

Commission on Nomadic Peoples

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Newsletter of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples, Number 9, September 1981

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The Collectivization of Mongolia's Pastoral Production

by Daniel Rosenberg

The collectivization of pastoral production in one community of the Mongolian People's Republic from the 1920's through 1959 is the subject of this paper.¹ The development and implementation of a strategy (in national policies) to achieve collectivization is viewed in the following account as a series of adjustments to local responses and the resources available to the state. During the thirty-five year collectivization movement, the regime increasingly relied on the manipulation of interests to achieve desired behaviors. This strategic process continues two decades after the achievement of collectivization through a system of moral and material incentives which intricately links desired productive behaviors with positive sanctions (Rosenberg 1981).

The study of contemporary Inner Asian nomadic pastoralism is particularly relevant for those concerned with the situation of pastoral nomads in the modern world. As contemporary pastoral nomads experience pressures and opportunities resulting from a dramatically changing social and physical environment (due to such factors as drought, environmental depletion, tribal wars, incursion of government policies and authority, the introduction of new technology, reduction in available pasturage, and changing market accessibility), the study of cooperatives, collectives, state farms, and communes among Inner Asian pastoralists may lead to increased flexibility in the responses of peoples in other regions. The development of these new forms of social organization in Soviet Central Asia, the Mongolian People's Republic, and the People's Republic of China provide specialists with examples of planned change and alternative approaches to organizing production among pastoral nomads. Case studies of such pastoral communities exemplify how several nomadic societies relate to and integrate with newly encompassing political domains and national development programs, and cope with altered circumstances.

The case of the Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia) is of particular interest since the scale and resources of the state more clearly approximate the situation of the third world nations in which the remaining nomads live than is true of the Soviet and Chinese cases. The Mongolian collectives, called *negdels*,² are flexible enough to include or exclude some degree of land cultivation and are adaptable to variations in population, herd type and size, pasture, and forms of mixed economy. Moreover, whereas state farms³ rely on a high degree of centralized direction from the state - a condition that may not be viable or desirable in other nations in which nomads live - these production cooperatives do not. The collectivization of Mongolia's pastoral economy has played a central role in a national social transformation toward industrialism and socialism (providing most of the raw materials for industrial production and export, as well as supplying the bulk of the nation's diet), yet has retained a pastoral nomadic option for a major portion of the population.⁴

Historical Background: From Colony to People's Republic

As a result of Manchu domination since the 1680's, Outer Mongols were divided into social classes based on two structures, the Manchu-Chinese dominated colonial feudal⁵ system and Mongolian Lamaism. These two structures provided

an interwoven hierarchical network of class divisions, including several varieties of serfdom. This system continued through the fall of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1911 and a decade of Mongol autonomy (1911-21) during which various forces struggled for control in Outer Mongolia.

The feudal system was essentially in place when the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), a communist-inspired but not yet communist party, seized control of Mongolia in 1921. The feudal system installed by the Chinese had contributed to severe colonial exploitation resulting in depletion of livestock resources, but the feudal and Lamaist structures had also retained a significant quantity of livestock in the country due to their position in relation to Chinese authorities (especially their exemption from colonial taxation) and their ability to deal with skilled Chinese merchants and usurers. Consequently there was livestock capital within the nation to provide a basis for development under the new regime, even if that livestock was largely under feudal-Lamaist control.

The population was enormously influenced by Lamaism due to its privileged position under Chinese domination, and its control of education, religion, medicine, and resources (especially manpower and livestock). The monasteries were the only centers of rural Mongolian culture; they were the site not only of religious ceremonies but of most trade and information exchange. Lamaism was the primary institution through which resource redistribution among social classes occurred. Moreover, at the time of the revolution, about 40 percent of Mongolian males were lamas. Under these circumstances, Outer Mongolia became the second Marxist-Leninist oriented state - the Mongolian People's Republic.

After the revolution, the government pursued a number of strategies to curb the political and economic power of the feudal ruling class. These steps included prohibiting children from joining monasteries to train as lamas, providing educational alternatives to the monasteries, and cancelling debts owed to foreigners (a popular and critical action in a countryside virtually overrun with Chinese trade organizations). Property held by foreigners and the feudal-Lamaist structure was expropriated and redistributed (over a period of more than a decade) to poor herders and lamas choosing to leave the monasteries to become herders.

