

## Soviet and Post-Soviet Reindeer-Herding Collectives: Transitional Slogans in Murmansk Region

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**‘Sustainable development’**—One of the key phrases used in transitional discourse is ‘sustainable development’. I put it in quotes here as it is not always quite clear what is to be developed in a sustainable way: an ecologically sound economic model, or simply an economy that, after initial support, would be able to be self-propelling? The current period of transition in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc is characterised by a plurality of competing socio-economic models and an interpretation which appears to be taken for granted is that it is market oriented models that are to be developed and sustained. This is in fact the sense, which appears also elsewhere in the literature – not surprisingly where it touches on post-colonial experiments. Thus Schwartz and Hare talk about ‘unsustainable development’ in post-colonial contexts in connection with generally failed attempts to import Israeli rural technology into Zambia, Nigeria, and Nepal in the seventies (Schwartz and Hare 2000).<sup>1</sup>

While in Russian public discourse such views are being debated in intensely ideological terms (‘Are we to be taught by capitalists and imperialists?’), actors down on the ground have the hard task of making ends meet in, preferably, a sustainable way.

For vast portions of the former Soviet Union, as well as for the greater part of the former Soviet Bloc, the task, as we know, is not an easy one. In the Russian Arctic Regions it is however especially difficult and the odds are such that many of the numerically small peoples of the North are, as it is said in concerned publications, on the brink of extinction. For many of these peoples the last ten years are said to have been the most critical in their entire history.

Against this very gloomy background the opinion I offer for debate here is prompted by the question: what are the internal, (‘own group’, ‘emic’) ideas and practices underlining phrases like ‘sustainable development’? I have to say immediately that I use the phrase emblematically and as a shorthand

label – as representative of imported transitional discourse. By analogy with other such ‘buzz phrases’ – like TK (traditional knowledge), or TEK (traditional ecological knowledge), I shall use the acronym SD further down – a reminder, as I hope, of the fact that when regional human concerns become captured by global acronyms they are dehumanised and alienated from the local scene.<sup>2</sup>

Local texts tend to be much longer. Consider, for instance, the following (by the representative of the President in the Khanty-mansi Autonomous Okrug):

‘What is to be the nature of the socio-economic order, which is necessary for preservation and development of the aboriginal peoples of the North, of their culture?

What economic mechanism is capable of preserving traditional land-use methods in contemporary market conditions? How are traditional branches of the economy to be aligned with the system of global economic relations?

Answers to such questions are to come from a well thought out conceptualisation of northern policy in respect of the indigenous peoples of the North’. (Kurikov 2000, 7)

What in Western terminology can be labelled as SD, in texts like the one above – referring to Arctic problematics – comes out as ‘economic mechanism capable of preserving traditional land-use methods in contemporary market conditions’, an ‘economic mechanism’ which is to be implemented by a central ‘northern policy’. I shall turn below to recent historical continuities of this mode of thinking – i.e. that the Centre conceptualises a policy, which then solves the problems of distant peoples. Before that I look at how the distant peoples try to solve their own problems, while the Centre is still thinking and conceptualising.

**‘Crypto-entrepreneurship’**—Using experience with the reindeer-herding community of the Kola Peninsula, as well as textual material from this and other parts of the Russian Arctic, I suggest that local answers to such questions tend to come out in a pragmatic mode which may experimentally be called *‘crypto-entrepreneurship’*. In contrast to *‘overt entrepreneurship’*, this seeks existential security through social and economic activities in which

private concerns operate under the umbrella of collective property and collectivist ideology and practice. It is claimed that such a 'private-in-the-collective' mode is the overwhelmingly predominant pattern of socio-economic behaviour in the region in question, and tends to be typical of the majority of others.

Such dominance seems to be motivated by the extreme insecurity of public space, i.e. that space in which an actor operates without any other protection but that of the juridical system, administrative and market laws. From this point of view the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that market-oriented behaviour cannot be developed before public space has become a securer environment. In the meantime, what requires attention and support seems to be the model that has evolved precisely as a means of survival in hostile public space, i.e. a model oriented primarily on providing *existential security*.

