Collective Farms

Again, please forgive me for disturbing you. It has been a long time since you, Comrade Stalin, expressed your views on the future of the collective farm movement during its transition from socialism to communism.

--From a letter to Stalin from M. A. Ivashechkin, 1951[1]

On March 2, 1951, a communist party member named M. Ivashechkin from the central-western province of Kursk wrote a letter to Stalin addressing some of his concerns about the state of the countryside. "In recent meetings, collective farmers are raising the question of setting up *kommuny*," he explained. "There is no question that the enlarged collective farm is a new qualitative change of the collective farm." But, he asked, "Can one say that it is a significant step towards the *kommuna*?" For Soviet communists, the *kommuna* represented the highest existing form of collectivized agriculture. Thus, in the most direct sense, Ivashechkin was asking how the ongoing campaign of collective farm amalgamation fit into this theoretical schema. At the same time, Ivashechkin's question may have also reflected local insecurity over what amalgamation would mean *in practice.* Local peasants' interest in the question of "setting up a *kommuna*" suggests that peasants feared losing their household plots or private livestock, which—in *kommuny*—would be socialized. Indeed, while raising the

[1] "M. A. Ivashechkin, deputy of the Kursk provincial executive committee, to Stalin," RGASPI f. 588, op. 11, d. 900, ll. 34-36.

question in a speculative way, Ivashechkin emphasized that the "progress" on amalgamation already achieved led him to believe that the "question of the *kommuna* is not simply a theoretical question (*poznavatel'nyi vopros*)."[2]

Whether in theoretical or practical terms, Ivashechkin's letter was a call—albeit delicate—for Stalin to provide leadership. He was correct when he wrote that "it had been a long time since you, comrade Stalin, have expressed your views on the future of the collective farm movement." Indeed, Stalin's only public post-war comments on collective farming are from a 1946 speech, in which he asserted that the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis had confirmed the strength of the collective farm system.[3] At the secretive 1947 central party plenum on agriculture Stalin had taken a backseat role and increasingly from that time Soviet agriculture would be managed from within the Council of Ministers, as part of Stalin's wider effort to delegate economic decision making while he became more involved in military, diplomatic and foreign affairs.[4] Although Stalin must have approved of Khrushchev's proposals for merging collective farms, he remained removed from the campaign. Until March of 1951, his only known involvement was signing the May 30 decree initiating the all-Union campaign and a discussion on 31 July 1950 concerning cases of livestock "squandering" [*razbazarivanie*]. And during his yearly three-month vacation on the Black Sea in the

[2] Ibid.
[3] I. V. Stalin, "Rech' na predvybornom sobranii izbiratelei Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Moskvy," (9 February 1946), *Sochineniia,* Vol. 16 (Moscow: Pisatel', 1997), 12.
[4] On 8 February 1947, G. M. Malenkov was assigned to head the new Council of Ministers Bureau on Agriculture and Procurement. Malenkov, however, was still primarily based at the Central Committee. Malenkov's aide there, Sukhanov, recalled in an interview with Gorlizki that once a week Malenkov would receive two large cases with approximately four hundred documents from the Council of Ministers offices in the Kremlin. On this, and on the creation of the agricultural bureau, see Gorlizki, "Ordinary Stalinism," *The Journal of Modern History*, 74, (December 2002), 705-711 (715).

fall of 1950, Stalin did not even receive written updates about the campaign.[5] He evidently did not share the view of one provincial party secretary that amalgamation was the "second and most important stage (after collectivization)" of the transformation of the Soviet countryside.[6] In typical fashion, Stalin simply forwarded Ivashechkin's letter to Malenkov, who was formally responsible for Soviet agrarian policy.

Despite Stalin's seeming indifference, however, this was a critical moment in the history of the collective farm. In the wake of amalgamation, which had in effect liquidated approximately half of the Soviet Union's quarter of a million collective farms, local officials were desperate for guidance on how to organize the new collectives. There was a widespread assumption that the mergers would be accompanied by further measures, ranging from resettlement to support for construction. At the same time, the mergers had also led to immediate logistical problems and concern about maintaining labor discipline. To address these questions, by early 1951 some local and provincial authorities were beginning to take matters into their own hands, independently deciding questions of resettlement, private plots and construction, with the expectation that Moscow's approval of these measures would be forthcoming.[7] The campaign, in other words, was beginning to take on a life of its own.

**Unresolved Questions**

The question of resettlement was one of the most pressing issues among collective farm administrators in early 1951. The vast majority of enlarged collective

[5] Instead, he received regular updates on the annual grain procurement campaign. This is based on my reading of "Shifrotelegrammy Voroshilova K. E., Malenkova G. M., mestnykh partiinykh i sovetskikh organov s otvetami i rezoliutsiami Stalina I. V., chlenov Politbiuro i sekretarei TsK VKP(b) za 1939-1950 gg," f. 558, op. 11, d. 66.
[6] Kasatkin (Yaroslavl) to Kulagin," in V. Popov, "Vtoroi i vazhneishii etap," 27-50.
[7] See Chapter 4.

farms were based on multiple settlements, sometimes dozens. In fact, some farms were merged on the assumption that small and sometimes distant settlements would be liquidated. Beginning in late 1950, many provinces created special commissions to help choose which settlement would be the future center [*tsentral'naia usad'ba*] of the collective farm. For example, the province of Kursk (the home of M. Ivashechkin, who had written to Stalin about the question of *kommuny*) created commissions at the district level to "help collective farms in choosing locations for economic and cultural centers and to decide the issue of resettlement." By January, 1,191 settlements had been selected as collective farm centers and 1,002 of these decisions had already been confirmed at collective farm general meetings. Pskov reported already in mid January that they had selected 554 settlements as collective farm centers and, moreover, that 660 households had already been resettled. They proposed moving another 8,800 households in 1951, for which they requested to be relieved of post-war construction debts and to be provided with timber and transportation equipment.[8] A number of provinces, especially in Ukraine and Belorussia, would later also admit to planning "mass resettlement."[9]

Locals began to send in complaints immediately. One anonymous individual from Smolensk wrote, for instance, that the district commission "only took into account the personal interests of the collective farm management, who live in the village of

[8] Report by Shubin (1 January 1951), RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 348, ll. 2-6. Many of the specific requests were accepted. However, on January 31 the Ministry of Finance responded that the government was currently reviewing the question of resettlement for the entire country and so its decision would be postponed. Ibid., ll. 7-15.

[9] The province of Kostroma reported on January 17 that it hoped in the coming 5-7 years, "not less," to relocate 82,503 households, currently living in 5,920 settlements. In 1951 it suggested resettling the smallest 1,000 settlements, which had an average of six households each. Ibid., ll. 16-21.

Petukhovka, and paid no attention to the protests of collective farmers."[10] In Arkhangelsk, a commission arrived to the village of Shelomenskoe in Ustiansk district in March to inform the villagers that they would be resettled to the smaller and younger village of Nizhneborsk, located on a flat site with ample room for growth. According to a young war veteran, this came as a shock to the villagers. "Why would they move a large village to a smaller one," they asked him. "No meeting was held," he wrote in his diary, "and no one asked the people."[11] The most serious case came from Nikolaevsk province, in Ukraine. In one collective farm there, all the livestock was relocated to a single site, "which led a large number of livestock to die off [*privelo k bol'shomu padezhu*]." At the same time, the farm's barns were relocated to the site of the planned "little agrotown [*agrogorodok*], and a good number of them remained unfinished through the winter." Finally, it was decided that the collective farms would only get small private plots, from .10-.15 hectares at the new site, which "dramatically worsened labor discipline among the collective farmers."[12]

Such cases of actual resettlement, however, were an exception rather than the rule. In many regions planning for resettlement had not even begun. As one official from Tiumensk in Siberia commented, "We will have to resettle many people… but no one is thinking seriously about how this will take place, at least no one is talking about it in collective farms or at the district level."[13] What held up resettlement in many cases was the problem of financing construction for housing and resettlement. Most officials

[10] "Obzor pisem i zhalob, postupivshikh v Sovet po delam kolkhozov v 1950-1951 g.g. po voprosu ukrupneniia kolkhozov," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 118, l. 52.
[11] I. N. Kononov, "Letopis' severnoi derevni 50-kh - 80-kh godov," Unpublished Manuscript, 6 (21 March 1951).
[12] "Informatsiia A. Andreevu, po apparatu "VCh" o khode obsuzhdeniia zakrytogo pis'ma" (26 April 1951), f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, ll. 163-170.
[13] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia predsedatelei Soveta po delam kolkhozov pri Pravitel'stvakh Sredne-Aziatskikh respublik" (16 February 1951), f. 9476, op. 1, d. 468, l. 49.

awaited word from the government as well as a promise of loans for construction. As one Kremlin official explained in January at a Moscow conference on rural construction, the question of government loans for construction and settlement, the timeline of resettlement, and "principles of mergers" [*printsypy ob"edineniia*] were all being reviewed by the government and would be decided in the coming days."[14] Some leaders, however, sought to separate the issues of construction and resettlement. The Minister of Agriculture for the Ukrainian SSR, for instance, explained in a meeting on 26 February 1951 that "it is not worth getting distracted over building agrotowns. Our current task is to carry out the relocation of existing homes…."[15]

Another unresolved issue was the question of whether the household plot would be adjusted during the course of amalgamation. While there were set norms for the size of private plots, in reality there was a wide degree of variation. In irrigated regions the size ranged from .15 to half a hectare, and in unirrigated regions from .25 to an entire hectare.[16] In the aftermath of the campaign, one province even admitted that it had failed to "liquidate" the practice of distributing plots according to the size of families, evidently a holdover of pre-collectivization land distribution practices.[17] Malenkov's Council of Ministers agricultural bureau had drafted a resolution on the size of household plots in the early days of the campaign (14 March), but the proposal seems to

[14] TsAOPIM f. 3, op. 138, d. 211, l. 53
[15] "Protokoly soveshchanii u ministra sel'skogo khoziaistva za 1949-1951 po sel'skim voprosam," (26 February 1951), TsDAVO f. r-27, op. 17, d. 399, l. 114.
[16] This was observed by the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, in a 1950/1951 study of almost 16,000 households using data from 1947. GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 3848, ll. 7-14.
[17] A. Matrosov to Andreev (December 7 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, l. 208. They called it the "per capita principle of allotting personal plots to collective farmers, i.e. the size of the personal plot depends on the number of family members."

have been dropped afterwards.[18] The Ministry of Agriculture again raised the issue in June, ostensibly because it was found that there were discrepancies in the size of plots even between neighboring collective farms.[19] Local authorities had requested permission to establish a unified size for all members of enlarged farms, and the Ministry of Agriculture supported this solution.[20]

The Council of Minister's July 17 follow-up decree on amalgamation included recommendations that private plots *not be altered*, but the text of the decree clearly stated that they *could be altered* if two thirds of the membership voted for a change. At the local level, this was at least in some cases understood as permission to carry out the alterations. As one report found, "here and there [the July 17 decree] was understood to mean just its opposite" because it "suggested the possibility of altering the existing norms for personal plots."[21] This is not surprising, especially given the fact that the process of merging farms also required a two-thirds majority vote, the same requirement for amalgamation itself. Moreover, there was widespread support among the party and state for reducing the size of private plots. It was widely believed that the plot distracted collective farmers from fulfilling their labor duties within the collective. As Benediktov explained in an early 1951 (unsuccessful) request to establish a new set of norms, our goal is to "eliminate the great variation" [*likvidatsia mnogoobraziia*] in the

[18] For a reference to the draft and a discussion about it, see "BGm-1012 poruchenie biuro po sel'skomu khoziastvu 14.III.1950," f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5731, l. 206.
[19] 23 June 1951, deputy agricultural director Andrienko to N. T. Kal'chenko. TsDAVO, f. r-27, op. 17, d. 424, l. 5.
[20] Benediktov to Malenkov (24 June 1950), RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5732, ll. 262-264; "proekt resheniia kollegii," RGAE f. 7486, op. 1, d. 5747, l. 226.
[21] Undated report (no earlier than July 17, 1950) by Ivnitskii, "O predvaritel'nykh itogakh ukrupneniia kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1057, l. 43. For an example of a collective farm that increased the size of the household plot, see the report from A. Kaminskii to Andreev (10 May 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, l. 135.

size of plots *and* "increase the participation of collective farmers in the collective economy of the collective farm."[22]

Regardless of their motivation, by 1951 some local authorities had taken these matters into their own hands. In Arkhangelsk, for instance, a number of districts had raised the question of reducing the size of household plots to between .25-.30 hectares and in at least one district, authorities introduced "unwarranted" [*proizvol'nye*] changes to household plot and personal livestock norms in individual collective farm charters.[23] Many collective farms in the Belorussian SSR opted during the course of collective farm meetings to reduce the household plot, "in the majority of cases to the minimum," a decision that was taken "under pressure from local organizations." In one province, 354 enlarged farms (out of a total of 712 farms) were pressured into changing the size of household plots. There were also cases in the Belorussian SSR in which authorities reduced the maximum number of cows a peasant household could keep from two to one.[24]

Plans to develop agrotowns could also affect the size of household plots. At first these were exceptional cases, though such decisions may have been adopted more widely at collective farm meetings as rumors of pending resettlement increased. On 4 August 1950, for example, the Gorky provincial executive committee resolved to divide household plots in order to plan a more compact collective farm settlement in the well known Timiriazev collective farm. Within the new central settlement, which was referred to as an agrotown in the planning stages, each household would get a .15

[22] GARF f. 5446, op. 81, d. 3848, ll. 7-14.
[23] Arkhangelsk later acknowledged that such reductions had been carried out in a "couple of districts." "Protokol zasedanii biuro obkoma no. 46 (10 April 1951)," GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1048, l. 162.
[24] Undated report to Kulagin (April-May 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, ll. 100-104. For another example from Saratov province, see RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1974, ll. 216-217.

hectare plot of land, with a further .10 hectares guaranteed by the collective farm charter to be located elsewhere.[25] The Ministry of Agriculture also supported this approach, although there was no talk of carrying out such plans on a mass scale.[26] But in Ivashechkin's Kursk province, almost three-quarters of the collective farms in one district reportedly resolved to divide their private plots in connection with plans to establish agrotowns. It was later acknowledged that collective farmers had had an "unfavorable opinion of such activities and that some (the most "backward" members) began to destroy personal and collective farm seed beds [*posadki*], sell off their livestock and so on."[27] Some private plots were also reportedly split in the Siberian province of Chitinsk, and the fact that "many collective farmers" in the Kazakh SSR later "asked for their old plots to be returned" suggests implementation there too.[28]

