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#### COLLECTIVIZATION POLICY IN 1920-1937: SOVIET PRACTICES AND MUSLIM CLERGY IN DAGESTAN

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#### *Abstract*

At the present development stage of the Russian society, against the background of fundamental social and economic, political, spiritual and moral and other transformations, international tensions in the entire former Soviet Union also typical of Dagestan during the post-Perestroika period and difficult processes almost in all social spheres caused the relevance of many problems. Against the background of the proclaimed principles of democracy, publicity, freedom and focus on fundamentals of civil society and the constitutional state, the changes were followed by quite complex social and economic problems associated with deterioration of financial position of the majority of the population of the country. Such situation naturally triggered enhanced actions of state governing bodies since the social stability of the country was fully dependent on the efficiency of their work, including the policy aimed to settle social tensions in the whole Russian society and particularly in Dagestan. In conditions of modernization of production and reorganization of life of the Russian society, it is obvious that the modern Russian including Dagestan society objectively needs to learn lessons and make conclusions from the past, ensure its critical re-evaluation because without the analysis of the previous historical experience it is not only extremely difficult to find, to formulate the recovery mechanism from socioeconomic, political, spiritual and moral crisis. In this regard, the retrospective of this study is the analysis of the collectivization policy in Dagestan that had a number of features and was full of protests from the urban population caused by religious beliefs.

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**Keywords:** Russia, Dagestan, collectivization, peasants, Islam, protest.



## 1. Introduction

It has been more than a hundred years since the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 – the first revolution in the history of the mankind, which happened under the banner of social slogans, declarations of the principles of freedom and equality for all people living in the Russian Empire. In the post-Soviet time the events of that period were considered from a different perspective, many archival secret documents were revealed. The victory in the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 fostered changes in the Russian Empire, destruction of socioeconomic, political, spiritual patterns since it was the time of a new socially fair society where all people, irrespective of their ethnicity, race, religion, were proclaimed equal. The first official documents and decrees of the Soviet regime refer to the strive of the Bolsheviks who came to power having overthrown the imperial government to define fundamentally opposite social and economic development of the society with the abolition of private property for the benefit of production. In other words, the first years of the Soviet power were characterized by focused efforts on cardinal political, economic and sociocultural transformations of the society.

Far-reaching reforms in all social spheres happened under quite difficult conditions. The participation of the Russian Empire in the World War I that continued its activities despite weak positions after the defeat in the Russo-Japanese war, events of 1905, revolutionary movement, intensification of terrorism, etc. severely weakened the national economy. Hence, this reduced the level of material prosperity of the population, which at that time was already low, thus causing quite reasonable concerns in the society encouraging the revolutionary movement towards the overthrow of the imperial government.

Considering the post-revolutionary period, then we may say that the consequence of the Civil War in Dagestan that lasted up to March, 1921 was the destroyed economy, political, religious, ideological contradictions, which provoked social unrest. The analysis of historic facts of that period shows that the military operations caused a huge damage to industrial centers of Dagestan, which, in comparison with other Russian regions, demonstrated a certain progress though being poorly developed. In particular, Khasavyurt was completely destroyed, Derbent saw three-quarter losses, Kizlyar – half, Port-Petrovsk and Temir-Khan-Shura – one third. The situation was not better in such sectors of economy as, for example, the railroads, many vessels were flooded, the port was severely damaged.

The study of the condition in Dagestan in the 1920s allows drawing a conclusion on the existence of complex socioeconomic, political, religious, spiritual and moral problems in the region, which were caused by a few reasons: first, socioeconomic backwardness of Dagestan, lack of competent and educated domain, need to train the manpower able to build a new socialist society. Second, the economic paradigm of Dagestan was quite special since poorly developed industry, lack of technical staff able to develop the industrial sectors of economy, consequences of the World War I and Civil wars degraded the economy of Dagestan even more (Kakagasanov, 2010). Besides, the resistance of a certain part of the Dagestan population to the Soviet power due to religious reasons was generally negative to favorable development of the republic.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The protection of their homeland against extraneous interference has always been a sacred duty for the Muslims. The system of collectivization was unacceptable for highlanders since the inviolability of home was a matter of life and death for them, and the independence and sovereignty were a century-old habit. According to Russian scientists, nevertheless “at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the image of the Dagestan village is still defined by slightly modified collective farms of the Soviet period”, where Islamic institutes and practices play an important role. Today the development of the post-Soviet Dagestan village may be characterized by the preservation of the Soviet collective farms.

## **3. Research Questions**

Hence, the subject of the study is the analysis of national and religious features within the policy of collectivization in Dagestan.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze forms and methods of the collectivization policy nationwide, to consider the specifics of protest moods of the Dagestan population.