In essence crypto-entrepreneurship is the underlying pragmatic model of State Socialism and as such is no big news. Analysed as 'soft budget constraints' (Kornai 1992), or the 'domestication of revolution' (Creed 1998), this characteristic feature of State Socialism has been widely discussed in the literature. What seems to invite a revisiting, however, is that in post-socialist conditions it operates side by side with other models, most prominent among them being *'overt entrepreneurship'*.

In the realm of reindeer herding and the people that depend on it, this may be illustrated by the following statistical data. In the Northern regions a total of 30 kolkhozes are functioning; 202 sovkhoses; 128 share companies (*aktionernie obshchestva*, AO); 177 limited liability companies (*tovarishchestva s ogranichennoi otvetstvenosti*, TOO), and 199 agricultural co-operatives (*sel'skokhoziaistvennie proizvoditel'nie kooperatsii*, SHPK). These and other forms of collective herding hold 55,5% of the total herd, while the share of private herding is 37,6 %, and of private farms – around 7% (Savirski 2000, 15). It is interesting to note here that in Murmansk Region – which is quoted in the same article as a success story (specifically SHPK 'Tundra' of Lovozero), collective herding accounts for practically 100% of the total herd of the Region (cf Rybkin 1999, 19).

Against this statistical background it is also interesting to ask: why is crypto-entrepreneurship so persistent (as I shall try to show below), and why is 'overt entrepreneurship' seen either as 'lunacy', or burdened with negative

connotations (*komersanti*, *mafia*, etc.)? From there on, which is the model to be developed primarily, and which has a greater chance of developing in a sustainable way? Will it be productive to ignore a dominant model because it may look too ‘Soviet’? Finally, under what conditions does the model have the greatest chance of sustainability? The questions are asked against the historical background of the Soviet period (in a preceding paper I tried to describe the relevance of these issues to the pre-Soviet period; see: Konstantinov 2000).

**State protection**—As in most parts of the Russian Arctic, reindeer herding in the Murmansk Region has experienced a dramatic setback. The problems themselves are well-known: swift deterioration of living standards in the post-Soviet period, pressure from non-renewable resource extractors, and, specific to the Murmansk Region, very high presence of impoverished urban and military population leading to a rise in criminality and poaching.

For problem-solving purposes in the sensitive area of living and working standards, the Soviet period provided an array of supportive measures mainly by way of annual bonuses (*premi*), possibilities for holiday-making, easy and cheap transportation, cheap maintenance of living and working premises, kindergartens, etc. The disappearance of the social care of the Soviet state was paralleled by the disappearance of an assured market for produce, as also by the much diminished presence of modern powerful technology in reindeer-herding (e.g. the use of helicopters, all-purpose track vehicles, snowmobiles, electric generators). All of this has produced a retrogressive effect, which may be called ‘going back in time’. We are all too familiar with what this means in practice. Across the greater part of the former Soviet Bloc, from the Kola to say, Bulgaria, along the meridian, and again from Kola to Chukotka, along the parallel, it wouldn’t be wrong to say that cash incomes have become minimal, social care is next to absent, and the main ambition of a household is to ensure subsistence and heating through the winter. This would be as true of the Arctic reindeer herder, as for a shepherd in the Balkan Mountains.

Concentrating on the North, feelings of nostalgia for a lost world of safe and optimistic existence, can be illustrated with texts like the following:

‘In the very recent past ... the indigenous peoples of the North widely used health and cultural facilities, their children were taken

care of in sport, arts, music schools, pre-school, and school institutions. The impetus for a better life was increasingly felt everywhere. Workers from the North increasingly travelled for health and recreational purposes to all parts of the country. More and more of our children went to higher education institutions in the central cities in our Republic. Especially during the period 1984–1990 the North revived, life in reindeer-herding camps (*ulusi*) was beating vigorously, people were feeling elated, regional conferences on various problems of reindeer-herding were being held regularly'. (Kladkin 1999, 9)

In accordance with such nostalgic feelings, measures for solving problems in reindeer-herding are mainly seen in terms of the resurrection of previous state support, a state-ensured market for production, state subsidies for produce and machinery, and a vertical system of administration and control.