While there was widespread support for bringing order to the private plots, there were cases of disagreement, too.[29] Some specialists spoke out in opposition to dividing the private plot or argued on the side of higher norms. On 16 February 1951 deputy chairman of the collective farm Council Kulagin met with representatives from the Central Asian republics to discuss the progress of the campaign. The Kirgiz representative, a certain Gorelikov, who had been a member of the commission tasked with planning new collective farm settlements, was unusually outspoken. When faced

[25] "O stroitel'stve agrogoroda kolkhoz im. Timiriazeva," GARF f. a-259, op. 6, d. 6477, ll. 15-18.
[26] Reporting back on a meeting with representatives from the provinces, Ivnitskii reported: "While discussing the suggestion regarding merging of small settlements, the unanimous opinion of the participants was that collective farmers in new settlements should be given household plots of no more than .25 ha adjacent to their houses and the remaining part to satisfy the norm according to the Charter should be allotted to them outside of the village as a unified landmass." RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 1032, l. 67. For the discussions themselves, see "Stenogrammy soveshchanii rabotnikov mestnykh sel'khoz organov (4-7 October 1950) po voprosam organizatsionno-khoziaistvennogo ukreplenia ob"edinennykh kolkhozov," RGAE f. 7486, op. 7, d. 902.
[27] Koriavin to Malenkov (25 April 1951), RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 345, ll. 25-28.
[28] Report to Malenkov, f. 17, op. 138, d. 349, ll. 99-104. For the Kazakh case, see Kaminskii's report (10 May 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, l. 137.
[29] On this topic more generally, see for instance Alec Nove, "Peasants and Officials," 61.

with the problem of deciding on the size of household plots, members of his commission realized that they had no clear instructions from the government. "We simply don't have any directives [*ukazania my nikakogo ne imeem*]. We follow the literature. [The journal *Sotsialisticheskoe zemledelie*] says to decide matters [*razreshit' vopros*] so that .15 hectares be located in the new settlement, and .15 hectares behind it. What do they mean by decide? Does it mean the question should be decided at a collective farm meeting, or that a government decision is required?" What followed, Gorelikov relayed, was an argument over whether reducing the size of the plot would lead collective farmers to devote more time to the collective economy. In Gorelikov's view, this was an unsubstantiated claim. He then explained how he had recently met a decorated hero of socialist labor who "masterfully combines his work on his personal plot, orchard and bee farm with harvesting some hundred centners[30] of cotton per hectare." In deciding such questions, he maintained, "haste should be avoided." M. V. Kulagin, deputy chairman of the Collective Farm Council and chair of the meeting, abruptly interjected: "But hesitation is also dangerous.... It seems like we will have to decrease the size of personal plots and increase the minimum labor-day requirements." "Mikhail Vasil'evich," Gorelikov responded, "if such a decision is made, [I will not lag behind] when it comes to implementation. But while there is no decision, please allow us to express our opinion."[31]

By 1951, these questions were pressing and many regions felt compelled to proceed without official authorization. Amalgamation without further measures, as

[30] 100 centners is approximately eleven tons.
[31] "Soveshchanie predstavitelei Soveta po delam kolkhozov pri Pravitel'stvakh Sredne-Aziatskikh respublik," (16 February 1951), f. 9476, op. 1, d. 468, 141-158.

Arkhangelsk executive chairman Minin had put it a month before, "was senseless."[32] But without straightforward guidelines, the process was being carried out haphazardly. Indeed, at a similar meeting chaired by Kulagin in Novosibirsk, the Collective Farm Council representative from Kazakhstan, a certain Serpeninov, also raised a provocative question. Referring to his experience in Karagandinsk province, he asked whether it was "beneficial to carry out amalgamation in all cases." He gave as an example an enlarged farm that now stretched for almost four hundred kilometers. "Why had these three been merged," he asked. It had been done, he was told, "in order to save weak farms from disintegrating [*ot raspada*]."

> Well, so we merged them… but did we send even one specialist? Not one… Then who did we send to manage the farms. The type of person that should be tried for embezzlement and larceny in two previous collective farms, where he was before amalgamation… How can we speak of 'factors that slow down mechanization when there is nothing mechanized at all…"

Serpininov's giant collective farm was not typical, but the themes he raised were not unfamiliar to officials throughout the country. With little investment in the new enlarged farms, it was difficult to see how the enlarged farms would turn out. And uncertainty about whether the campaign would be more damaging than progressive was making Serpininov nervous. "I'm afraid that in the end," he concluded," we might end up with what comrade Stalin described twenty years ago in his article, "Dizziness with success."[33]

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[32] This episode is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. "Doklad predsedatelia oblispolkoma tov. Minina V. na 1 sessii oblastnogo Soveta (5 January 1951)," ll. 1-53.
[33] "Stenogramma mezhoblastnogo soveshchaniia predsedatelei Soveta po delam kokhozov (6 January 1951)," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 467, l. 302.

**A Scapegoat**

From 15-18 January 1951 Nikita Khrushchev hosted a four-day conference in Moscow on the question of rural construction. The conference itself was a component of his efforts to mobilize the province in support of resettlement and rural construction. As one participant put it, "there is no doubt … [that] within two to three years instead of small and unsightly [*nevzrachnykh*] villages there will be large collective farm settlements with adequate public services [*blagoustroennye*]." While focused on provincial issues, however, some participants also wanted Moscow to become "a model example [*obraztsovym i pokazatel'nym*] for collective farms in other provinces," as one participant put it.[34]

The fact of the conference itself speaks to Khrushchev's desire to transplant the "rural construction ecosystem" that he had helped foster in and around Kiev to Moscow. The conference brought together bureaucrats, technical specialists and collective farm chairmen from around Moscow, as well as a few from Kiev, where collective farm planning had government support. One collective farm chairman captured Khrushchev's sentiments when he stated: "we collective farmers *hope* that the scientific community" will help us "build a new village." "I'm already an old man," he added, "but I would like to live in such a settlement, in such a collective farm. Therefore I hope to begin moving collective farm houses come spring, no matter how difficult the

[34] "Soveshchanie po kolkhoznomu stroitel'stvu," TsAODIM f. 3, op. 138, d. 211, l. 133.

circumstances of construction."[35] It is within this specific context that Khrushchev gave a speech that would finally be used to draw Stalin into the campaign.

Our goal is "above all," Khrushchev claimed in his keynote address, "to build collective farm structures—barns for livestock, storage facilities for equipment, grain and vegetables." At the same time, he asserted that "simultaneously we should develop in every possible way the construction of housing and cultural and communal facilities." Specifically, he called for the establishment of construction brigades and supported splitting the household plot so that settlements could be built more compactly and efficiently. Also, as he had done since June, he stated that a great deal of resettlement would be required. Khrushchev considered this comprehensive approach to be a "fundamental preconditions" [*nepremennykh uslovii*] of the successful development of collective farming.[36]

There were signs of disagreement among participants over how collective farm construction would in fact be funded. Some expected government contracting organizations to lead the way. This view was criticized by the head of the Soviet Council of Minister's directorate for rural construction, V. D. Ivanov. He cited what he referred to as the "mistaken" views of an engineer who had claimed in a Moscow newspaper that "the time had come to create a powerful trust dedicated to rural and collective farm construction with self-supporting offices" that would "build collective

[35] Chairman of the collective farm Dimitrovka, Kolomenskii district, Moscow oblast'. For some reason his last sentence apparently evoked laughter in the audience. Ibid., 82. For articles that mention architectural and planning agencies outreach to collective farms, see *Moskovskaia Pravda,* January 6, 1951 (pp.1-2), 14, 19.

[36] Nikita Khrushchev, "O stroitel'stve i blagoustroistve v kolkhozakh," *Pravda,* 4 March 1951, 2-3. Khrushchev's speech (along with all his other speeches from his time as first secretary of Moscow province) was removed from the former Moscow party archive (now TsAOPIM). I suspect that the original transcripts are held in the Archives of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF). No one, to my knowledge, has compared the text of the original speech to the published version.

farm centers, Machine Tractor Stations, schools, hospitals and so on." Such a belief, Ivanov pointed out, was in contradiction to the Moscow party plenum decree that called for collective farms to draw on their own resources for construction purposes.[37]

Khrushchev maintained that the cost of resettlement and construction "could be shouldered" by the collective farms themselves. Though he called the reconstruction of the village a "big step forward on the path to communism," Khrushchev stressed that it was the collective farm itself, in reconstructing "its own village," that should take this "great step forward."[38] And this was consistent with what was then occurring in Moscow province. Throughout February 1951, a number of collective farms passed resolutions to direct between five and seven percent of labor-day income special construction funds. And Khrushchev proposed the same schema at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.[39] During the January 1951 conference, however, Khrushchev's principle message was that rural construction should be made more affordable. He praised the presentation of one Kuzmin, who was—in the words of another participant—"putting all his energy towards making the construction of collective farm homes cheaper and simpler."[40] Both at the conference and in his article, Khrushchev emphasized above all the need for efficiency. For instance, while acknowledging the need to base construction on locally available materials, he argued that to encourage each collective farm to have its own brickworks would be drastically inefficient. Responding to mention of locksmiths and blacksmiths on collective farms, Khrushchev interjected: "[collective farms] should be able to buy door hinges; they

[37] "Soveshchanie po kolkhoznomu stroitel'stvu," l. 90.
[38] Khrushchev, "O stroitel'stve i blagoustroistve v kolkhozakh."
[39] *Moskovskaia Pravda*, February 15, 22, 28. The 1956 speech is discussed in the conclusion of the present dissertation.
[40] Khrushchev, "O stroitel'stve i blagoustroistve v kolkhozakh."

shouldn't be produced in the collective farm… What will a locksmith or blacksmith do in a collective farm construction brigade? ... [We have to] provide ready parts, because such work should not be done in collective farms."[41]

While Khrushchev believed in applying new construction technologies to rural construction, he also argued that they should not be "mechanically transferred… from the town to village." "Nothing good would come of [such an approach.]"[42] When a scientist at the conference suggested ways that "precast panel construction" [*plitno-sbornoe*] could be easily applied to rural construction, Khrushchev commented: "This is something new and interesting. I have no critical comments. It's a shame that we won't have the opportunity to see [examples]."[43] In the conclusion of his speech, he underscored: "We will support in any way we can those who look for progressive techniques in the field of construction, those who think about the interests of the Soviet people."[44]

Khrushchev's speech made perfect sense in the context of a conference on rural construction, but Khrushchev permitted his speech to be published in the country's leading newspaper, *Pravda.* According to Khrushchev's assistant, A. Shevchenko, a *Pravda* correspondent attended the conference and asked for a copy of the speech. His name was Vasilii Ivanovich Poliakov. According to the then-editor of *Pravda*, Poliakov simply found the topic "very interesting," and had convinced the editors to request the

[41] "Soveshchanie po kolkhozmu stroitel'stvu," 90. On the importance of using local resources, see the summary of Muromskii's presentation at the conference in *Moskovskaia Pravda*, 19 January 1951, 3.
[42] Khrushchev, "O stroitel'stve i blagoustroistve v kolkhozakh."
[43] Two days of the conference were dedicated to visiting exhibitions, including a display of approximately 50 plans [*proektnykh rabot*] at the Moscow party headquarters, followed by a visit to the All-Union construction exhibition. "Soveshchanie po kolkhoznomu stroitel'stvu," 96, 133, 166. For a description of the event, see *Moskovskaia pravda,* 19 January 1951.
[44] Khrushchev, "O stroitel'stve i blagoustroistve v kolkhozakh," 3.

speech.[45] Reminiscing many years later, Shevchenko claimed to have urged Khrushchev "not to hand it over in a hurry," but it seems that he never explained why he was nervous at the time.[46]

On March 4, after a long delay, a version of Khrushchev's January 17 speech to his rural construction conference was published simultaneously in *Pravda*, *Moskovskaia pravda* and *Sotsialisticheskoe zemledelie*. But the very next day, *Pravda* published a brief note explaining that Khrushchev's article had been published for "discussion purposes only."[47] Something was clearly amiss. Reminiscing many years later, Molotov recalled that Stalin "laughed" at Khrushchev's article and condemned it as "harebrained scheming, pure and simple."[48] Stalin then confronted Khrushchev. That these events deeply frightened Khrushchev is confirmed in a letter to Stalin that he signed on March 6. In it, he recanted his article and noted in particular that "the harm to the party [caused by the article] could have been avoided if I had consulted with the Central Committee." Stalin's opinions of his article had prompted Khrushchev to "think deeply" and come to the conclusion that his "speech in its entirety, in its essence, was completely incorrect." He asked to be given the opportunity to publically criticize his article, and asked as well that he be allowed to have the Central Committee review his critique.[49] Khrushchev's aides reported later that he was devastated. "He suffered

[45] Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 2, 166.
[46] Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era*, 229. For a retrospective discussion of the events that led up to the publication, see Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 2, 165-166. For a detailed account of these events based on published sources, see Robert Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR: The Study of Soviet Dynastics* (London: Macmillan, 1961), chaps. 6 and 7.
[47] The same note was published in *Moskovskaia Pravda.*
[48] F. I. Chuev and V. M. Molotov, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chueva*. 1991, Moscow: "Terra," 362. Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era*, 230.
[49] O. V. Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) i Sovet Ministrov SSSR, 1945-1953*, (2002), Moscow, ROSSPEN, doc. no. 274, 334. Also published in *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, 1994, No. 1, 44.

terribly, he thought it was the end, and that they'd remove him," recalled Shevchenko. "It was terrible," explained Pyotr Demichev, "He was on edge. He stopped sleeping. He aged ten years before our eyes."[50] Stalin, however, seems to have been satisfied by Khrushchev's repentance. On March 6, the day that Khrushchev sent his letter, Stalin formed a commission that was given ten days to draft a secret party circular regarding the campaign.[51] Malenkov was appointed as chair of the commission. And although Khrushchev was included on the commission, the episode had been significant blow to Khrushchev, and marked the end of discussions about rural construction and resettlement.