Collectivization in Ikh Tamir

For centuries, under colonial feudalism, autonomous feudalism, and socialism, Mongolian pastoral nomadism had been characterized by movement within fixed administrative areas. Located in the mountain-forest-steppe region of north central Mongolia, Ikh Tamir (meaning "Great Strength," the name of a local river), despite territorial adjustments over the years, has been a local administrative unit since well before Chinese political domination came to an end in 1911.

In 1923-24, a local administration was organized in Ikh Tamir consisting of elected representatives, the majority of whom were local herders (although some of those chosen had managed feudal property and were valued for their administrative experience). This administration had the power to control all land use in the unit, called a sum (translated here as "district"; it is roughly equivalent to the concept of a county in the United States). In 1923 the first MPRP cell was organized in Ikh Tamir, consisting of three lamas and nine poor herders (called arat, the term still applied to ordinary herders in contrast to wealthy herders, or more recently to other social groupings such as workers and intelligentsia). By mid-1926, there were thirteen party cells, united by a

party committee. They were the party and government's local allies. These party units discussed the activities of the local administrations, and exercised control over the activities of these formal political structures. The party cells uncovered and fought against counterrevolutionary activities and rumors that served to divide the people and turn them against the regime, an important function, because this area had a particularly strong counterrevolutionary movement based in the monasteries through the early 1930's. These local party units were therefore already exercising political power and carrying out pro-government political activities in the mid-1920's. Vigorous efforts were made to improve the educational standards of party members, and many voluntarily travelled considerable distances to reach army units where they joined study groups discussing Marxism-Leninism."

The concept of collectivization appeared as early as 1925 in the Party Program, a key document outlining concrete goals. At this time the MPRP viewed socialist development of agriculture under Mongolia's prevailing conditions as being possible only in stages, beginning with the support of simple forms of cooperatives.

In 1928, a power struggle within the MPRP was won by a group favoring immediate implementation of socialist development of the pastoral economy. The Seventh Party Congress emphasized the importance of organizing various kinds of labor associations. Two types of these associations were established in Ikh Tamir by mid-1929: (1) cooperative encampments for pastoral production, in which a number of households jointly managed aspects of their private livestock production; and (2) specialized associations, based on particular types of productive labor (such as caravan workers cooperating as a team and dividing their income). These labor associations were to be seeds of collectivization, giving people experience in collectivized labor and management. Although limited in scale and scope, they were successful for several reasons. First, these early associations were an extension of traditional forms of cooperation in encampments and among relatives. Second, they benefited from the newly released resources of expropriated feudal property, and from the organizational and moral support of the local party organization. Third, with the decline of the old order there was a need for alternative community institutions to replace those that had disappeared or were in decline. At the personal level, individuals were examining their options as they adapted to altered circumstances, and many were consequently prepared to consider variations on traditional productive strategies.

For the MPRP faction that now dominated the Central Committee, these labor associations were viewed as insufficient. Pro-Soviet in orientation, this faction was familiar to some degree with Soviet collectivization, and believed a positive outcome could be quickly achieved in Mongolia. A period later known as the "Left Deviation" began. It was influenced not only by the desire for social and economic progress, but by the fact that the rise of this faction in the party immediately followed and was partly a reaction to a "Right Deviation" that sought to slow or halt the processes the revolution had set in motion. Mass collectivization was viewed as a response to counterrevolutionary influences in the countryside.

The MPRP leadership did not, however, adequately consider the level of political consciousness among the arats, or the nation's social and economic condition. With the leadership overlooking these circumstances, mass collectivization was introduced throughout the nation. A large number of communes and cooperatives were organized from 1929-31. In Arkhangai Province, in which Ikh Tamir is situated, there were fewer than twenty labor associations (simple cooperatives) operating in 1929. By the end of 1930, however, sixty-three communes and twenty-five cooperatives had been established. One thoughtful informant reflecting on these years aptly described it as a period of "over-enthusiasm" on the part of the party.

During these years, the MPRP was slow to respond to the objections of the herders.⁶ People became increasingly angry and resentful of such policies as forcible inclusion in communes or cooperatives, collectivization of property, and persecution of lamas. These attitudes were reflected in labor performance. Nationally, during the years of the Left Deviation, cattle and horses declined by 18 percent each, sheep by 37 percent and goats by 24 percent, and the overall loss was between six and seven million head of livestock (Shirendev et al. 1976:272) from a national total of about 23 million (Central Statistical Board 1971:71). These losses were due to neglect and poor management, and the slaughter of animals to resist what many herders thought would be forced expropriation.