There are few signs that State support is anywhere on the horizon, except in various projects for 'well-thought out policies', or governmental decrees like, for instance, 'For Urgent Measures for State Support of Northern Reindeer-herding', a project for a decree of the Ministry of Agricultural Production of the Russian Federation (Savirski 2000, 16; see also Polezhaev 2000, 17–21). The future will show how effective such a policy, laws, or decrees might be. In the meantime one is inclined to be very pessimistic indeed and much reminded of the Brezhnev decades which abounded in similar appeals for urgent measures and radical changes, coming from the central authorities, only to be followed by swift oblivion soon after the current Party congress was over.<sup>3</sup>

**Outside influences**—In the Murmansk Region the reindeer-herding Raion Administration is also yearning for the *Oblast'* Budget, but apart from some subsidies for the main urbanised settlements (Lovozero and Revda) in respect of heating, health-care, schooling, and public transport, little is left in the way of support for reindeer-herding itself and almost next to nothing for reindeer herders. A local positive feature – absent in the greater part of the Arctic – is, however, a foreign investor and main buyer of meat – the Swedish Norfrus Company. Another outside influence, creating an idea of protection, is that there is considerable attention given to local reindeer-herders

along revived links between the Fenno-Scandic reindeer-herding communities, most of all Saami organisations, and the local indigenous people. This also includes the activities of an evangelical mission, the All-Norwegian Saami Mission.

Such post-Soviet developments, connected with Western ethnopolitical attention, necessitate a careful look at the various slogans around reindeer herding. I see this necessity as coming from the easily noticeable fact that the two sides tend to speak and perform in ways that often differ widely. In brief, while on the Western side there is an idea that Kola reindeer-herders need support to become liberated private entrepreneurs, feelings among the herders themselves are very far from such goals. The resulting space of misunderstandings and ambiguities is an attractive terrain for typically self-appointed ethnic entrepreneurs. This part of the picture has been presented very convincingly by Overland in his doctoral thesis discussing local ethno-political representation (1999).

Misunderstandings and ambiguities tend to come from an all too easy acceptance – often tongue in cheek – of imported ideas of the SD-type. Taken at face value the phrase implies a concern that something has to be done for developing reindeer-herding in such an ecologically concerned way that after some aid has been given and the money spent, this development continues, or, at least, its achievements are retained without the further need for continuous financial injections. If we take this down and paraphrase it still more plainly, it means that when money is given, it should not disappear as if into sand, but set off an inner and ecologically sound developing mechanism.

If my reading is correct, then there are two tasks here: (a) for the money not to disappear; and (b) for these inner mechanisms to start functioning. (In connection with (b) let it be briefly mentioned that another fashionable, but again somewhat fuzzy term is ‘traditional methods of land-use’, see Kurikov (2000, 7), quoted above).

Slogans like ‘Let Us Fight For SD’, or ‘Through Traditional Land-Use – to More and Greater SD’ – I facetiously invent here trying to underline the easy bond between Soviet, on the one hand, and post-Soviet myth-making, the foreignness of the wording assisting, rather than preventing such linkages. The myths seem to be in competition with each other, depending on what public they are addressed to, and what the tastes of that public are. When the

public is Western, the texts produced follow a 'reformed' orientation with a bias on private concerns, environmental consciousness, etc. For local use, however, the texts are diametrically opposite in ideological orientation: the bias is on collective property, state support, and ensuing social care. On what might be called a 'poetic'<sup>4</sup> level, these paradigms are, therefore, competing according to the demands of the moment.

On a level of direct correspondence with reality – a 'nominative' level – a collectivistic orientation is clearly the predominant world-view, with dreams of resurrecting state support, i.e. re-interpreting the previous State Socialist model as illustrated above. But still further there is what has been aptly called – in reference to a different post-totalitarian region (Romania) – 'the solitude of collectivism' (Kideckel 1993). That is: individual entrepreneurship under the protective umbrella of a collective enterprise (possibly subsidised or otherwise supported under a still higher, overarching protective umbrella), or in other words, 'crypto-entrepreneurship'.