One has to wonder whether Malenkov played a role here in this episode. Indeed, he was later accused by Khrushchev's allies of masterminding the affair in order to "crush" Khrushchev [*gotovili razgrom Khrushcheva*].[52] While I found no smoking gun, there is very suggestive evidence. Following the publication of Khrushchev's speech, Malenkov immediately began to make inquiries about it through the party office responsible for monitoring the central newspapers. V. S. Lebedev later explained that Malenkov had asked him to very carefully find out how Khrushchev's article had been published.[53] There is also one archival document, a report by one of Malenkov's chief deputies in the Council of Ministers, which suggests at the very least that Malenkov had continued in February to develop an argument that would undermine

[50] Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 229.
[51] RGANI f. 89, op. 57, d. 9. The commission was made up of Malenkov, Molotov, Mel'nikov, Patolichev, Khrushchev, Oleinik, Kozlov, Iusupov, Benediktov, Ignat'ev, Andrianov, and Tishchenko.
[52] At the 1957 June plenum, during which Khrushchev narrowly prevented a group from within the Presidium of ousting him, Khrushchev's former Minister of Agriculture for the Ukrainian SSR, V. V. Matskevich, made this claim. A. N. Yakovlev et. al. (eds.), *Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, 1957: stenogramma iiun'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* (Moscow: 1998), 632.
[53] Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 2, 166.

or discredit Khrushchev.[54] While the document is not dated, a number of facts suggest strongly that it was written at this time.[55] The report begins by summarizing the progress of amalgamation, noting that as of 1 February the number of collective farms in the country had been reduced to 118,252 from a previous total of 252,146. There is no important reason why Kuzmin would use 1 February as a benchmark other than the likelihood that this date was the most current figure. Though the campaign had begun in the summer of 1950, mergers continued to occur regularly throughout 1951, both before and after February. It is also important to note that Kuzmin refers directly to the December expense report's conclusion that resettlement plans would "cost 85 billion rubles and require a huge amount of various construction materials," which suggests a direct connection with the resettlement expense report discussed 17 January 1951.[56] Finally, Kuzmin did not name Khrushchev, which became commonplace after Stalin intervened in early March.

The report presented new arguments against the resettlement side of the campaign. For one, it suggested that resettlement plans and the idea of building agrotowns and new settlements had distracted "a number of local government and party agencies" from questions of agriculture. In particular, Kuzmin asserted that the idea of creating construction brigades had become widespread, that this would reduce the labor force available for field and livestock work, which would negatively affect primary

[54] I. Kuzmin, deputy chairman of Malenkov's Agriculture and Procurement Bureau, was appointed to the position when it was created in 1947, even though he had no agricultural training. He was born (1910) into a civil servant family [*sluzhashchii*] in Astrakhan' and worked as an engineer in Moscow until 1940 when he rapidly established himself in the *Kommissia po partinyinomu kontroliu* in the Central Committee.

[55] "O nedostatkakh i oshibkakh v rabote po ukrupneniu melkikh kolkhozov," RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 348, 46-58. The only date on the document is a stamp from May 8 from the *tekhsekretariat* and the document was catalogued chronologically in the *delo* according to this date.

[56] For a discussion of the report, see Chapter 3 of the present dissertation.

sectors of the collective farm economy. No data was presented to back up any of these claims; instead, Kuzmin cited a number of examples in the literature that showed that these ideas were being "widely circulated in newspapers as pressing and high-priority." Such authors had accepted the "factitious [*nadumannyi*] assertion that the quality of life on collective farms should be raised to the level provided in towns that even the term 'village' and 'settlement' needed to be replaced." Such suggestions," he argued, "are not based on Central Committee decisions." Like the resettlement expense estimates, the Kuzmin report corresponded with Malenkov's attitudes about the campaign, and supports the claim that he was preparing to make a convincing case against Khrushchev.

Malenkov's deputy in the Central Committee, Aleksei Kozlov, also seems to have believed that Khrushchev was in danger. The task of drafting a letter criticizing Khrushchev's article and clarifying the questions surrounding rural construction and resettlement was initially managed by Kozlov. He turned to two specialists, D. T. Shepilov and I. Laptev, both of whom were at the time working on Stalin's textbook on political economy.[57] But Kozlov provided them with a draft letter. Shepilov was struck by the "sharp and politically harsh tone" of the letter. Khrushchev's approach was called "leftist," with "some hints at Trotskyism." What is unclear is whether this initial draft reflected Stalin's opinions of the Khrushchev's article, or if this dangerous language came from Malenkov.[58] Kozlov though expressed disappointment when

[57] Shepilov, D.T., *Vospominaniia.* Voprosy Istorii KPSS, 1998, no. 7, 5-6. Shepilov's memoirs have recently been translated into English. Stephen V. Bittner and A. Austin eds., *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics under Stalin and Krushchev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
[58] Inteviewed in the early 1980s by Russian journalist B. Litov, Ivan Benediktov apparently claimed that Stalin used similar language in direct reference to Khrushchev's ideas. "In a small circle of people," he explained, Stalin called Khrushchev's ideas "purest daydreaming" [*chisteishei vody prozhekterstvom*], "leftist running ahead" [*levacheskim zabeganiem vpered*], "petit burgoise zeal" [*melkoburzhuaznoi goriachkoi*]. "I remember those words well," he added, "because Stalin repeated them numerous times in my presence, worried, it would seem, that I might otherwise fall under Khrushchev's influence." It was

Shepilov and Laptev refused to go along with his initial draft. According to Shepilov, he was "very upset" by the "character of our critique and by our positive suggestions," and kept insisting that we "hone it politically to the maximum extent possible."[59]

Finally, at the first meeting of the commission on March 16, Malenkov tabled a draft letter clearly based on the one that Kozlov had initially presented, rather than one that was independently written by Shepilov and Laptev. This first letter spoke of a "struggle against a 'rightist' opportunistic deviation in the party and 'leftist' excesses and distortions in the party line within the collective farm movement." Advocates of "mass resettlement" purportedly proposed the "obligatory establishment of a single consolidated settlement" in each collective farm and "suggest destroying [*pustit' na slom*] all old collective farm structures." Collective farmers would thus have to "forfeit their familiar household plot, and the garden they themselves had grown." "They suggest," the draft continued, "to free the collective farmer from any kind of concern over his or her own housing and [instead] to force the collective to provide housing...," despite the costs. The proposal, in short, was based on an extreme interpretation of the campaign that had little basis in reality, but one that was consistent with the sentiments that Malenkov seems to have adopted as early as the fall of 1950.[60] While more

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finally published by B. Litov (pseudonym of V. N. Dobrov), "I. A. Benediktov o Staline i Khrushcheve," *Molodaya Gvardia,* (no. 4: 1989), 12-65 (58). The circumstances of this publication raise some questions about its reliability. Benediktov had come to despise Khrushchev over the years, and in general thought highly of Stalin. He admitted to having liked Khrushchev's ideas about amalgamation initially, and to have only later been convinced otherwise by "well argued critiques by respected specialists and academically trained agrarianists" (57), presumably Laptev and Shepilov. The interview is available on the Internet at http://rksmb.org/get.php?143 (accessed March 2012).

[59] Ibid, 32. My translation. When did Stalin make it known that he had forgiven Khrushchev? Shepilov's account suggests that Kozlov learned this "soon" after he and Laptev submitted their critique, which was on March 10. The commission first met on March 16, ten days after Stalin's confrontation with Khrushchev.

[60] "Proekt. K pervomu zasedaniiu Komissii (16 March 1951)," RGANI, f. 83 op. 1 d. 7, ll. 1-18, (2, 7, 8, 10).

evidence is necessary in order to make a definitive statement about Malenkov's intentions, this was certainly more than healthy competition.

Stalin may have seen and personally rejected this first draft.[61] According to Molotov, Stalin dwelled on the issue of rural electrification. The first draft had accused Khrushchev of insisting on providing "street lights" [*ulichnoe osveshchenie*] on collective farms.[62] Molotov later recalled that Stalin explained that "electrification, as Lenin understood it, is one thing; rural electrification is another matter. One must not equate them both, these are two different things. Of course, by itself an electric station is useful, but it is not the equivalent of electrification. To establish socialism it is not enough to simply build small electric stations; it is necessary to create a system of electric stations encompassing the entire country… Then he turned to us," continued Molotov, and said "It should be softer. Make it softer."[63] The meaning of Stalin's comments about electrification (in Molotov's retrospective rendering) is not entirely clear, but his decision to go "soft" on Khrushchev is unmistakable, and has been noted by other historians. In the draft that followed Stalin's corrections the term "serious mistake" was changed to "lack of understanding" and the criticism of rural electrification was removed entirely. Instead, the party circular asserted simply that enlarged collective farms would be better able to build and make productive use of local electricity generating stations.[64] Such a change was typical of the drafting process: increasingly the party circular was transformed into a glorification of the enlarged farm. Instead of dwelling on the problems of the campaign, it instead called on the localities

[61] Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)*, 334.
[62] "Proekt. K 1-mu zasedaniiu Komissii," 13
[63] Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym*, 362.
[64] "Zakrytoe pis'mo TsK," RGANI f. 83, op. 1, d. 7, 53-57.

to better take advantage of the benefits of amalgamation. Some of the political language of the early drafts was removed, and the final party circular, approved on 2 April 1951, noted simply that "similar mistakes were made in comrade Khrushchev's well-known article."[65]

Despite the controversy, no one was punished. Aside from the stress and perhaps shame that Khrushchev endured, the only "victim" of Stalin's intervention was the Council of Ministers agricultural bureau itself, which was dissolved on 15 March, a day before the first meeting of the commission. This might have been a subtle rebuke to Malenkov, who up to that point had been the sole Politburo member running agriculture. Agriculture was from then on to be managed directly by the Council of Ministers central bureau, which Malenkov co-chaired on a rotating basis with Bulganin and Beria; Khrushchev had been a member since September 1950. Ten years later, at the height of his power, Khrushchev even claimed that Stalin by and large had agreed with him: "Building large settlements is necessary," Stalin supposedly acknowledged, "just not now." Khrushchev then claimed to have pressed Stalin: "We have to condemn old methods; what are you saying, do you want to keep the peasantry living in root cellars?" Khrushchev then added "He simply insisted that it was not the right time. And he said that only because he didn't know about life; he lived, like a marmot [*surok*], disengaged from the world. He didn't even read *Pravda.* If he had, he would have known about [all this], because a great deal was written then about [rural construction]."[66] While one cannot help but suspect that Khrushchev may have embellished this account, it cannot be entirely discounted. And if Stalin had indeed

[65] "Utverzhdennyi proekt" (2 April 1951), RGANI, f. 83 op. 1 d. 7, ll. 58-67; also published in I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, t. 18, (Tver', 2006), 676-685.
[66] Tomilina and Artizov, *Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: Dva tsveta vremeni*, vol. 2, 166.

promoted Khrushchev to provide a counterweight to Malenkov (and Beria), then Stalin's decision to forgive Khrushchev and focus attention on bringing order to the campaign should come as no surprise.[67]

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If Malenkov's intention had been to remove Khrushchev as a competitor, he failed, if only because Stalin refused to go along. At the same time, the episode had a long-lasting effect on Khrushchev's reputation. If Molotov and Benediktov are to be believed, Stalin personally dismissed Khrushchev's ideas as "harebrained scheming." Just as influential, however, were the ideas of Laptev and Shepilov, who had been brought in to draft a critique of Khrushchev's *Pravda* article. They accused Khrushchev of succumbing to "unscientific, primitive" ideas about how the village would develop under socialism. His main problem, they proposed, was that he "absolutely ignored" questions of collective farm production, and instead was concerned with "consumerist" issues. By "consumerist," they meant policies that were based on providing for collective farmers. To use Marxist parlance, they accused him of focusing on questions of the "superstructure" rather than the "base." Shepilov and Laptev's critique had a strong influence on the drafting process of the party circular that would eventually be sent out. In all, the commission discussed three drafts before a revised version of the party circular was submitted to Stalin on March 28.[68]

As an example of consumerism, they mocked a recent article in the Soviet daily *Izvestiia* by a collective farm chairman from Kalinin province by quoting the following passage, which described the architectural character of his proposed agrotown:

[67] Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 137-140.
[68] According to materials at RGANI, Stalin received the third draft on March 28.

> Homes must satisfy a certain architectural minimum: it must have not less than three windows on the front wall, a stone foundation, and carved cornices [*reznye karnizy*]. On the windows there must absolutely be window trimmers [*nalichniki*] and the porch must be adorned by carved balusters [*reznye stolbiki*.] The house, as a rule, should consist of a bedroom, dining room, a living room [*gornitsa*], and a storeroom.[69]

The idea of creating agrotowns, this example was meant to show, was rooted in superficial concerns like architectural finishings.