In Ikh Tamir, people were apathetic in carrying out assigned tasks. Labor organization was weak, and members usually did not carry out their share of the assigned labor, caring only for their private livestock. There was no plan with which to coordinate the collective activities. Commune members received equal produce and goods without regard to their individual contributions of labor. There were few capable leaders, and fewer still with any notion of socialist management principles. The chaos, and the lack of strong administration or control by the party, left the collectivized property vulnerable to corruption. Individuals moved into positions of authority and used their power to increase personal wealth at the expense of others. The corruption and incompetent administration resulted in payments too low to adequately reward members for their work.

The middle strata suffered more than the poor herders under the Left Deviation. These people were not feudal or capitalist exploiters, but generally were small traders or skilled herders who had built moderate-sized herds and managed them well. In Ikh Tamir there were no especially wealthy herders,⁷ and the difference in herd size between the middle strata and poor was not large. They were treated, however, as class enemies (in a manner akin to the treatment of kulaks, probably due in part to the Soviet experience) and were taxed punitively. Thus a group whose competence and experience were important resources for rural development was attacked for having demonstrated those very qualities. This period left an especially bitter mark on such men and their families, but some nevertheless went on to play important roles in community life and in the collectivization movement in the decades following the Left Deviation.

Forced collectivization was a disaster. The party and government lacked experience for this undertaking, had not prepared the people for a change of this magnitude, had not sought the voluntary participation of the herders, and tried to carry out the project on too large a scale with limited resources. In addition, this radical reorganization of socioeconomic life appeared to the herders to be against their interests. Many viewed the regime as confiscating their source of livelihood. Also, the rhetoric of "building socialism" was not a sufficient substitute for the reality of material incentives, which the collectives were unable to offer. Faced with imminent economic disaster and a hostile population (including instances of armed insurrection, one occurring in the immediate vicinity of Ikh Tamir⁸), the party had to admit failure, recognize its errors, and disband the communes and cooperatives in 1932.

The cooperative movement came to a standstill. No action was immediately taken to develop new initiatives for collectivization. The excesses of "over-enthusiastic" policies not only inflicted great damage on the economy, but caused the arats to reject the concept of collectivization. This period resulted in a serious setback to the development of forms of cooperative production among herders. The Left Deviation exemplifies a failure of force in socialist development.

Due to the mistakes of the Left Deviation, livestock production was low. Uncertainty regarding the future left people with less interest in increasing the size of their herds. In order to improve livestock production, the regime acted to increase incentives for productivity. This signals the adoption of a new strategy of appealing to the material interests of the herders to effectuate behavior. A number of such steps were taken by the end of 1932. A new tax law affecting livestock and grain production freed poor herders of tax obligations and provided tax relief for middle and upper strata households. Taxes of households preparing specified quantities of hay, and/or building winter livestock shelters were reduced by 10-25 percent in order to motivate herders to improve the condition of their livestock in winter. As a result of such legislation, household property differentials in the district were lessened. The number of poor households was reduced, and the middle strata households increased in number.⁹ Also, livestock production was recovering from the impact of the Left Deviation.

Another important factor influencing the recovery of the pastoral economy was that the MPRP eased fears of a renewal of forced collectivization. In mid-1932, the Central Committee adopted a resolution concerning "people's production cooperatives." Essentially, herders were invited to form cooperatives on a voluntary basis, and the resolution pledged the support of the Central Committee and the government to those cooperatives. The emphasis on voluntarism was very strong. This policy, in effect until collectivization was virtually complete twenty-seven years later, laid a basis for trust in the regime that was to become particularly important during the difficult years of the Second World War and the post-war era of rapid transition.

By the mid-1930's, the tasks facing the regime in Ikh Tamir, as elsewhere, were (1) to further voluntary collectivization; (2) to increase government income from the district to pay for national economic and social development (including industrialization, transportation, education, and medical services) and for defense in a period of border tensions culminating in World War II; and (3) to bring the lamas into the mainstream of social and productive activities of the new order. In Ikh Tamir in 1935, of a total male population of 1570, there were 322 lamas (twenty-one percent), or over forty percent of the adult male population which was about average for the nation. For each of these problems, the regime responded by developing strategies that emphasized providing incentives (supported by propaganda and persuasion) for behaviors that corresponded to the needs of the regime in carrying out its goals. The issue of least direct concern to this study, the inducement of lamas to leave the monasteries, will be discussed first, and the remainder of the paper will consider the first two problems.