## **5. Research Methods**

Addressing the methodological basis of the study, the group of authors chose the method of structural-functional analysis, which major principles are objectivity and consistency in considering social phenomena and political problems. The general scientific methods allowed logically arranging the events and assess them within the studied period in the national region. The synchronous method made it possible to consider and analyze the activity of the Soviet power and thus caused social transformations. For example, since the end of the 1920s the policy of collective farms was implemented as a fierce resistance in national regions under religious slogans. The specificity of the research methods is in the relevance of this problem at the microlevel with further projection to modern reality, including the preservation of the principles of rural Jamaats in modern Dagestan aul that were so desperately opposed during the advent of the Soviet state.

## **6. Findings**

After the Civil war and establishment of the Soviet power the new soviet leadership faced a practical problem of power structures within the national outskirts of the former Russian Empire, a task to develop new forms of their relations with central authorities and ways to involve people into the Soviet construction.

The reconstruction of the economic sector and industrialization of the country were particularly urgent for the soviet leadership in the second half of the 1920s. However, practical implementation of political directives was connected with multiple difficulties, especially in Dagestan, where the industrial production was quite low (Osmanov, 2005). The purpose of such rapid industrialization was to strengthen the position of the country on the international arena and to supply industrial goods to the broad sections of the society. To find the means for planned

decisions it was necessary to withdraw them from agriculture, thereby predetermining the tasks of complete collectivization (Gutieva, 2010).

The collectivization of agriculture in the country according to the decision of the XV Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (December, 1927), which made it into the history of the Soviet state as the congress of collectivization of agriculture and preparation for socialism on all fronts, became the major event in the history of the country.

The policy of collectivization is based on the destruction of traditional tenor of life of the peasantry, taxation in the form of obligatory agricultural deliveries to the state. The bread got through confiscation was used for the needs of industrialization. According to confidential reports of the Joint State Political Directorate, by 1929 when the ration books were back in the country, the food situation was even worse than during the War Communism and the Civil war. The forced modernization implied the construction of the new economy at the expense of the most competitive Soviet “goods” – bread, cheap labor (forced labor camps), severe promotion and propaganda.

In order to solve the grain problem within the shortest time possible I.V. Stalin headed for mass collectivization of country farms and forced planting of collective farms in main grain areas (Kondrashin, 2008). The so-called “revolution from above” caused the resistance to the Soviet power among a significant part of the peasantry and other segments of the population (Kakagasanov, 2014). The proclamation of the policy of complete collectivization was critical for the republics of the North Caucasus where in the 1920-1930s the majority of the population was involved in agriculture. The initiated collective-farm construction was perceived extremely ambiguously by the highlanders. The economic set-up that has been developing in this region for centuries had to give way to new industrial relations with increased role of the state. The situation in Dagestan was not easy and at times even extremely difficult. The most widespread and the most effective method of active political resistance among aul residents during the considered period was the dissemination of various “anti-Soviet” information and propaganda including against agrarian policy (Gutieva, 2010). Women with slogans supporting clergy and rejecting collective farms took an active part in anti-collective-farm actions. Thus, in the Baba-yurt such demonstration broke down the meeting on collectivization (Sulaev, 2009). The mullah in auls agitated their fellows against agricultural deliveries to the Soviet state.

Before full establishment of the Soviet regime in 1920 the policy concerning the Muslims of the North Caucasus was characterized by the tolerant approach. Understanding the complexity of work in the national region, the new power tried to be loyal to Islamic religion and its believers. Considering that a 30-million Muslim population of the Republic still maintains the inviolability of numerous religious medieval prejudices of counterrevolutionary purposes, for the Bolsheviks it was critical to get rid of these prejudices through developed forms and methods (Emtyl, 2010). However, they had to “act carefully and demonstrate a maximum goodwill to Muslims, especially in Dagestan ...” (Khalidova, 2017, p. 225). Besides, the Soviet government understood that the authority of religious figures was untouchable in the public and was afraid of popular discontent.

As far back as in the mid-1920s it was clear that many promises of the Bolsheviks were declarative, and various “forced measures” aimed at collectivization, change of the education system, prosecution of clergy, believers, prohibition of Sharia trials, etc. caused a lot of discontent. All this resulted in a situation where mass political protests in the Caucasus did not end with the establishment of the Soviet power, but, on the contrary, took a different turn (Alieva, 2013).