While the notion that Khrushchev was concerned above all with "consumerist" problems rather than economic ones was persuasive, there were significant problems in their argument. Most importantly, they tended to agree with much of what Khrushchev had actually been attempting to accomplish in 1950. They acknowledged, for instance, that the state should support the process of establishing development plans for collective farms, a practice this was standard in Ukraine, but which Malenkov had refused to pay for in the Russian Republic.[70] They also accepted the notion of establishing new collective farm centers and encouraging *gradual* resettlement. Where Moscow province—under Khrushchev's direction—had gone wrong was in pushing for "unnecessarily emergency-like rates of resettlement." While in theory this was a reasonable objection, it ignores the fact that the "campaign" was standard practice in the late Stalin era. Indeed, their critique of Moscow's supposed rush towards resettlement

[69] "O nekotorykh zadachakh kolkhogo stroitel'stvo v sviazi s provodimym meropriiatiami po ukrupnenii melkikh kolkhozov," 30-45. The article they referenced: *Izvestiia*, 13 February, 1951.
[70] See Chapter 3.

could have been applied to the way the entire all-Union amalgamation campaign had been carried out.[71]

Shepilov and Laptev also distinguished their approach by claiming that the new centers should be located in large villages rather than at "new sites," which the advocates of rural construction had supposedly accepted "as a rule."[72] This was a dubious claim. Very few plans involved resettlement to entirely new sites, and if they did, it was often because there were external circumstances (i.e. the planned destruction of existing villages) that necessitated such actions.[73] Even in the vanguard Moscow province, newspaper articles often mentioned carrying out construction in selected villages and making—in the words of one—"the maximum use of existing structures."[74] But their claim made it into the final party circular, which stated that Khrushchev and others had sought the establishment of "collective farm towns" and "agrotowns" "at new sites," or in other words, from scratch [*sozdat' na novykh mestakh*]. Finally, Shepilov and Laptev also argued that new construction "be carried out based in accordance with available resources in the well developed collective farms," an argument that Khrushchev himself might have made. Overall, their underlying accord with Khrushchev's outlook is reflected in Shepilov's memoirs, where he writes: "Naturally, I was wholly in favor of fundamentally restructuring our settlements and

[71] In particular, they condemned a December decision by the Moscow Provincial Executive Committee (*Mosoblsovet*) that gave local officials one month to review plans for land reorganzation in enlarged collective farms in all local districts. Shepilov and Laptev to Malenkov (10 March 1951), "O nekotorykh zadachakh kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v sviazi s provodimymi meropriiatiaami po ukrupneniiu melkikh kolkhozov," f. 17, op. 138, d. 348, 43.
[72] Ibid., 43.
[73] On the surprising details behind the decision to select a new site for the relatively famous Stalin agrotown near Cherkassy, Ukraine, see Chapter 2.
[74] *Moskovskaia pravda,* January 1, 14, 15, 19. Of course, "making use of existing structure" did not necessarily imply using them in their original location.

villages, which in their appearance and their peasant ways retained the features of the old wooden antediluvian Russia."[75]

Their argument, in other words, was rhetorically effective but lacked substance. Even the specific case of the Kalinin agrotown, which they ridiculed for its chairman's concerns for architectural finishings, did not correspond to their stilted portrayal of the campaign. For instance, the example contradicted their earlier claim that agrotowns were to be built at new sites. In fact, the Kalinin proposal was based on expanding the existing central settlement, which already "had electricity, an elementary school, a community center and a park." Here it seems, rural "consumerism" had already been established. The intention of resettlement was to help incorporate inhabitants of small remote villages. The plan was to resettle the four smallest villages, which had a total of one hundred and twelve households. In this way, everyone in the collective "would have easy access to the community center, school, stores, canteen and public bathhouse." Expenses were to be shared by the farm and households, with special benefits for the elderly and veterans. Indeed, "the farm membership had resolved to relocate the house of one collective farmer, the sixty-year old shockworker [*udarnitsa*] Bol'shakova, who lost her husband and son [in the Second World War], entirely for free." In this case, resettlement was presented as a measure that was well within the means of the existing farm.

All in all, Laptev and Shepilov's critique furthered the view that the task of helping to reorganize the newly enlarged collective farms was a superficial issue. They focused, one might say, on the high modernist dimensions of the campaign—the concern with spatial organization and "improving the human condition." And they

[75] Translation from Bittner et. al., eds., *The Kremlin's Scholar*, 164.

patently ignored the significant organizational issues that amalgamation had raised. A great number of collective farms were in decline or in crisis, and they needed the state's attention.

**Stalin's Big Farms**

On 2 April 1951, the Politburo finally approved of the party circular on amalgamation.[76] Stalin had resolved the conflict over resettlement and rural construction in Malenkov's favor, but had resisted efforts to politicize the affair. At the same time, the commission had been careful to ensure that the circular not delegitimize amalgamation itself. This required some subtlety. One of the early drafts clearly went too far when it accused proponents of the campaign of suffering from "gigantomania," an unmistakable reference to the early days of collectivization in 1929-1930. The campaign, the unknown author claimed, had led to the creation of "territorially disconnected [*razobshchennykh*]" farms that "lacked continuous land usage" and consisted of "settlements scattered across large distances, sometimes exceeding ten to fifteen and more kilometers."[77] This was certainly often the case, but acknowledging such facts and proposing to "correct" such "mistakes" might have opened the door for many thousands of collective farms to seek separation based on comparable circumstances.[78]

[76] "O zadachakh kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v sviazi s ukrupneniem kolkhozov," republished in Khlevniuk, ed., *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b),* doc. no. 275, 334-339.
[77] "Proekt. K 1-mu zasedaniiu Komissii," l. 14.
[78] Indeed, in April 1951 the Collective Farm Council responded to questions about what to do in cases where a collective farm was spread out over 15-20 kilometers. Their answer: "We will not allow any kind of division of the enlarged collective farms. Only in exceptional cases, with the permission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and with the involvement of provincial party committees. "Voprosy i otvety. Priniato po VCh," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 109. In some cases, enlarged collective farms had been divided *before* the closed letter. But a report from Altai forwarded to

Upon receipt of the party circular, provincial officials across the country promptly met and rescinded all directives that had encouraged resettling villagers, planning new settlements, clubs and other non-production related construction, and reducing or dividing private plots. Planning commissions were dispersed and collective farms were called to hold general meetings in order to reverse analogous decisions—although some reports indicated this might not always have been carried out. For example, seven months later a Collective Farm Council representative from Kemerovo province in Siberia reported to his chief Andreev that collective farm meeting resolutions had not been reversed and the norms for household plots in the charters of the newly enlarged farms had not been reviewed.[79] Ironically, other provinces (including Arkhangelsk) took the party circular as an opportunity to blame the poor performance of their collective farms in 1950-1951 on their "consumerist approach."[80]

The official position was that the party's decision was met with unanimous support. In Kiev, provincial party secretary Gryza and his associates admitted their mistaken public support for the building of the (Stalin) agrotown in Cherkassy district.[81] As one Moscow party official explained at a plenum, "I, of course, was deeply convinced … that it would be impossible to properly strengthen [our] collective farms

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Malenkov on Februrary 5 suggested that this could lead to problems. According to one chairman, the division "had a negative economic impact on neighbouring collective farms: the collective farmers began to worry, thinking that all the farms might be re-divided." RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 349, 36.

[79] "Materialy po zakrytomu pis'mu VKP/b" (7 December 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 208.

[80] "Protokoly zasedanii biuro obkoma No. 46 (10 April 1951)," GAAO f. 296, op. 2, d. 1048, 162-165. For another example, see the report from Nikolaevsk Province in the Ukrainian SSR, RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 167.

[81] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation

without resettlement and for that reason I fully and completely take responsibility for the mistakes that were made."[82]

Some officials may have been relieved by the change in course, but this is difficult to judge. The secret party circular was distributed on April 2 with instructions for it to be destroyed after two weeks. But responding to requests from local authorities, on 18 April 1941 the Central Committee authorized officials to read the circular in local party cells, which suggests that the abrupt change of course was met with considerable doubt at the local level.[83] Indeed, some officials understood the party directive in unintended ways. At one meeting, held to discuss the circular in Siberia, the senior district land official expressed his frustration:

> The Central Committee letter says that we should not immediately carry out the resettlement of small villages, but does not discuss long-term resettlement… What should we do now, just leave collective farms without radio or electricity? They will not be happy about this...

And referring to contradictory instructions about reducing the size of private plots, he added, "Why did the CC [Central Committee] wait two months before taking any action? Why did the letter come so late?"[84] In another case from Siberia, one G. Iu. Ostapenko, a rural correspondent, objected to the fact that the secretary of the Khabarovsk Province party committee, Sukhinin, and a local party secretary, one Makarov, were using the letter as an excuse not to carry out amalgamation. Ostapenko claimed that Makarov had been opposed to amalgamation from the beginning: "So what

[82] Levitskii, director of the Moscow Provincial Agricultural Administration, "Stenogramma zasedaniia plenuma MK VKP/b (23 April 1951), TsAODIM f. 3, op. 138, d. 16, 48.
[83] Khlevniuk, ed. *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b),* 339 n. 1.
[84] RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 349, 41-42.

if we merge two or three collective farms into one, what is the point? In no way will it increase the number of able-bodied workers," he had supposedly declared, before adding, "We need people, more people!" Voznesenskii was appalled. In his view,

> The merging of small collective farms, the concentration of the means of production *and labor* is the only solution for the peasants of Bikinskii district. We absolutely cannot have such dwarf-like, small-scale farms, especially…along the border [with China], where they are a dishonour to socialist agriculture [my emphasis].[85]

Indeed, the party's reversal left local authorities in difficult situations. In the Belorussian SSR, many collective farmers wrote to complain that, without resettlement, the chosen collective farm centers would not be suitable [*nezhiznennye*], leading to confusion over where "to build much needed collective farm housing," in one location or throughout the existing villages.[86] One province of Ukraine reported wide variation in the size of household plots, from .30 to .80 hectares in single enlarged farms, which causes resentment among collective farmers. They requested permission to establish a unified norm. In light of "the most recent orders of the Central Committee," their request was denied.[87] A representative from Belorussia was told by the Collective Farm Council to reverse decisions taken by collective farm meetings to unify the size of household plots: "leave them as they were before amalgamation" [*po staromu*], the Council asserted.[88] Original plots were to be returned; if previous plots had already

[85] Khabarovsk officials denied Yu. Ostapenko's claims. Ibid., 72-88.
[86] Kaminskii to Andreev, RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 137.
[87] "Materialy k soveshchaniiu sekretarei obkomov," TsDAVO f. r-27, op. 17, d. 424, 64.
[88] "Priniato po VCh," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 109.

been ploughed over or planted by the collective farm, they were to be returned the following year.[89]

While Stalin's secret circular had effectively put a lid on the debates about resettlement and collective farm planning, it failed to address the central problem facing enlarged collective farms: the integration of formerly independent collective farms.[90] The deputy minister of agriculture for the Ukrainian SSR expressed the issue most clearly: "Once upon a time," he explained during a meeting, "in every settlement there was one or a couple of collective farms; only rarely did a single farm have two or three settlements." Each district, he continued, had forty, fifty or sixty collective farms. Officials and directors considered it their duty to visit each collective farm, and "since they had come," they chatted [*obshchalis'*] with collective farmers and attended end-of-year meetings.

> Now after amalgamation… instead of fifty farms there are twenty one, our life has become two-and-a half times easier. What is the result? District officials visit the collective farm central settlement, gather those who are about, and the rest of the collective farmers never see those in charge. This forces us to transfer all our political activism, agricultural and agro-scientific organization directly to the field brigades in order to maintain close supervision [*priblizit' rukovodstvo*]. If we do not manage to do this, then we lose a great deal.[91]

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[89] RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 103, 109.

[90] If resettlement had been carried out, I found no evidence that it was reversed. Despite some confusion, and perhaps provincial variation, the resettlement of independent households [*khutory*] in Ukraine and the Western Borderlands (occupied after WWII) continued. For a statement allowing for the resettlement of *khutory* under specific conditions, see "O khode obsuzhdeniia zakrytogo pis'ma," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073, 109. For Rovno in Western Ukraine and Latvia, see RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 345, 29-34, 133-134.

[91] "Protokoly soveshchanii u ministra sel'skogo khoziaistva za 1949-1951 po sel'skim voprosam," (26 February 1951), 112.

This was a widespread issue. From mid-1950 to the end of 1951, the number of farms in the entire Union was reduced from 252,146 to 99,400. Of these, 87.4% consisted of two to four former farms, 11.6% from five to seven and 1% of eight to ten former farms. And it is important to keep in mind that even some former "small farms" consisted of multiple settlements, as was the case in Arkhangelsk.[92]

Rather than increase party presence in the countryside, the failure to substantially reorganize farms may have in fact created a gap between "center" and "periphery" within collective farms themselves. For example, a 1951 Collective Farm Council investigation in Arkhangelsk found that party educational-political work was being carried out "for the most part in the center of the enlarged collective farms," and that there was "extremely little in the brigades, which used to be independent collective farms." There was an overall increase in the number of lectures delivered in Kholmogory district, for example, but "where," asked the party secretary, "are they being delivered? At activity centers, in the enlarged collective farms, in village reading rooms," he answered, but then added: "But we did not make it … to the brigades, to individual villages… and to the former small collective farms, now enlarged."[93] Procurement officials also raised concerns in 1951 in Arkhangelsk that economic activity had *also* retreated to the new centers. They warned that no amount of new agricultural equipment could obviate the need to maintain production among the outlying villages."[94] Similar problems were reported more widely later in the decade.[95]

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[92] I. M. Volkov, *Sovetskaia derevnia v pervye poslevoennye gody*, (Moscow, 1978), 308.
[93] "Stenograficheskii otchet vtorogo plenuma Arkhangelskogo obkoma" (12 January 1951), GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 1029, 47-48. This point was repeated at the Provincial party plenum in July. "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," l. 10b.
[94] Ibid., 65.
[95] During a high-level discussion on 23 September 1957 about rural political activism, it was noted that "lectures are given as a rule at the central bases of collective farms, *MTS* and state farms." The

The demise of the general meeting as a community institution also worked against the integration of the large collective farm. General meetings traditionally had allowed for a certain degree of popular involvement in the farm, but it was simply impossible to bring everyone together in most enlarged farms. Thus, as early as 1950 there were requests for permission to create a system whereby elected representatives from each village could vote on behalf of their members.[96] But they were never approved. The Ministry of Agriculture of Ukraine refused an analogous request in 1951, explaining that such a move would "contradict the democratic principles of collective farm administration by suspending the right of each collective farmer to actively participate in solving the most important problems within the collective."[97] In fact, even if all members could be brought together (which on some large farms would take great effort), there was no space to hold such large meetings. In many cases, collective farm chairman simply ignored the problem, which led to a large number "violations of collective farm democracy" being reported in the following years. Failure to hold meetings was reported in many provinces in 1951, including Arkhangelsk, and a 1952 investigation in the province also cited "large territorial dispersion" as the principle reason for the "irregular meetings" and "failures to meet the

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discussion was based on an extensive investigation in many provinces. "It's as if we live in a dark forest," a certain comrade Zhurin, a brigade leader from the Ul'ianovsk province, was quoted as saying. His description was considered "not an exception." Concluding their report, the authors V. Moskovskii and K. Rybakov from the Department of Propaganda concluded that "we do not have a political influence on a significant proportion of the population, especially youth." RGANI f. 13, op. 1, d. 907, 125-139. Alex Nove long ago observed that amalgamation turned chairmen of large farms into remote figures, "particularly to the peasants in the more distant settlements." "Peasants and Officials," in Jerzy F. Karcz (ed.), *Soviet and East European Agriculture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 62-63.