**Emic slogans in reindeer-herding**—One way to illustrate this strategy is to take slogans reflecting what seems to be a received idea – both for the Soviet and the post-Soviet period – about what 'correct' reindeer-herding should be like. When, in April 2000, the best reindeer-herders were given prizes on account of the 70-th Anniversary of former Sovkhoz 'Tundra', their achievement was presented through rhetoric handed down practically from the first years of collectivisation (See Appendix I). For the four prize-winners (the Director of SHPK 'Tundra'; the *zootekhnik* of Brigades 3 and 4; the brigade-leader of Brigade 9; and the head-*zootekhnik* of the co-operative) the text is stereotypical and runs as follows:

'For high professional achievement, initiative, ensuring a high level of *preservation of reindeer herd totals* (*pogolovye olenei*) and in connection with the 70th anniversary of the Agricultural Collective 'Tundra', a Honorary Diploma (*pochetnaia gramota*) of the Governor of Murmansk Region is given to' ... (Lovozerskaia pravda, April 2000, 5)

The emphasis in the above quotation is mine. What the formulation actually means is that the persons given the prizes have contributed – one way or another – to herding brigades not performing the following activities:

- (1) Not losing contact with their herd to the extent that they are unable to round it up in the autumn for counting and subsequent harvesting;
- (2) Not selling reindeer-meat informally to interested parties to the point where the herd gets drastically reduced.

**Private deer**—Another piece of reality which gets somewhat obscured by the text about preserving herd totals is the issue of private deer. In herding of this type, i.e. ‘re-interpreting the sovkhov’, there is constant pressure on the part of herders to increase their private deer contingents in the collective herd,<sup>5</sup> and to be mainly interested in the welfare of these ‘private’ islands in the herd, leaving the rest to their fate, but with the following reservation. When it comes to: (a) shooting deer for the pot; and (b) selling meat informally (*nalevo*), they are invariably taken from the collective herd, and, if circumstances allow, from another brigade’s herd. Losses are attributed to poachers (*breki*), and predators – mainly bears, as wolf- or wolverine-pressure in this region has fallen so much that it cannot be taken seriously. The tradition goes well back into the Soviet period as can be illustrated by the following report. It is from 1972 and describes the state of reindeer-herding in Lovozero Raion:

‘The Raion Inspectorate (*Raiinspektoura*) one more time points out to the unsatisfactory registration of reindeer for private use (*oleni lichnogo pol’zovaniia*). There has been much talking on this topic, but all of it boils down to many herders deliberately hiding the personal deer in their possession. This is borne out by the fact – supported by some statistical data – that the very severe year for reindeer herding – 1972, has not affected private herd numbers’. (GAMO-Kirovsk 1972, 7)

I am saying all of this with the sole desire to see what the realities behind slogans are and not wishing to present herders in any negative light. What is happening is part of the adage: ‘You are cheating by paying, we are cheating by working (or in any other way possible)’. This kind of tense relationship between workers and administration has, in other words, been retained intact despite serious changes in the country, changes, which we call post-Soviet reforms. The relationship, it has to be said, does not bode well for goals like development and improving living standards among reindeer-herders. The



money from meat sold on the sly is usually for vodka, and prices there can be ridiculously low – like a whole carcass for two bottles, sometimes even one. The meat in the pot while out in the tundra is a necessity of life and no one would begrudge the right to that. A more serious profit is made by selling private meat, but market-prices are fairly low, often there is no market at all, so there the aim is to keep families afloat and help relatives, no more. The central issue here is that one, nevertheless, achieves a degree of existential security through this mode of herderhood. Conversely, that critical degree of security is seen as threatened and unlikely to be achieved, should one venture out as an overt entrepreneur.

Ex-sovkhoz management is fully aware of the delicate balance. Should it attempt to press somewhat harder, i.e. exercise and enforce control over the herds and what is happening there, it would lose its herders, as a significant part of the rational reason for being a herder would disappear. This does not mean, in the general case, that herders will seek an alternative in private entrepreneurship. The sad truth is that they will seek an alternative in alcoholism, becoming, in the local jargon, *bichi*, i.e. down-and-outs who are past caring about existential security. Thus an unspoken agreement is reached between administration and herders which may be paraphrased as something like the following: so long as the herd is rounded up in the fall, and losses from it are not too great, there is sufficient room allowed for the herders' own (hidden) entrepreneurship.