The situation became worse as a result of forcible nationalization of private and mosque lands (mulk, waqf) within the antireligious policy. The Krestkoms (peasants' committees of public recourse) were established, where some waqfs were transferred. Consolidation of the Soviet power allowed the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to issue the resolution On Nationalization of Waqf Property on 23 January 1927, according to which all waqf property in possession, use and at disposal of various religious institutions in Dagestan (mosques, madrasahs, etc.) were declared the national wealth (Red Dagestan, 1927). In pursuance of this resolution 6,416 tithes of land, 101 tithes of gardens, over 2 thousand tithes of pastures and hayfields, over 8.5 thousand heads of heavy and small cattle, 42 mills, 103 houses, etc. were withdrawn from mosques (Osmanov, 1986). In October, 1927 only in the Buynaksk district the following was withdrawn: money – 5,485 rubles 47 kopeks, croplands – 870  $\frac{1}{4}$  tithes, wheat – 5,095 poods 33 feet, flour – 132 poods, corn – 2,780 poods 15 feet and barley – 80 poods, cattle – 22 heads, rams – 1,947 heads, oil – 11 poods, meat – 52 poods, two houses, 5 madrasahs, cotton sheeting – 20 arsheens, potatoes – 500 poods. The total amount made 30,197 rubles 73 kopeks (CSA RD). Having sold some of the received waqf property, the krestkom bought 5 tractors, 1 reaping machine, 1 mowing machine, 1 thresher, 2 corn threshers and 25 plows (CSA RD). However, there were cases when besides waqfs the members of the committee withdrew all values, even books and houseware from mosque communities (Karpov, 2017).

Such Soviet practices caused widespread anti-collective-farm protests, and in some areas were treated with fierce resistance.

Thus, in 1930 there was a revolt in Tsumadinsky district, which, according to authorities, was inspired by the sheikh Abdullah Magom Sultanov Ingishinsky from the Ingishi aul of Gumbetovsky district.

In Kurakhsky district the Soviet power was almost deposed, and the revolt covered Kurakhsky, Kasumkentsky and Tabasaransky areas. In this region the discontent with collectivization was multiplied by rough protests against the shutdown of mosques and repressions against clergy. In a political survey on the Kyurinsky district the Dagestan Joint State Political Directorate emphasized active protests of the kulaks, clergy and other anti-Soviet elements against various actions of party and the Soviet government, including against collective farms and transfer of waqf property to krestkoms. Thus, the construction of a collective-farm in the Ataga-Yarag village was encumbered by the propaganda of the kulak-clergy group consisting of Kadyr Gadzhieva – a kulak, Sadimkhan Umarov – a former mullah. On 26 April 1930 a rebel group of 100 people was organized in Kurakhsky district under the leadership of the sheikh Shtulsky and the sheikh Atarsky. In his letter to the head of the Dagestan office of the Joint State Political Directorate K.G. Mamedbekov the Sheikh Shtulsky put forward some claims, including the refusal from collectivization of their religion.

The anti-Soviet forces supported by clerical leaders also aggravated in the Avarian villages Harakhi and Orota of Khunzakhsky district.

The collectivization was followed by excesses on places. This, in turn, was used by kulak-mullah element in case of the influence operation to undermine the construction of a collective-farm. A number of anti-Soviet former officers, kulaks, mullahs in local land bodies and Soviet structures spread rumors that the cattle will be withdrawn and called for its slaughter. At the beginning of 1930s the militia evidenced and prosecuted 147 people for deliberate slaughter of livestock. Thus, if in 1930 there were 131 thousand sheep in Buynaksk district, then in two years it had only 44 thousand.

In 1934 the protests against the Soviet power became even more aggressive. As of August of that year there were 5 rebel groups ranging from 24 to 37 people. They acted in Derbentsky, Tabasaransky, Botlikhsky, Khasavyurtovsky, Kazbekovsky, Babayurtovsky, Kizlyarsky, Karanogaysky, Akushinsky, Khunzakhsky and Gumbetovsky districts. *The most active protests took place in Southern Dagestan and on the plane of the Northern Dagestan.*

The new revolt began in the Gunib aul in March, 1934. A famous aul known as the place of delivery of the imam Shamil to the Russian troops in 1859 became the revolt center for a few months. The participation of a large number of the mullahs in a revolt bringing religionism in their actions rather harmed than contributed to the success of the action. The revolt was headed by the authoritative person among highlanders of Dagestan regions – a 50-year-old Abu-Bekir. There were dozens of peasants, fugitives from collectivization from Ukraine, Kuban and Don among the rebels. In the Avarian and Ankdiysky districts the revolts were headed by Moustapha Khalilov that strongly relied on clergy not wishing to obey to the general plan. According to different estimates, the number of rebels varied from several thousands to twenty. Almost in half of the regions of Dagestan there were organized protests. The authorities managed to prevent them in the cities of the republic (six in total). Initially the rebels were locally successful in some areas, but after the arrival of the NKVD riot troops and change of the local leadership of the People's Commissariat (it was headed by an experienced security officer Aliyev, the Dargin by nationality, a very active and cruel man as remembered by contemporaries) the situation changed dramatically. The rebels were pushed high in the mountains; their groups were scattered. Finally, on 5 September 1935 after a monthly siege and 8-day sanguinary fights the Gunib aul was destroyed.

## 7. Conclusion

The collectivization policy took place along with antireligious campaign and was marked by violent planting of farms, confiscation of zakats and waqfs, shutdown and conversion of mosques. Often some issues were solved without considering the interests of peasants, but with the account of the class essence. This caused fierce resistance of the people. Strong positions of religion and Muslim clergy in the republic allowed organizing, heading peasant protests against collectivization and the Soviet power and managing them.

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