[96] See, for example, "Stenogramma soveshchaniia pri Sovete po delam kolkhozov po voprosam organizatisii i oplaty truda v kolkhozakh" (1-3 November 1950), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1647, 37 and "Stenogramma mezhoblastnogo soveshchaniia predsedatelei Soveta po delam kolkhozov," passim.

[97] "Materialy k soveshchaniiu sekretarei obkomov" (2 April 1951), TsDAVO f. r-27, op. 17, d. 424, 19.

minimum quorum" needed for the meeting to be considered constituted.[98] One former collective farm chairman explained to me that in the 1950s—before a club that could seat 150 was built—only twenty seven out of a total of 183 members would meet, and even then they crowded into the small room "like sardines into a barrel."[99]

Primary responsibility for integrating collective farms in the wake of Stalin's decision fell on collective farm chairmen. But despite the government's efforts, there is very little evidence that amalgamation significantly improved Soviet leadership over the collective farms.[100] The campaign dramatically increased the percentage of chairmen who were members of the communist party, from 28.3% in 1947 to 79.4% in 1952 for the entire USSR (See Table 5 for 1952 figures). This was a significant increase, but considered in real numbers, the impact of the campaign was much less dramatic than the percentages suggest: there were 69,000 collective farm chairmen who were members of the communist party in 1947 and 78,923 in 1952, an increase of less than ten thousand over a five-year span.[101]

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[98] "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," f. 296, op. 2, d. 1035, l. 22 and Vetoshkin to Kulagin (15 December 1952), "O sobliudenii demokraticheskikh osnov." RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1169, ll. 54-63. Contemporary Russian historians often assert that amalgamation undermined kolkhoz democracy. For instance, without presenting any evidence, the Russian historian S. N. Andreenkov writes that as a consequence of amalgamation and the "strengthening" [*ukreplenie*] of the pool of the kolkhoz chairmen… the opinion of regular kolkhozniki lost any significance." In V.A. Ilinykh (ed.), *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia i sel'skoe khoziaistvo Sibiri v XX veke: ocherki istorii* (Novosibirsk: 2008), 210.

[99] Vel'sk Interview, 1, 2008.

[100] Improving the quality of collective farm chairmen had been an important component of the amalgamation campaign and was highlighted in a special decree on 9 July 1950 that encouraged—above all—the promotion of individuals with an "agricultural education" [*sel'skokhoziaistvennoe obrazovanie*]. For the final resolution, see *Direktivy KPSS* 1917-1957, Volume III. The decree was based on a proposal made by N. S. Khrushchev on 29 May 1950, his only official behind-the-scenes involvement in the all-Union campaign. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 138, d. 220.

[101] Jean Levesque, "'Part-Time Peasants,'" 263.

**Table 5. Party status, education and gender of collective farm chairmen for 1952**

| | Party | Above Primary School | Male |
|---|---|---|---|
| USSR: | 79.4% | 22.5% | 97.6 |
| RSFSR: | 83.5% | 21.2% | 97.2 |
| Arkhangelsk: | 76% | 12% | 96.3 |
| Ukrainian SSR: | 74.6 | 28.4% | 98.6 |
| Belorussian SSR: | 61.1% | 22% | 98.2 |

In spite of this improvement, Arkhangelsk's rural party organizations remained—in the words second party secretary Loginov—"few in numbers and organizationally weak." For the entire province there were only 664 rural communist cells, over half of which consisted of fewer than ten individuals. In 1950, only one hundred and thirteen rural inhabitants joined the party, and seventy-five were expelled. Half way through 1951, sixty-eight had joined and thirty-eight had been expelled.[102] Even in 1952, the vast majority of collective farm chairmen (almost eighty percent) had no more than a primary-school education, and the figure was almost ninety percent in Arkhangelsk. As of January 1, 1951, only seventy-two chairmen in the province had more than a primary education and a year and a half later the number had only increased to eighty-nine.

Throughout the campaign, there were also many complaints about the poor choice of chairmen. For instance, in Cherevkovskii district "out of twenty-nine chairmen, only one had a high-school education, almost half have no experience

[102] "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," l. 61 ob.

managing agriculture and a significant proportion clearly are incapable."[103] Some of the specific accounts were almost comical, if they had not risked leaving collective farmers—as they complained–"without grain or money." For instance, a former chairman of the rural soviet, "known to the district party committee for all sorts of unseemly actions [*po vsiakogo roda neblagovidnym postupkam*]" was selected to be chairman on one farm. For two months he "drank non-stop" [*zanimaias' sistematicheskim p'ianstvom*] and than fled the collective farm. To replace him, the district party committee suggested a brigade leader who "had no managerial experience and who was also a drunk [*gor'kii pianitsa*]." To make matters worse, when the collective farmers in a different farm managed to get rid of their chairman, they elected—with the blessings of the district party committee—the same chairman that had fled the first collective farm.[104]

While chairman turnover rates were "more stable than they had been in 1945-1946," they continued to be quite high in the immediate period following the campaign (table 6).[105] In Arkhangelsk, one hundred and forty-two (seventeen percent) new chairmen were elected after the amalgamation campaign had already finished, that is,

[103] And these were not isolated problems: "We cannot name one district in which the situation with chairmen could be described as satisfactory." Ibid., ll. 11, 15 ob.
[104] "Stenogramma chetvertogo Plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," GAAO f. 296, op. 2, d. 1035, 11. For further reference to this problem from 1951, based on a survey [*svodka*] of letters to the newspaper *Sotsialisticheskoe zemledelie*, see "Protokoly zasedanii Soveta po delam kolkhozov," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 11, l. 143. Incidentally, according to a 1950 report another chairman with same last name (Parshin) from the same province (collective farm Lenin) was elected but refused to go to the collective farm. The local response from collective farmers: "Can it be true that the district party committee doesn't have the strength to force Parshin to be chairman?" Indeed, he was summoned by the district party committee and threatened with removal from the communist party. GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 906, l. 114.
[105] Levesque, "'Part-Time Peasants,'" 274.

after district officials had already had the opportunity to replace almost two-thirds of them.[106]

**Table 6. Collective farm chairmen turnover rates as of 1 July 1952**[107]

| | # of farms | Up to 1. | 1-3 years | 3-5 | 5+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **USSR** | 94,655 | 23.5 | 36.1 | 14.4 | 26 |
| **RSFSR** | 54,666 | 21.6 | 36.8 | 13.6 | 28 |
| **Arkhangelsk** | 736 | 18.6 | 33.8 | 47.5* | |

* Records from Arkhangelsk did not distinguish between these two categories.

Under pressure to increase the number of agricultural specialists in charge of collective farms, the ministry of agriculture sent fifty of its provincial employees to work as chairmen. Some, however, turned out to be unable to run the new farms. Their lack of "managerial skills" and "political experience" was blamed. At the same time, it was also reported that a number of the specialists sent to the collective farms "feel like temporary workers and do not become members of the collective."[108] An anonymous 1955 letter from the northerly Vologda Province described the situation from the perspective of a local:

[106] Comparing turnover rates for 1 January 1951 and 1 July 1952 suggest that it was often experienced chairmen that were removed, rather than newcomers. In early 1950, prior to the campaign, Arkhangelsk province had 1799 collective farm chairmen; of these, 1411 were effected by mergers, resulting in a total of 850 farms by early 1951. As of 1 January 1951, only 562 had more than a year of experience, suggesting that 1,238 had been removed, and that 288 first-time chairmen had been appointed. As of 1 July 1952 only about 363 of the experienced chairmen re-elected during amalgamation remained. The fate of the tens of thousands of former chairmen is an issue that has not been explored. They often became normal collective farmers. In Verkhnotoemsk district in Arkhangelsk, the fate of chairmen was as follows: reelected (9), deputy chairman (5), field brigade leader (16), livestock manager (4), accountant (2), storeroom clerk (2), tractor driver (1), collective farmer (11). Five were promoted to higher positions [*na bol'shuiu rabotu*]." ) GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 906, 58, 103.

[107] Levesque, "'Part-Time Peasants,'" 109, 273; For the Arkhangelsk data, see RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1169, l. 36.

[108] Vetoshkin and Kasiuk to Andreev, RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1169, ll. 30-47. In November 1952 the Arkhangelsk presidium also discussed a series of failures in the field of agricultural training. Ibid., l. 45.

> When they carried out amalgamation, provincial and district committees began to send staff members of provincial and district organizations to run the collective farms… supposedly to strengthen them. But these people didn't come on their own free will; they were forced to, under threat of being expelled from the party… [Many] left their families in the towns [where they had previously worked]. The majority of them ran the farm 'on the go' [*rukovodil naezdom* – that is, they continued to live part-time in town]. At the same time they were paid a set salary rather than based on labor days. Therefore they had little concern for the collective farms and the collective farmers. In the last three years those "imported" managers completely ruined the collective farms.[109]

That amalgamation "ruined" collective farms by installing irresponsible and uncommitted chairmen is a perspective that should not be discounted. While such cases were probably not the majority, they were certainly numerous. Individuals who resisted assignment to collective farms were threatened with expulsion from the party and—when possible—some chairmen surely tried to maintain their previous lives "in town."[110] Officially, only qualified chairmen were supposed to get regular salaries.[111] However, in May 1951, Collective farm Council representatives were already reporting violations, such as districts granting regular salaries of up to 1,000 rubles per month to all their chairmen, or to those "with only primary education." A collective farm from the northerly province of Molotovsk (formerly Perm') reported:

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[109] To chairman of the Council of Ministers, N. A. Bulganin (6 April 1955), GARF f. 5446, op. 89, d. 1808, l. 34

[110] There were certainly individuals who tried to get out of their assignments. For instance, see the report from the secretary of the Verkhne-Toemskii raikom Martiushov (August 1950) GAAO otdel DSPI f. 296, op. 2, d. 906, l. 114.

[111] "O zadachakh partiinykh i sovetskikh organizatsii po ukrepleniiu sostava predsedatelei i drugikh rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov kolkhozov" (9 July), published in Egorov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, 233-241.

> On 14 February 1951 A. Ia. Brezgin was sent to our collective farm as an agricultural specialist. But he never worked in agriculture and has no education [they claimed he had only completed first grade, but had served 8 years as a rural soviet chairman]. Is he permitted to receive a salary of 800 rubles per month and be freed from state procurements [*gosudarstvennykh postavok*].[112]

And a collective farmer from Smolensk also wrote:

> On behalf of all the collective farmers of our collective, I ask you to explain what makes no sense to us, and to be precise: our collective farm elected the former chairmen of our rural soviet, and at the end-of-year meeting on 25 February 1951 we were forced to set his salary at 700 rubles per month, while we collective farmers received per labor day in total only 105 grams of second and third-rate grain and nothing more… A former chairman was chosen to be the deputy chairman and receives 80% of the chairman's salary… Our collective farm is forty thousand rubles in debt, and since 1 March 1951 we have run out of animal feed… Is it correct for [him] to receive a regular cash salary [*denezhnye oklady*]?"[113]

Finally, another problem mentioned in the anonymous letter from Vologda that also raised concerns in the government was that the new chairmen—in part because they

[112] They added that their amalgamated farm's total income was sixty-four thousand rubles. Zaremba to Andreev (26 April 1951), RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1654, 134-152.

[113] Ibid. Such salaries were unreasonable. As a point of reference, in February 1951 the Collective Farm Council proposed legislation that would have established monthly salaries that depended on the farm's income, from "seventy five rubles to four hundred rubles for 'millionaire' collective farms." Moreover, these salaries were to be reduced by up to twenty five percent if the farm did not follow set expenditure guidelines. Ibid., 3.

were no longer as constrained by the general meetings—significantly raised collective farm expenditures.[114]

On 25 April N. Andreev, chairman of the enlarged collective farm *Put' Krest'ianina* in the Moscow Province, wrote a letter to Stalin describing his predicament. His farm, he explained, consisted of eight former collectives, "each with seven to twenty households," except the one in the village of Vertkovo, where there was one former chairman, one brigade leader, one accountant and two collective farmers."[115] The entire enlarged farm now consisted of twelve men and one hundred and twenty women, out of which seventy-nine were considered disabled. The collective farm was spread out over six kilometers, divided up by swamp to the extent that for approximately one and a half months in autumn and then in spring the collective farm transport is impossible. He explained, "The farms are scattered, small and not properly equipped for us to be able to complete the livestock plan. We need to build infrastructure for cows, chickens and pigs. If they aren't built this year, we will fail to fulfil our quotas [*sryvaetsia plan*]." The locals are "good and hardworking" but that "they do not believe that they will be paid anything, even if there will be a good

[114] Minister of Agriculture I. Benediktov explained to Central Committee secretary A.A. Andreev that even before amalgamation — in the late 1940s — "kolkhoz chairmen had ceased to feel responsible to collective farms themselves, and instead answered only to the district authorities." This led to the "unauthorized [*samovol'noe*] use of the kolkhoz means, property and produce." Quoted in T. M. Dimoni's, "Dukhovnye traditsii krest'ianstva Evropeiskogo Severa Rossii v 1945-1950 gg," in M. A. Beznin, T. M. Dimoni, and F. I. Konovalov, (eds.) *Severnaia derevnia v XX veke: aktualnye problemy istorii*. (Legiia: Vologda, 2000), 110. Amalgamation seems to have only furthered this practice. An internal investigation by the Collective Farm Council found that "among many kolkhoz managers" is was common to find the "mistaken and dangerous impression" that in connection with amalgmation they could independently increase payroll (both financial and in terms of labor days) as well as create new positions (ranging from deputy chairmen, brigadir assistants and brigade stockkeepers to various tally clerks and accountants of non-exisiting departments). This had also lead collective farms to independentally "hire all kinds of specialists." "Makarin and Spasibin to Kulagin (10 May 1951)," RGAE f. 9476, op. 1, d. 2073. For reference to such problems in Arkhangelsk, see: "Otchet o rabote za 1950-51 i dokladnye zapiski predsedatelia Soveta po Arkhangelskoi oblasti o nedostatkakh v razvitii obshchestvennogo zhivotnovodstva, o narusheniiakh i po drugim voprosam," f. 9476, op. 1, d. 1109, ll. 152-159.