In the mid-1930's, especially 1934, the battle against the Lamaist establishment intensified. Heavy taxes were placed on the lamas' income. New laws emphasized the distinction among lamas by strata: those perceived to be exploited, the lower-level lamas; those considered non-reactionary, the middle-level lamas; and the upper-level lamas, said to be reactionary. There was severe repression in this period carried out primarily against this latter group, partly in response to real and perceived internal security threats related to hostile Japanese political and military actions (including Japanese contacts with Mongols in the MPR, especially in the monasteries), and partly resulting from integration of Soviet-Mongol security forces at a time when both regimes felt threatened from without and within (Lattimore 1962:131-147).

A different approach was taken to each class of lamas. The vast majority were lower ranking lamas, and extensive propaganda was utilized to draw them from the monasteries into productive work. Government representatives went to the monasteries and held meetings, introducing them to the program and policies of the party and government, and to the concrete opportunities open to them. These opportunities for the lamas in Ikh Tamir included the chance to go to school, which had been one motivation for entering the monasteries in the first place. Lack of alternative economic opportunities were an even more important cause of the high percentage of lamas. In response, lamas who chose to become herders became entitled to a certain number of animals from the monastery herds, thereby acquiring the necessary capital for pastoralism.¹⁰ In addition a carpentry cooperative--an artel (the Russian word was adopted)--was set up at the site of the monastery, and included a carpentry school specifically designed to train former lamas in productive skills which were in demand. The establishment of the carpentry artel in Ikh Tamir, and similar artels throughout the nation, was particularly effective for several reasons. This kind of labor was more suitable for many single men (and lamas were at least nominally celibate) than a pastoral career in which the productive unit was the family. Also, some lamas had not acquired the necessary skills for pastoral production. For the party, the artels were advantageous as well. Former lamas were congregated where they could be more easily influenced by the "ideological workers" seeking to help them develop positive attitudes as they oriented themselves to new circumstances. In addition, the artels turned ex-lamas into semi-skilled and skilled laborers whose occupations were in strong demand. Carpenters, for example, were needed for the ambitious program of building livestock shelters, schools, and other structures. Herders, on the other hand, were typically not interested in non-pastoral careers. With the success of the first artel, a second was set up in Ikh Tamir manufacturing clothing, iron stoves, and other goods. As these opportunities increased, some herders joined the ex-lamas in the artels, and many of these artel members were to go on to the towns and cities to form the industrial labor force. These artels also provided a highly visible example of collective labor and its advantages, and of the alternatives open to the lamas still in the monasteries.

Increasingly, lamas realized they could best serve their interests by leaving the monasteries. Lamaist institutions were under severe pressures from the state, and Lamaism was rapidly losing its power and traditional influence in the community. The dominant ideology was rapidly transforming from a Lamaist to a Marxist-Leninist orientation. Under these circumstances, the material position of the lamas was also declining. In addition to steep taxation of their income, lamas were earning less as fewer people utilized their services (for example, people were increasingly turning to free modern health care rather than paying for Lamaist treatment, previously an important source of income for individual lamas). Moreover, in appealing to the lamas to leave the monastery in Ikh Tamir, the party workers skillfully stressed both the new economic opportunities and the social opportunities beyond celibacy. In this context, with greater opportunities existing outside Lamaism than within, lamas began streaming out of the monasteries.

Meanwhile, no effort toward collectivization of pastoral production occurred in Ikh Tamir for six years after the end of the Left Deviation. In 1938, seventeen heads of households in Ikh Tamir (with six party members among them) agreed to form a cooperative, one of the first in the province since 1932.¹¹ At their first meeting, they asked the district administration to allocate to the cooperative land they had chosen. They also agreed to build more livestock shelters, and decided on supplementary economic activities. The members resolved to send a representative to Ulan Bator, the capital, to help secure approval for the cooperative. The Arkhangai Provincial Party Committee sent along a letter of support stressing that the initiative for the cooperative had come from its members, not the party organization, and that membership was entirely voluntary, not coerced by party officials. That such a letter was thought necessary illustrates the depth of the scars of forced collectivization, as well as the control exercised by the regime to ensure that collectivization was a voluntary process

The representative met with many officials, including the nation's leader, Choibalsan, who praised their initiative and urged the cooperative's members to repeatedly explain the purpose of their actions to the arats. In addition to moral support, the regime gave the new cooperative a horse-drawn haymowing machine, a machine for separating cream from milk, and some money. The Central Committee also sent a delegate to the cooperative to investigate conditions and determine needs.