It may be added that Accountants' Offices in former sovkhozes are past masters in mystification of reality and adept at producing financial documentation in which crypto-entrepreneurship does not exist. There is a long tradition here of creating a world impenetrable to the uninitiated. As well noted by Anderson, it is operating through 'creative flexibility of accounting categories' (i.e. 'poetically' in my analogy with Jakobsonian use), and 'is trained to defend the enterprise and its social universe from adversity' (Anderson 1995, 42–3). I might add here that at least in the case of one herding co-operative I worked with during my field-studies, the accountants were the wives of the leading heads of brigades.

This, I believe is the thicker reading of the time-honoured phrase: *preservation of herd totals* in the present context, but, as could be shown again below, in essence it has been that from the very beginning of kolkhoz and later sovkhoz management.

**Socialist Competition**—An early text which exemplifies the Soviet form of SD in reindeer-herding is given in Appendix I. I have quoted in full this Contract for Socialist Competition between two herding brigades, dating back to 1936, for a double purpose. On the one hand, for anyone acquainted with reindeer-herding practices it will be clear that the goals set are close to impossible to achieve and the text is therefore to be seen largely as ‘poetic’ in the sense explained previously. It has all the lasting appeals for preservation of herd-totals, for numbers, for increases, etc. that characterise the quantitative bias of Soviet bids for legitimacy. (For all the great insistence on increasing the production of meat, it never became quite clear to me where all this meat went to, except for disappearing anonymously into sausages at Meat-Processing Complexes (*miasokombinati*). The urban labour migrant consumer public never really developed a taste for venison, nor is there any evidence that reindeer meat – as such – was exported to the temperate and southern belts in any serious way. Thus ‘herd numbers’ seem to be more about the ‘numbers’ than the meat from them.)

Secondly, there is a highly enlightening sentence in this Contract, namely:

‘Item 9. Preserve fully production resulting from enforced slaughter’.

(Appendix I, Archives of Revda Museum 1936)

Decoded, it means that the brigades pledge not to take deer from the collective herd on the pretence that they have had to slaughter an animal for some *force majeure* reason: like a gelding strangled in a *melée* resulting from a team having crashed through thin ice and scrambling to safety. The text therefore illustrates the concern of administrations about brigades and brigade members catering for their individual interests while out there in the tundra and away from immediate control and means of inspection, as this might lower herd numbers and thus blot notebooks before the higher authorities. The text indicates that from the very beginning of the Soviet collective, including the harshest periods of repression, hidden entrepreneurship under collective protection has been there and was never really eradicated. As a way of attaining existential security it seems to be unsurpassed and this may explain its tenacity.

Those who have compared the two states: that of a private herder in Fennoscandia, on the one hand, and a collective herder in Russia, on the other, point out the much securer state of the latter. Thus Beach, as a result of his

acquaintance with one of the sovkhos herding teams (*brigadi*) back in 1992, very accurately concludes:

‘The sovkhos organizational structure provides herders with a basic income security independent of their personal ‘reindeer luck’. Moreover, the Kola herders do have opportunities to raise their incomes through extra effort and initiative’. (Beach 1992, 141)

Direct long-term work with herding brigades have led me to the conclusion that ‘sovkhos’ is a view-of-the-world concept denoting a received, desirable, and often – the only thinkable reality (Konstantinov 2000, 61). Non-sovkhos ventures in Murmansk Region – like private herding – are being consistently rejected as impossibilities or ‘lunacies’. Such a negative view has been reported by other researchers (e.g. again Beach 1992, 140) and is supported by the evidence of a very precarious existence of the few isolated attempts (e.g. Sharshina’s farm at Loparskoe; Mikhailova 1995, 15–7), or their downright failure (the reindeer-herding private farms between the rivers Notta and Lotta in the central western part; Rybkin 1999, 19).