[115] There was also one "link leader."

harvest." "You promise us everything," the collective farmers told him, "just like last year, but we didn't get anything." In 1950, a labor day was "500 grams of rye, nothing more."

> I wrote to the district committee, to the factory that is assigned to help us, as well as to comrade Khrushchev (who did not answer me) about how we can find the means, the labor force to concentrate our productive livestock [*tovarno-produktovyi skot*] and increase its productivity, as has been done in leading collective farms (or even better!). Then the farm could, on firm ground, pay off its debt to the government and begin construction of a new socialist settlement. I ask you, dear comrade Stalin, please forgive me for such an unpleasant letter, but the situation is extremely serious.[116]

Andreev's collective farm may not have been a typical case, but such situations were not exceptional in many parts of the country. Most interestingly, it seems that the chairman, writing in late April, still had not heard about—or at least not understood—Stalin's 2 April circular. And Stalin made no comments on Andreev's letter. Most of Stalin's "big farms" would have to fend for themselves, as well as to continue to feed the country's growing cities.

Serpininov was correct to be concerned about a repetition of "Dizziness with Success." He was afraid—and rightly so—that he and his compatriots had expanded collective farms too much, without providing the proper guidance, specialists or equipment needed to consolidate the new farms. And he also feared—again correctly—that the campaign was getting out of hand. Stalin's intervention in the spring of 1951 brought the campaign to a rapid halt, thus quelling any fears about further local

[116] N. Andreev to Stalin, RGASPI, f. 588, op. 11, d. 900, ll. 18-20.

excesses. But ironically—rather than address or reverse the (in Serpininov's view unfounded) expansion of collective farms, Stalin in fact put a stamp of approval on them. The fact that collective farm meetings could no longer be held; that economic and political activity was retreating in some cases to the centers of the new farms; that few new cadres had been sent to the countryside; that chairmen remained critically under qualified; and that turnover rates remained huge—all these issues were brushed under the carpet. Only the calls for the state to play a more active role in organizing the new collective farms were condemned. The enlarged collectives would be, by and large, left to solve their own problems.

## Conclusion

The collective farm amalgamation campaign of 1950-1951 was driven by two conflicting impulses: a modernist vision of social transformation and a conservative predilection for extraction. Neither of these tendencies was new, or distinctly Soviet for that matter. Late imperial Russia had witnessed both.[1] They had come together most powerfully during the collectivization campaigns of the early 1930s. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, however, the goals of creating large-scale and "modern" farming enterprises remained unfulfilled in the vast majority of collective farms. The amalgamation campaign was the first significant attempt to revitalize what could be called the modernist agenda.

A number of factors in the post-war period created the necessary conditions for such a campaign. For one, the destruction of the Second World War, especially in provinces that saw fighting or occupation, brought new urgency to the task of reconstructing the village in western regions of the country. There was also a growing demand from the population for agricultural products, which prompted the authorities to consider ways to improve the system. While the average person's diet was miserly—on average equivalent to what Gulag inmates were supposed to receive—the government had to maintain higher consumption standards for privileged social groups like bureaucrats, military personnel, members of the security services, scientists and

[1] On modernism and rural reform in the late Imperial era, see Introduction, note 16. For a discussion of Imperial Russian concern with control over grain procurements, see Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

inhabitants of larger cities, especially Moscow.[2] Finally, large post-war environmental engineering projects, such as the planned hydroelectric station and reservoir at Kremenchug near Kiev, also created opportunities for planners to consider new ways of resettling populations. And these tasks were taken up by a growing cohort of Soviet-trained technical and medical experts who—in ways typical of the era—believed that their knowledge could be applied for the betterment of society.

Nikita S. Khrushchev, then first party secretary of the Ukrainian SSR, was a model high modernist. He believed that in order to be successful, collective farms had to be expanded, reorganized, mechanized, and provided with outside leadership. Like many other technocrats of this era, he never considered the possibility that collective farmers themselves might possess a local, practical, and experiential knowledge (what James Scott calls *metis*) that could contribute to successfully raising yields and productivity. Khrushchev also had faith in the ability of Soviet engineers, doctors, and other specialists to improve the lives of ordinary people—including collective farmers—by rationalizing everyday life, especially the home. And he put these ideas into practice by supporting experimental agrotown projects at Demidovo and Cherkassy in the late 1940s, and later through his activism around Moscow in 1950 and 1951. He argued that the government should develop new cost-effective technologies that would reduce the financial, material, and labor burden of development for collective farms. All in all, implementing some of his proposals would have amounted to a significant

[2] According to calculations by the Central Statistical Administration for the year 1953, the average Soviet citizen consumed 500 grams of flour, groats and pasta, about the same amount of potatoes, and about 400 grams of milk and dairy produce (mainly cow and goat's milk). Khlevniuk and Gorlizki, *Cold Peace*, 134.

shift in the relationship between the state and the peasantry: a shift from one of coercive extraction to that of government-guided modernization.

The prospect of pursuing rural development found considerable support among regional authorities, for varying reasons. When the leadership in Moscow began to solicit opinions in early 1950, regional party officials argued that the legal merging of collective farms should be accompanied by further measures. They proposed for the newly amalgamated farms to receive attention from professional planners in order to rationalize production; for construction and the mechanization of labor-intensive processes to be carried out; for the consolidation and reorganization of land holdings; and for the resettlement of some small settlements. To many officials, amalgamation only made sense if it included additional measures to strengthen the enlarged farms, which frequently encompassed multiple villages, sometimes spread out over considerable distances. The failure to carry out reorganizational measures threatened to "discredit the idea of amalgamation" itself, as one Arkhangelsk official put it in early 1951.

But the modernist goals of reorganizing agriculture threatened traditional priorities within the Kremlin. Indeed, in contrast to what many historians have presumed, it was not Khrushchev, but Georgy Malenkov, the long-time Central Committee insider, who supervised amalgamation. And under his leadership, the campaign was carried in a way that minimized the government's involvement in collective farm organization. Unconcerned with reform, one of Malenkov's principle motivations was his rivalry with Khrushchev. Despite the considerable number of reports that questioned the results of the campaign, Malenkov never expressed any doubts or worries. Likely following Stalin, he expressed no dissatisfaction with the

status quo in Soviet agriculture. When the government presented expense estimates in December 1951 for the hypothetical resettlement of 3.7 million households, Malenkov was unperturbed. This is because he knew—I argue—that such measures were not really on the table. He saw the (expensive) calls for greater state involvement in reorganizing the enlarged collective farms as an opportunity above all to discredit Khrushchev, one of his principle rivals, and the radical expense report was just what he needed. In March of 1951, Khrushchev and other supporters of the campaign were accused of suggesting to "free the collective farmer from any kind of concern over his or her own housing and [instead] to force the collective to provide housing...."[3] Like the expense estimates for resettlement, this claim was based on the type of hyperbolic description of the campaign that Malenkov was wielding against Khrushchev and those calling for renewed action.

Stalin largely ignored the campaign until March of 1951, when he reacted with hostility to an article published in *Pravda* by Khrushchev. Like Malenkov, Stalin dismissed the serious issues that Khrushchev was attempting to grapple with. In his view, the problems of far flung villages, the need for building barns—and Khrushchev's related proposals—could be boiled down to "hare-brained scheming." Stalin believed that collectivization had satisfied the principle goal of Soviet rural policy: control over grain, and hence livestock. Beyond that, Stalin was impatient with transformative proposals. And the secret party circular issued in April dashed any remaining hopes that the campaign would increase the state's role in rural development. Stalin's decision was thus a sharp rejection of Khrushchev's calls for increasing attention to as well as investment in the countryside.

[3] See Chapter 5, page 167.

There was of course an inherent danger in high modernist solutions to the Soviet Union's agricultural woes. If applied widely and indiscriminately—as Khrushchev and other reformers were accused of proposing—resettlement and rural reconstruction might indeed have "destroyed the entire fabric of rural life" in the Soviet Union.[4] If Stalin had put his authority behind a comprehensive campaign, this "second collectivization" might have been as or more destructive than the first. But the government never seriously considered such an initiative. High modernist solutions—though they had wide appeal—were trumped in Moscow by bureaucracy, political infighting, as well as Stalin's preference for the status quo: a rural policy predicated on extraction. In short, there was not the necessary political will in Moscow in 1950 to turn the campaign into the type of twentieth century social catastrophe that Scott describes.

Stalin's outlook on the countryside between 1931 and 1951 remained remarkably consistent. Above all, he saw rural investment as "concessions to the peasantry" that would inevitably undermine his policy of concentrating growth in the military and heavy industry sectors.[5] Both collectivization and amalgamation shared the same bottom line: investment should be minimized and extraction maximized. And this is one way that James C. Scott's notion of "seeing like a state" falls short as an explanation of Stalin's rule over the countryside. Stalin's Soviet Union—whether in the 1930s or the early 1950s—was attracted by the tenets of high modernism. When it came time for planners to envision future settlements, they thought in terms of abstract lines and "pencil points on a map."[6] But when it came to implementing their plans, the state under Stalin settled on more repressive methods. In 1931, the principle tactics

[4] Pyzhikov, "Sovetskoe poslevoennoe obshchestvo i predposylki khrushchevskikh reform," 38.
[5] Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 136.
[6] The term is Lynne Viola's. See "The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning"

were expropriation and repression. In March of 1951, facing a rural world already demoralized by collectivization and war, Stalin simply reaffirmed the well worn strategy of expropriation, based on high taxes and mandatory procurements. Collectivized agriculture under Stalin was about "taking grain," to use Moshe Lewin's phrase. It was only after his death that the advocates of rural modernism took center stage, for better and for worse.

In the end, the amalgamation campaign as it was actually carried out above all reflected and contributed to a trend of social and demographic decline in the countryside. Though Stalin and others declared the campaign a success, these were hollow claims. The most one could say is that it had created a somewhat more "legible" countryside, to use another of Scott's terms, by simply reducing the number of collective farms. However, at the local level—whether around Kiev, in distant Kazakhstan or northerly Arkhangelsk—amalgamation was as a rule understood as a process of liquidation. For every collective that might have benefitted from becoming the new central settlement in any given locale, neighboring farms that were merged lost salaried positions, control over their assets, and their independent identity. And in forested regions like Arkhangelsk, where travel and communication between villages was especially difficult because of the geography, consolidation led to a decline in both economic and political activity in the former farms.

## Epilogue

It is a great honor to revive collective farms, to build communism not where it is warm, but in our region of sweeping frosts, on our harsh northern soil…

--From N. Zhernakov's *Pravda Severa* report, "The Dairy Farmer New Year Celebration," 4 January 1959[7]

Change came slowly to the post-amalgamation countryside. In 2008 I returned to Arkhangelsk in northern European Russia, three years after I had first come to the region, investigating the history of the Malye Korely museum of rural wooden architecture. This time I wanted to follow up on a manuscript based on a diary kept by a villager in southern Arkhangelsk, named Ivan N. Kononov, which covers the years 1950 to 1995. Through Kononov's story, I wondered if I could get a longer-term perspective on the all Union amalgamation campaign of that was initiated the same year he began his diary. Kononov's village of Shelomenskoe had been merged in 1950 with a neighboring village, Kononovskaia, home to a slightly better-than-average collective farm. Only a few months after beginning his diary, Kononov wrote (22 March 1951) that a planning commission had visited his village and announced unexpectedly that an agrotown would be built at the neighboring village of Nizhneborsk, which was located on a flat site with ample room for growth. According to Kononov, the decision came as a shock to the villagers, especially the elderly. "Why would they move a large village

[7] Newspaper report on the New Year celebrations dedicated to livestock and dairy workers in the town of Kholmogory, located not far from the provincial capital Arkhangelsk. The event was held in their community center, located on Collective Farm Street; the first party secretary of the province as well as the chairman of the province executive committees (arguably the two most powerful people in the province) were in attendance. The quote is from a poem that was read at the gathering. N. Zhernakov, "Novogodnii prazdnik zhivotnovodov," *Pravda Severa* (4 January 1959).

to a smaller one," they asked. "No meeting was held," he wrote, "and no one asked the people." In any case, the diarist dismissed the idea as "utopian." "Who can think of resettlement and construction when there aren't even resources to build an electric station or provide a community center [*klub*] or a nursery?"[8] From the perspective of an average village in northerly Arkhangelsk, the idea of building an agrotown no doubt seemed like plans to build socialism with future bricks, as Bukharin had put it. Less than two weeks later, the party's secret circular had already proved him correct: local authorities quietly shelved the decision to resettle Shelomenskoe. But, as Kononov's diary helps demonstrate, this was just the beginning of the story.

***

After Stalin's death in early 1953, Nikita Khrushchev bested Malenkov on his way to the top of the Soviet hierarchy, in part by advocating dramatic changes in agricultural policy. And in his opening speech at the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress, which is better known for his behind-closed doors exposé about Stalin's crimes, Khrushchev returned to the basic themes that he had advocated in 1951. The contemporary village, in his view, not only suffered from the "well known and age-old heritage of rural economic and cultural backwardness," but it also had still not recovered from the scars of World War II. As a result, a "large number of [peasants] live in unsuitable homes." The solutions he proposed were much the same ones that he had raised in 1950-1951. For instance, he recycled an initiative that had been briefly tried out in Moscow province in 1951: the creation by economically successful farms of special funds dedicated to housing development. But he also emphasized that the state

[8] I. N. Kononov, "Letopis' severnoi derevni 50-kh - 80-kh godov," unpublished manuscript, Arkhangelskaia oblastnaia nauchnaia biblioteka im. N.A. Dobroliubova (21 March 1951), 73.

should be more involved. He called for district officials to provide direct assistance to collective farms, for example in organizing construction. And as he had in 1951, he insisted that the government invest in new technologies in order to reduce the cost of construction. "We need to use our resources and build pre-fabricated housing parts," especially for plumbing, doors, windows.[9] These were some of the essential components of a rural world that would be rationally organized and healthy for the individual.

Judging from his manuscript, Kononov—who soon became a village activist and joined the communist party in 1953—had mixed feelings about government rural policy. For example, in 1955 he disapproved of the government's decision to send 30,000 urban professionals to run the collective farms, another decision that was consistent with Khrushchev's aims in 1950. "That's all they chatter [*boltat'*] about on the radio," he wrote dismissively, "that [the 30,000ers are] going to revive the weakest farms." And on 17 February 1957, after "repeated requests," his farm was one of multiple farms in the province that successfully reverse amalgamation. His farm, which had been merged in 1950 with the neighboring Kirov farm just over the hill, was divided in accordance with the traditional boundaries.[10]

In the late 1950s, however, Soviet rural policy again shifted toward further amalgamation. In March 1958, Stalin's party circular of 1951 that had scapegoated Khrushchev in order to end the campaign was officially reversed, which set the stage for the government to expand its rural development plans.[11] From late 1958 through 1960,

[9] The speech was published in *Pravda Severa* on 16 February 1956, 1. The government had already set a number of these processes in motion. See Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside*, 48-49,
[10] "re: im. Kirova (29 March 1957)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 4697, l. 66.
[11] RGANI f. 89, op. 57, d. 14. Published in V. Popov, "Vtoroi i vazhneishii etap," l. 49.

collective farms were yet again amalgamated, with the total number of farms in the country dropping from approximately 90,000 to 30,000. On 27 February 1960, Kononov's collective farm Shelomenskoe was absorbed into a "giant" collective farm that united all the farms of his rural soviet. Kononov noted dryly that the newly elected chairman was an administrator from Shangaly—the district center—which was also now the administrative center of the farm. "The history of my collective farm is over," he wrote.[12]

Four days later, N. Sedrichev, deputy chair of the Arkhangelsk provincial executive committee, gave a plenary speech on the subject of rural development. In 1950, Sedrichev had been the director of the province's agricultural department, which had managed amalgamation. Ten years later, his message was simple: the province was set to carry out comprehensive district planning in order to rationalize future rural construction. The current organization of labor, he argued—based on the wide distribution of agriculture production across a vast number of very small villages—was simply too inefficient to be maintained. While he did not use the term agrotown, he surely had them in mind. The new agricultural centers, Sedrichev noted, should be compact, "taking into consideration existing fire safety and sanitation standards," and he added that the private plot should be divided: .10-.08 hectares could be located within the settlement, while the remaining allotment would have to be located outside of it.[13]

Was there support for the new plan among the conference attendees? This is difficult to judge. But what everyone agreed on was that the status quo was

[12] Kononov, "Letopis' severnoi derevni" (27 February 1960), 27.
[13] "Doklad zampredsedatelia oblispolkoma Sedricheva N. N. na piatoi sessii (sed'mogo sozyva): O sostoiainii i merakh po uluchsheniiu stroitel'stva v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh oblasti (31 March 1960)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 5240, ll. 11-14.

unacceptable. "We build the same way we built one hundred years ago," explained the chairman of the "millionaire" collective farm *Organizator*, one of the most successful in the province.[14] Builders make do with "an axe, a hand saw and a chisel." As for a drill, he added, "it is impossible to buy one nowadays."[15] The chair of the Velsk district executive committee mentioned that she had recently held meetings with voters, who told her directly—and fairly, she explained—

> that [officials] simply do not do anything.… We asked for a new farm, but it still has not been built, even though it was promised last year…. I work as a dairy girl [*doiarka*]; we are not just going to wait, because a new farm will never come, but at least if the old building could be renovated. We do everything by hand… My workday is fifteen to sixteen hours, at the same time that we are discussing a seven-hour work day and two days off![16]

The only enthusiastic presentation was given by a certain Evstiugov, the director of the Ministry of Agriculture's [RSFSR] department of Rural Construction in Collective and State Farms. He gave a stump speech praising the country's accomplishments in rural construction from 1954 to 1959. But when his allotted time ran out, he had to ask for ten more minutes. "He has already been speaking for twenty-five minutes," a certain Petukhov commented, perhaps suggesting impatience. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the conference attendees were unresponsive to Evstiugov's boasts. He announced, for instance, that there were presently twenty-five thousand collective farm community centers in the country, with space for up to three million

[14] For details about the farm, see Z. V. Lebedeva, *Kolkhoz Organizator* (Arkhangelsk, 1953).
[15] "Stenograficheskii otchet zasedaniia piatoi sessii oblastnogo soveta deputatov (1 April 1960)," GAAO f. 2063, op. 1, d. 5239, l. 65.
[16] Ibid., l. 109.

guests. But as the provincial executive chairman noted pointedly later in the meeting, in the entire province of Arkhangelsk there were only seventy-nine such centers, as well as a number of districts where there was not a single one.[17]

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union's faith in high-modernist schemes seems to have been at its highest. Take, for example, a 1962 report by a certain Larionov, an auditor [*kontroler-revizor*] for the Arkhangelsk Provincial Department of the Ministry of Finance and a Bolshevik party member since 1918. On December 4 of that year, he sent a lengthy letter to the provincial party committee on the topic of rural reform. The situation in the province, he explained, was appalling: since 1928 the urban population had tripled, while the production of basic food products actually continued to decrease. Over the period, the territory of ploughed land had decreased by eleven percent and yields of all agricultural products—he claimed—had declined dramatically [*rezko upalo*]. The much-celebrated investments of the mid and late 1950s, he added, had done little to stem the decline. "What is the problem?" he asked rhetorically, "why have the enormous government expenditures on agriculture in the region not increased production, increased the amount of saleable goods and lowered production costs?"[18] (This is a question that would be repeatedly asked throughout the Soviet Union over the coming decades).

Larionov's proposals were completely divorced from local knowledge and practice. He called for "taking on the northern Virgin lands [*pokhod za pod'em severnoi tseliny*]." Virgin lands referred to the millions of hectares of Kazakh and Siberian

[17] In Arkhangelsk region, there was about one community center [*klub*] for every six collective farms. If Evstiugov's figures are accurate, the ratio for the Soviet Union as a whole was almost one to one. GAAO f. 2063 d. 5239, l. 118.
[18] "Po voprosam preodoleniia otstavaniia v sel'skom khoziaistve Arkhangelskoi oblasti (14 December 1962)," f. 296, op. 3, d. 899, ll. 76-82 (76-77).

grasslands and steppe that had been ploughed over since 1954 in a desperate attempt to radically increase the Soviet Union's grain production. Larionov proposed that—with the help of technology—Arkhangelsk's endless northern tracts of forest and swamp could be transformed into an equally productive agricultural center.

Rather than focusing on existing villages, Larionov claimed that agricultural progress depended on each of the province's timber stations to use their technological resources to create entirely new farms. As he explained, each station would simply have to select (and remove leftover stumps from) the "most conveniently located, clear cut acreage." Establishing agriculture here, he asserted, was simply a matter of correctly using technology: "logging units [*lesopunkty*] have equipment and personnel so with minimal additional spending on agricultural machinery and seeds tens of thousands of hectares of fertile land could become productive within two or three years." And "within each logging unit," he added "we can create a feeding farm where from May to October hundreds and thousands of heads of cattle and sheep can fatten up; and around lakes, thousands of heads of water fowl, will be grazing."[19]

To his credit, Larionov did not propose abandoning existing villages entirely. His northern Virgin Lands campaign would also be a turning point, he explained, for the traditional agricultural areas of the province. Rural decline since the war had led to significant reductions in the acreage of cultivated lands (a reduction of "not less than one hundred thousand hectares") and in the number of meadows and natural hayfields (a decrease of "hundreds of thousands"). "These lands are now overgrown with shrubs and not infrequently one can even find the thick early growth of coniferous forests," he noted, before arguing again that machinery could be used to recover these lands. And

[19] Ibid., ll. 78, 81.

the same strategies could also be introduced in other northern provinces, such as Murmansk, Karelia, Komi, Vologda and Kirov provinces, "where there are hundreds of timber settlements."[20]

It is difficult to say what the provincial authorities would have made of such suggestions. They took them seriously enough, however, to make notes and forward them for future discussion within the provincial party bureau. What the report above all reveals is that in the early 1960s, just as in 1950, officials understood that the existing system was not working, but could not escape the illusory promises of high modernist thinking.

In the summer of 1960 Arkhangelsk province took one significant step towards rationalizing rural investment. And they did so in one of the simplest ways possible: all villages in the province were to be designated as either "viable" or "unviable" [*neperspektivnyi*].[21] Investment, whether best on state or local funds, was to be directed exclusively to villages designated as "viable." And as of August 1960, the lists of viable and unviable villages had been approved for twelve of the province's twenty-one districts.[22] For the district of Ustiansk, where Kononov's village of Shelomenskoe was located, only forty-five of two hundred and thirty-five settlements were to be considered viable. Shelomenskoe was designated unviable, despite consisting of over two hundred households. Its smaller neighbor Nizhneborsk, which had been selected in 1950 as the site of an agrotown, was designated "viable."

[20] Ibid, 79, 82.
[21] Details on this decision can be found in B. S. Khorev, "Voprosy sovershenstvovaniia nauchno-tekhnicheskoi politiki v oblasti razvitiia sel'skikh naselennykh mest," *Demograficheskaia situatsiia i rasselenie naseleniia sel'skoi mestnosti RSFSR* (Moscow: 1986), 74.
[22] GAAO f. 1814, op. 1, d. 66, ll. 84-95.

It is unclear why Shelomenskoe was selected as an unviable village. But as we learn from Kononov's diary, the district-level desire to develop Nizhneborsk at the expense of Shelomenskoe can be traced back at least to 1951. Perhaps it was simply the fact that Shelomenskoe, located at the meeting point of two gentle hills, did not correspond to the high-modernist vision of large-scale agriculture that was still prevalent among officials and planners even in remote regions such as Arkhangelsk. Nizhneborsk, in contrast, was located on a flat plain leaving plenty of room for growth. Ironically, despite the state's efforts, *both villages survived* to see the fall of the Soviet Union. As late as 1979 Shelomenskoe was still the largest of the local villages, with 179 inhabitants, while the Nizhneborsk only had sixty-five.[23] Even in 1986 Kononov reported that his village was "at least still lively, as it was at present home to a farm office, a first aid station, a library, a store and a club." "But soon the center of the region will be in the village of Nizhneborsk," he added gloomily, "All the villagers mourn and curse whoever added Shelomenskoe to the black list of "non-viable" villages.[24]

Both villages, the modernist agrotown of Nizhneborsk and the traditional village of Shelomenskoe, barely survived the 1990s. The collapse of the rural economy was devastating to both Shelomenskoe and Nizhneborsk. The ruins of the once good-fortuned Nizhneborsk betray the investment priority it received. At the entrance to the village stand two large, abandoned cement buildings: the once proud club that opened in 1986 and the store, which opens these days for a couple hours each week. Two neat rows of modern looking houses have also been abandoned, as have most of the various

[23] Kononov, "Letopis' severnoi derevni," 73.
[24] Ibid., p. 98.

livestock and other sovkhoz facilities that once represented a new era of agricultural development.



**Illustration 6. The center of Nizhneborsk, 2011 (photos by the author)**



**Illustration 7. Nizhneborsk: The community center and the store, 2011**



**Illustration 8. Nizhneborsk: An abandoned pig farm, 2011**

What is striking though is that despite everything, Shelomenskoe survived. It is still home to a handful of year-round residents, all pensioners who are dependent on deliveries because there is no longer a store. The memory of the village will live on in

Kononov's manuscript. The fates of both Nizhneborsk and Shelomenskoe are yet to be determined.



**Illustration 9. Shelomenskoe, a view from the hills, 2011**



**Illustration 10. Kononov's childhood home, on the right, 2011**

# Appendix[1]

## Table 7. Number of collective farms and households by region of the USSR for 1937

| | Farms | Households | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SSSR** | 242,400 | 18,847,600 | 77.8 |
| | | | |
| **RSFSR** | 173,000 | 11,572,700 | 66.9 |
| Small farm zone | 97,599 | 4,041,700 | 41.4 |
| Small farm zone without Siberia | 83,012 | 3,187,700 | 38.4 |
| Mixed/border regions | 29,444 | 2,451,700 | 83.3 |
| Central Black Earth | 20,899 | 2,510,100 | 120.1 |
| Caucasus | 7,547 | 1,080,700 | 143.2 |
| No data | 4,569 | | |
| | | | |
| Ukrainian SSR | 27,400 | 3,866,700 | 141.1 |
| Belorussian SSR | 9,700 | 714,800 | 73.7 |
| Azerbaidzhan SSR | 3,700 | 325,200 | 87.9 |
| Georgian SSR | 4,200 | 386,600 | 92 |
| Armenian SSR | 1,100 | 172,500 | 156.8 |
| Turkmen SSR | 1,600 | 118,100 | 73.8 |
| Uzbek SSR | 8,500 | 754,500 | 88.8 |
| Tadzhik SSR | 3,900 | 185,500 | 47.6 |
| Kazakh SSR | 7,300 | 556,600 | 76.2 |
| Kirgiz SSR | 1,800 | 148,600 | 82.6 |

[1] Calculated from *Kolkhozy vtoroi piatiletki* (Moscow: 1939), Table 6. See Chapter 1, note. 41