**A look from above**—On the part of the administration the attempts to sustain the model – despite the uneasy relationship with the herders described above – takes the expected form of a well established tradition: incessant demands for help from the regional, or the federal budget. This is contingent on connections with people who could ‘really help’, i.e. on available social networks. In graphic text this form of seeking sustainability for development can be found – for example – in the proclamations of candidates for Head of the Raion Administration in recent municipal elections (Lovozero Raion) in the spring of 2000. One of them runs like this:

‘In the whole world everything is decided by connections. Our candidate ... indeed has such connections. She is an acquaintance of particular administrators, who are ready to help the Raion in case she gets elected and there is a normal highly qualified team at the helm of power. In the State Duma of the Russian Federation – this is the Deputy Chairman of the Gosduma ... ; the Deputy Chairman of Gosduma Committee for Natural Resources and Land Use ...; the Deputy Chairman of the Gosduma Committee for Agricultural Issues’...

etc., etc., all imaginable important persons in the Duma and Ministries in Moscow. A sign of the new times is not only the Duma, but also, towards the end of a very long list, the following useful connections of the candidate:

‘The President of the International Fund for Collaboration for the Economic and Social Development of the Indigenous Peoples of the North ... ; the President of the International League of the Numerically Small Peoples of the North ... ; Representatives of the MacArthur Foundation; of TACIS ; of ‘North Without Conflicts’.  
(Lovozerksaia pravda, March 2000, 8)

Among other things the text indicates that public space is firmly seen as one governed by useful personal connections, and not by impersonalised laws. The new diversity of power-holders in this terrain is represented by national and international funds and programs, besides the traditional actors from the corridors of state power. It is to be noted that in terms of this source of security, herders perceive themselves as very weak competitors. This is the realm of local politicians, and notably recently, of ethnic and environmental entrepreneurs, in brief a world connected with administrations of collective enterprises and local elites. The role of the herder is to adjust a private agenda to the rhetoric of the higher local echelons (i.e. ‘preserve herd numbers’), while the local higher echelons do exactly the same in respect of still higher newly received concerns (for ‘results from transitional reforms’).

## Conclusions

It can be concluded that in an attempt to attain existential security the mode called here ‘crypto-entrepreneurship’ is the mainly preferred one both from below and from above, i.e. both by the rank-and-file members of the collectives, the herders themselves, and the herding and territorial administrations. Herders and administrations alike tend to show a preference for a ‘hidden privateness’ within a collective rather than to braving it out as totally private agents – ‘overt entrepreneurs’. The model that is being shaped is a hybrid between private and public. In its essence it is not much different from the one practised during Soviet times, but there are important changes: (a) the present model cannot rely so much (if at all) on State support, and (b) if support is to come from anywhere it is from the West in which case it has to be used *as if* the model is being changed (market-reformed).

The sustainable retention of the model requires a delicate balancing act vis-à-vis at least two competitors. On the one hand these are the existing overt entrepreneurs who are either ideologically dismissed as *komersanti* or *mafiosi*, or, when necessary, invited to cooperate. The other competitor is connected with Western, in this specific case – Fennoscandic – influences and ideas, mainly in the direction of overt, market-oriented and effective entrepreneurship, raising living standards for the herders, preserving cultural traditions and environmental protection. All these concerns are critically important, but, given the prevailing tendencies they are mostly paid lip service to, in the best traditions of Soviet sloganism and mythology. The challenge that appears therefore, is to find a way in which concerns grouped here under the SD label can co-exist with the preferred mode of ‘crypto-entrepreneurship’. Although no quick and direct answer can be given to this delicate question, at least one basic conclusion could be drawn at this stage. A main characteristic feature of the situation seems to be a strong feeling of existential insecurity should one venture individually out into public space. Sovkhoz or para-sovkhoz formations create an atmosphere of protected ‘own space’, which is pragmatically effected through crypto-entrepreneurship. From here on the task seems to be connected with possibilities for increasing security, predictability, and friendliness of overt public space, rather than with attempts for direct transfer of market-oriented models. After ten years of experiments with direct market transference, it can be clearly seen that apart from a few countries in the westernmost parts of the former Soviet Bloc, in all the rest such attempts have led to economic crisis and increased yearning for the restoration of the previous regime.