**Table 8. Proportional distribution of households per collective farm for select regions of the USSR**

| | -15 | 15-30 | 31-60 | 61-80 | 81-100 | 101-150 | 151-200 | 201-300 | 301-500 | 500+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SSSR** | 6.4% | 18.5% | 29.8% | 12.8% | 8.8% | 11.8% | 5.5% | 4.4% | 1.7% | 0.3% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **RSFSR** | 8.4% | 22.2% | 30.8% | 11.9% | 7.7% | 10.0% | 4.3% | 3.3% | 1.2% | 0.2% |
| Small farm zone | 13.0% | 31.9% | 34.5% | 9.9% | 4.7% | 4.1% | 0.9% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Small farm zone without Siberia | 15.3% | 34.2% | 33.9% | 8.6% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Border/Mixed regions | 2.9% | 12.5% | 27.8% | 14.5% | 11.3% | 15.9% | 7.1% | 5.5% | 2.0% | 0.5% |
| Central Black Earth | 1.0% | 5.8% | 18.4% | 12.8% | 11.7% | 22.0% | 12.7% | 11.2% | 3.6% | 0.5% |
| Caucasus | 0.3% | 3.5% | 13.2% | 10.2% | 10.8% | 21.8% | 15.3% | 16.5% | 6.8% | 1.0% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ukrainian SSR | 0.1% | 2.6% | 16.7% | 13.3% | 12.6% | 21.3% | 13.5% | 12.9% | 6.2% | 0.8% |
| Belorussian SSR | 1.3% | 13.3% | 36.9% | 17.5% | 11.3% | 12.7% | 4.1% | 2.3% | 0.6% | 0.0% |
| Azerbaidzhan SSR | 2.4% | 13.5% | 31.4% | 14.8% | 10.0% | 14.8% | 6.1% | 4.9% | 1.7% | 0.4% |
| Georgian SSR | 5.9% | 17.4% | 24.1% | 12.8% | 9.1% | 14.3% | 7.8% | 6.1% | 2.2% | 0.3% |
| Armenian SSR | 1.1% | 6.4% | 15.3% | 10.4% | 9.3% | 16.3% | 12.9% | 13.5% | 10.7% | 4.1% |
| Turkmen SSR | 0.9% | 11.8% | 40.0% | 17.8% | 11.4% | 12.6% | 3.8% | 1.6% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Uzbek SSR | 1.1% | 11.4% | 32.4% | 16.7% | 11.4% | 15.7% | 6.2% | 4.1% | 0.9% | 0.1% |
| Tadzhik SSR | 10.2% | 36.4% | 35.0% | 7.4% | 4.0% | 4.0% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 0.4% | 0.2% |
| Kazakh SSR | 0.7% | 8.3% | 42.0% | 19.4% | 11.9% | 11.6% | 3.3% | 2.2% | 0.6% | 0.0% |
| Kirgiz SSR | 0.3% | 6.3% | 32.7% | 19.1% | 14.8% | 16.7% | 6.3% | 2.9% | 0.8% | 0.1% |

**Table 9. Number of collective farms and households for regions within the small farm zone**

| | Farms | Households | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Small farm zone"** | 97,599 | 4,041,700 | 41.4 |
| Small farm zone without Siberia | 83,012 | 3,187,700 | 38.4 |
| | | | |
| Karelian ASSR | 904 | 26,800 | 29.6 |
| Kirov | 10,936 | 342,500 | 31.3 |
| Leningrad | 9,527 | 309,100 | 32.4 |
| Yaroslavl | 7,683 | 251,600 | 32.7 |
| Kalinin | 13,490 | 456,800 | 33.9 |
| Ivanovsk | 5,765 | 225,500 | 39.1 |
| Moscow | 6,554 | 265,200 | 40.5 |
| Vologda | 5,969 | 247,200 | 41.4 |
| Udmurt ASSR | 3,342 | 140,200 | 42.0 |
| Mari ASSR | 1,990 | 88,800 | 44.6 |
| Smolensk | 9,484 | 429,200 | 45.3 |
| Tula | 4,534 | 225,500 | 49.7 |
| Arkhangelsk | 2,151 | 133,500 | 62.1 |
| Komi ASSR | 683 | 45,800 | 67.1 |
| | | | |
| Krasnoyarsk | 2,298 | 152,300 | 66.3 |
| Far East | 1,191 | 55,400 | 46.5 |
| Irkutsk | 1,407 | 76,500 | 54.4 |
| Novosibirsk | 5,112 | 296,900 | 58.1 |
| Omsk | 4,579 | 272,900 | 59.6 |

**Table 10. Proportional distribution of households per collective farm for regions of the small farm zone**

| | -15 | 15-30 | 31-60 | 61-80 | 81-100 | 101-150 | 151-200 | 201-300 | 301-500 | 500+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Small farm zone** | 13.0% | 31.9% | 34.5% | 9.9% | 4.7% | 4.1% | 0.9% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Small farm zone without Siberia** | 15.3% | 34.2% | 33.9% | 8.6% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Karelian ASSR** | 24.1% | 38.2% | 28.7% | 5.2% | 1.2% | 2.1% | 0.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Kirov** | 19.6% | 40.6% | 31.1% | 5.5% | 1.5% | 1.3% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Leningrad** | 17.8% | 37.5% | 33.9% | 6.9% | 2.4% | 1.3% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Yaroslavl** | 22.3% | 39.4% | 27.9% | 6.1% | 1.9% | 1.5% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Kalinin** | 19.4% | 36.3% | 32.8% | 6.3% | 2.9% | 2.0% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Ivanovsk** | 16.6% | 34.0% | 32.2% | 8.0% | 3.4% | 3.9% | 1.3% | 0.5% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Moscow** | 14.6% | 34.1% | 32.9% | 8.1% | 4.0% | 4.0% | 1.3% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.1% |
| **Vologda** | 12.9% | 35.3% | 31.9% | 9.9% | 5.7% | 3.6% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Udmurt ASSR** | 13.3% | 31.3% | 35.3% | 10.7% | 4.8% | 3.5% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Mari ASSR** | 9.8% | 29.1% | 40.2% | 11.0% | 5.4% | 3.4% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Smolensk** | 6.4% | 27.1% | 42.3% | 13.6% | 5.5% | 4.0% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Tula** | 6.6% | 24.2% | 39.8% | 13.7% | 6.8% | 6.1% | 1.9% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Arkhangelsk** | 4.1% | 18.4% | 33.2% | 16.9% | 10.0% | 12.4% | 3.2% | 1.6% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| **Komi ASSR** | 3.7% | 14.6% | 34.7% | 16.1% | 10.1% | 14.0% | 5.3% | 1.3% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Krasnoyarsk** | 1.9% | 14.4% | 37.5% | 16.5% | 11.6% | 13.1% | 3.5% | 1.4% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| **Far East** | 8.4% | 26.8% | 37.3% | 13.4% | 6.3% | 6.3% | 1.4% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Irkutsk** | 5.9% | 21.9% | 36.8% | 16.3% | 8.5% | 8.3% | 1.9% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Novosibirsk** | 2.4% | 18.5% | 39.8% | 18.2% | 10.9% | 8.6% | 1.4% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Omsk** | 2.7% | 17.8% | 37.3% | 16.4% | 10.4% | 11.6% | 2.7% | 1.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% |

## Table 11. Collective farms and households by other regions of the RSFSR

| | Region | Farms | Households | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| **Border/mixed regions** | Total | 29,444 | 2,451,700 | 83.3 |
| | Voronezh | 5,368 | 359,200 | 66.9 |
| | Orel | 7,263 | 503,300 | 69.3 |
| | Chuvash ASSR | 1,689 | 152,600 | 90.3 |
| | Kursk | 5,514 | 503,600 | 91.3 |
| | Gorky | 5,630 | 480,100 | 85.3 |
| | Riazan | 3,980 | 452,900 | 113.8 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| **Southern Urals** | Total | 13,155 | 1,067,400 | 81.1 |
| | Altai | 4,663 | 333,900 | 71.6 |
| | Chita | 772 | 56,800 | 73.6 |
| | Cheliabinsk | 2,910 | 221,000 | 75.9 |
| | Sverdlovsk | 2,153 | 200,600 | 93.2 |
| | Buriatskaia | 572 | 56,300 | 98.4 |
| | Chkalovsk | 2,085 | 198,800 | 95.3 |
| | | | | |
| **Central Black Earth** | Total | 20,899 | 2,510,100 | 120.1 |
| | Tambov | 3,397 | 359,200 | 105.7 |
| | Tatar ASSR | 3,871 | 414,800 | 107.2 |
| | Bashkirskaia | 3,895 | 441,700 | 113.4 |
| | Saratov | 1,815 | 231,400 | 127.5 |
| | Stalingrad | 1,655 | 217,200 | 131.2 |
| | Mordovskaia ASSR | 1,499 | 198,200 | 132.2 |
| | Kuibyshev | 2,918 | 396,400 | 135.8 |
| | Rostov | 1,849 | 251,200 | 135.9 |
| | | | | |
| **Caucasus** | Total | 7,547 | 1,080,700 | 143.2 |
| | Krasnodarskii krai | 2,421 | 372,800 | 154.0 |
| | Krymskaia ASSR | 1,196 | 83,500 | 69.8 |
| | Dagestanskaia | 1,124 | 144,700 | 128.7 |
| | Chechno-Ingushetiia | 469 | 73,800 | 157.4 |
| | Ordzhonikidze | 1,436 | 226,800 | 157.9 |
| | Nemtsev Povolzh'ia ASSR | 489 | 80,600 | 164.8 |
| | Kalmytskaia | 126 | 25,400 | 201.6 |
| | Severo-Ossetsiakaia | 119 | 27,900 | 234.5 |
| | Kabardino-Balkarskaia ASSR | 167 | 45,200 | 270.7 |
| | | | | |
| **No Data** | | 4,569 | | |
| | Perm | 3,314 | | |
| | Yakutia | 1,255 | | |

## Table 12. Proportional distribution of households per collective farm for other regions of the RSFSR

| | -15 | 15-30 | 31-60 | 61-80 | 81-100 | 101-150 | 151-200 | 201-300 | 301-500 | 500+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Border/mixed regions** | 2.9% | 12.5% | 27.8% | 14.5% | 11.3% | 15.9% | 7.1% | 5.5% | 2.0% | 0.5% |
| Voronezh | 0.2% | 5.8% | 20.6% | 15.1% | 13.2% | 21.0% | 11.1% | 9.6% | 3.2% | 0.2% |
| Orel | 3.9% | 16.2% | 34.2% | 15.2% | 10.3% | 12.4% | 4.9% | 2.3% | 0.6% | 0.0% |
| Chuvash ASSR | 1.2% | 9.2% | 29.6% | 17.4% | 10.5% | 17.5% | 7.9% | 5.0% | 1.2% | 0.5% |
| Kursk | 0.5% | 6.9% | 27.5% | 16.4% | 16.0% | 19.8% | 7.3% | 4.4% | 1.0% | 0.2% |
| Gorky | 7.7% | 21.0% | 28.4% | 10.5% | 7.0% | 10.9% | 5.4% | 5.4% | 2.7% | 1.0% |
| Riazan | 2.1% | 12.0% | 24.7% | 14.0% | 10.5% | 16.3% | 7.4% | 7.4% | 3.9% | 1.7% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Urals** | 1.2% | 9.5% | 34.8% | 19.2% | 13.8% | 15.2% | 4.4% | 1.6% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| Altai | 1.1% | 10.1% | 36.0% | 22.3% | 14.7% | 13.0% | 2.4% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Chita | 2.3% | 9.0% | 31.3% | 17.3% | 15.6% | 16.6% | 5.7% | 2.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Cheliabinsk | 0.5% | 7.6% | 36.9% | 18.6% | 13.7% | 16.1% | 4.4% | 1.8% | 0.4% | 0.0% |
| Sverdlovsk | 3.1% | 17.7% | 40.8% | 16.3% | 9.7% | 8.8% | 2.4% | 0.9% | 0.3% | 0.0% |
| Buriatskaia | 0.2% | 3.5% | 22.1% | 16.7% | 18.8% | 25.8% | 9.2% | 3.3% | 0.4% | 0.0% |
| Chkalovsk | 0.0% | 4.3% | 27.7% | 17.6% | 14.4% | 22.3% | 9.0% | 4.2% | 0.5% | 0.0% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Central Black Earth** | 1.0% | 5.8% | 18.4% | 12.8% | 11.7% | 22.0% | 12.7% | 11.2% | 3.6% | 0.5% |
| Tambov | 0.9% | 7.3% | 22.8% | 14.5% | 11.7% | 19.9% | 11.2% | 8.2% | 3.1% | 0.4% |
| Tatar ASSR | 1.9% | 12.2% | 22.5% | 11.3% | 9.5% | 18.5% | 10.7% | 10.2% | 2.9% | 0.3% |
| Bashkirskaia | 0.7% | 3.6% | 19.4% | 15.1% | 13.8% | 22.9% | 12.1% | 10.0% | 2.3% | 0.1% |
| Saratov | 0.1% | 2.5% | 14.8% | 15.8% | 11.8% | 23.3% | 14.8% | 12.3% | 4.3% | 0.3% |
| Stalingrad | 0.0% | 0.9% | 11.7% | 12.0% | 14.5% | 28.4% | 15.9% | 12.3% | 4.1% | 0.2% |
| Mordovskaia ASSR | 2.7% | 10.7% | 19.7% | 9.2% | 9.1% | 17.0% | 9.0% | 13.1% | 8.2% | 1.3% |
| Kuibyshev | 0.3% | 4.2% | 16.7% | 11.5% | 11.3% | 21.8% | 14.0% | 13.4% | 5.6% | 1.2% |
| Rostov | 1.8% | 1.0% | 11.2% | 11.2% | 12.2% | 28.4% | 17.2% | 13.7% | 3.1% | 0.2% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Caucasus** | 0.3% | 3.5% | 13.2% | 10.2% | 10.8% | 21.8% | 15.3% | 16.5% | 6.8% | 1.0% |
| Krasnodarskii krai | 0.4% | 3.7% | 12.0% | 9.8% | 10.1% | 22.7% | 16.4% | 17.7% | 6.3% | 0.9% |
| Krymskaia ASSR | 0.7% | 4.8% | 16.2% | 11.3% | 10.7% | 21.5% | 14.0% | 13.7% | 6.0% | 1.1% |
| Dagestanskaia | 0.0% | 6.1% | 19.3% | 14.3% | 12.3% | 17.5% | 10.7% | 11.2% | 6.8% | 1.8% |
| Chechno-Ingushetiia | 0.0% | 1.7% | 10.5% | 9.3% | 9.3% | 29.8% | 16.1% | 13.5% | 8.7% | 1.1% |
| Ordzhonikidze | 0.0% | 0.3% | 10.0% | 8.8% | 11.5% | 22.8% | 17.1% | 19.4% | 9.0% | 1.1% |
| Nemtsev Povolzh'ia ASSR | 0.0% | 0.2% | 2.8% | 6.1% | 8.2% | 23.8% | 21.0% | 28.5% | 9.4% | 0.0% |
| Kalmytskaia | 0.0% | 0.8% | 8.1% | 7.3% | 23.6% | 21.1% | 22.0% | 15.5% | 1.6% | 0.0% |
| Severo-Ossetsiakaia | 0.0% | 2.6% | 10.3% | 4.3% | 5.2% | 14.7% | 8.6% | 19.8% | 32.8% | 1.7% |
| Kabardino-Balkarskaia | 1.2% | 17.9% | 39.8% | 15.7% | 9.8% | 9.2% | 3.8% | 1.7% | 0.8% | 0.1% |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

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