## Appendix I

### CONTRACT

For Socialist Competition Between Herders’ Brigades of Kolkhoz ‘Sever’,  
village of Ponoï

For the purpose of fulfilling and overfulfilling the target plan (*planovoe zadanie*) for preservation of herds and rearing the young in the herds of the Ponoï Kolkhoz in 1936,\* Brigade No 1, consisting of 6 herders, with Head Herder FILIPPOV, Grigori Semenovitch, and Brigade No 2, consisting of

6 herders, with Head Herder KANEV, Feofan Klimentevich, have made a Socialist Contract, and we take upon ourselves the following obligations:

1. *To preserve in their totality herd numbers in accordance with the demands of the State Plan;*
2. By increasing the quality of servicing of the mothers' herd, to achieve the greatest possible reduction in loss of fawns (*otkhoda molodiaka*), so that this loss during the calving season should not exceed 4%, while annual loss should not exceed 9%;
3. By the end of the year bring the whole herd to a state of satisfactory fatness;
4. At calving time mark all fawns with earmarks assigned to each herd, on the day of birth;
5. Carry out registering (*oformit' perevod*) of the whole herd by age groups;
6. During the entire hot season patrol the herd without using sled-deer, and, at the same time, not allow losses in herd numbers;
7. Establish strict discipline among all brigade members and not allow a single absence from work (*progoul*) during the whole year, struggle for quality in performing all tasks assigned by the administrative leadership;
8. Use grazing land in the prescribed proper manner, strictly adhering to the regulations of the zootechnical minimum (*zoominimum*);
9. Fully preserve production resulting from enforced slaughter;
10. Carry out counting of the herd in no more than 5 days, and prevent injury to animals during the process of corralling;
11. Prepare the herd in good time for the rutting season, for which reason the selection of breed-producers and rejection (*otbrakovka*) of male animals not suitable for breeding be carried out by 16 August, while castration of rejected males be carried out by 15 September;
12. Bring to a minimum wearing out of Kolkhoz implements in herding brigades, not allowing any loss or damage to Kolkhoz implements.

We pledge to fulfil conscientiously all items listed above in the present Contract, and an inspection of the Contract in the brigades be carried out every three months together with representatives of the Kolkhoz Management and RAIZO.\*\*

Head Herder of Brigade No 1: (signature);

Head Herder of Brigade No 2: (signature)

Ordinary Herders: (four signatures)

\* Here and below all emphasis is mine

\*\* *Raionnoe zootekhnicheskoe otdelenie* (Raion Zootechnical Department)

## Notes

- 1 A discussion of the concept and practice of sustainable development suggests the usefulness of comparison between post-colonial and post-socialist developments, particularly developments imported from the West.
- 2 For this tension in respect of TEK e.g. Nadasdy (1999).
- 3 One is also reminded of the 'good tsar' syndrome, attacked by Mikhail Gorbachev during the initial years of perestroika: 'Don't lead people to expect miracles. It is necessary to expunge from people's minds a belief in the 'good tsar', in the assumption that someone at the top will impose order and organise change' (1988, addressing a meeting of Soviet editors, from Whittaker 1992, 77). But as Whittaker writes at the beginning of her very relevant historical survey of the concept: 'The idea of the 'good tsar' originated in Muscovite times and obviously has since become a commonplace of Russian political culture' (*ibid.*). Gorbachev's 'reforming tsar's' admonitions, one might add, did not seem to produce a noticeable effect.
- 4 'Poetic' is used here in analogy with a distinctive function of language, as introduced by Jakobson (1960). He argues that a creative violation of the systemic rules of language is just another use of it ('poetic'). In the same sense we could say that a violation of the rules presupposed by a discourse and its formulations, uses that discourse 'poetically'.
- 5 I am grateful to Patty Gray for drawing attention to the distinction between 'personal' (*lichnie*), and 'private' (*chastnie*) deer in a collective herd. Although in the context of Kola herding mainly personal deer have been at the centre of the debate, for the argument presented here 'private' can be used for both.

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