By October, 1939, the membership of the cooperative had grown to seventy (households), with its own party cell of twenty-four. In that year, three more cooperatives were organized in Ikh Tamir. Although only a small percentage of the members' livestock was cooperatively owned, this activity was evidence of progress in collectivization. The concept of collectivization was rekindled in the community, and the members were acquiring experience in cooperative productive activity. The overwhelming majority of the herders, however, remained outside and antagonistic to the cooperatives; many recall the predominant perspective of this period viewing these collectives as a temporary phenomena like the communes of the Left Deviation. The development of the cooperatives aroused hostile responses from the herders who associated them with the Left Deviation and viewed them as a threat to private ownership.

These cooperatives also experienced many difficulties in the early years due to their lack of expertise in cooperative management. The payment system, for example, was inefficient. Members worked at individual tasks and kept 70 percent of their earnings, giving 30 percent to the collective; if a group did the work, they divided up their 70 percent. This system did not adapt well to herding activities, and accurate record keeping was possible only when payments were made directly to the cooperative. Also, the main method of labor organization was the assignment of vague monthly tasks, but there was little supervision. Most of the collective work, at first, was in supplementary areas of the economy: timber cutting, hunting, hay harvesting, a small degree of land cultivation, and ox-cart construction; caravan transport also played an important role, and the four cooperatives in Ikh Tamir had a contract from the state trade organization for transporting raw materials to the Soviet border and Ulan Bator. The caravan men received 20 percent of the income from these activities (which took from forty to sixty days per trip) and the cooperative received the rest. In one of these cooperatives in 1941, this amounted to one-fourth the total income of the cooperative. The provincial administration gave some support to the cooperatives. In one instance they gave the Ikh Tamir cooperatives a plan for land cultivation to encourage this important activity, since fodder would increase livestock survival rates in the harsh winter conditions. The harvest, however, was a failure.

Despite such difficulties, cooperative labor activities were having some impact on people in the area. Cooperative members worked collectively and effectively at building livestock shelters. A government operated mechanized haymowing station in Ikh Tamir demonstrated the advantages of machinery and cooperative labor, and the hay station gave preferential treatment to the cooperatives in providing hay. People still remember how impressed they were by the huge piles of hay produced in this manner. Over 200 workers from the area were employed in this seasonal work, and an active political department at the hay station worked to develop political consciousness among the workers before they dispersed and returned to their normal pursuits.

In order to strengthen the cooperatives, the Central Committee made a number of decisions which indicate a consciously chosen strategy of manipulating the interests of the arats to encourage collectivization. Long-term loans were made available to the cooperatives at low interest rates, and agricultural machinery (especially horse-drawn haymowing machines) was made available for purchase, thus allowing the cooperatives to acquire a material base for increasing production. The loans were largely used to buy livestock, oxen (to increase caravan income), and the haymowing equipment. Most important, however, in terms of the sophisti-

cation of their approach, the government exempted collectivized animals from taxation. Consequently, in theory it became more profitable for the cooperatives to own untaxed animals and divide the increased profits among members than for individuals to own livestock and pay taxes on them (provided they were given the same level of care). This measure was designed to encourage collectivization of livestock, and also to increase herd size and cooperative income since the taxes would have been paid in meat and other livestock products.

At the same time the government was providing training for cooperative members. In 1939, for instance, a course was given to train bookkeepers, and standardized statistical record forms were introduced. Also in that year, members of Ikh Tamir cooperatives were sent to the Soviet Union to study collectivization of pastoral economies in Soviet Central Asia and to attend an agricultural exhibition.

In addition to these measures supporting the cooperatives, a new code for land utilization was adopted by the government in 1942. The cooperatives were to be allocated specific territories of their choice thereby allowing access to superior pasture, water sources, hay fields, and sites for land cultivation. Until this time, the cooperatives had faced problems in using the land they needed, since the land was public and private herders demonstrated hostility to the cooperatives by such actions as pasturing their animals on land set aside by cooperatives for hay fields, and driving the collectivized livestock from watering sites. Adding to this dilemma, local officials had been showing favoritism to private herders for reasons to be considered below. Under the new code, however, the cooperatives were to have preference in land use, a significant advantage for the struggling cooperatives, and a particularly visible one as well.

In fact, the code was not implemented at this time in Ikh Tamir (and according to interviews in other regions and discussions with Mongol scholars, this was true throughout the nation). Conflicting interests for both the national government and, more important, for local officials, resulted in lack of compliance. On the one hand, the government wanted to strengthen the cooperatives as part of its drive to develop a socialist economy. At the same time, however, the government needed income. World War II was in progress, Soviet aid was very limited, and Mongolia was at war with Japan. Funds were needed for defense and national development, and food required to feed the urban population, the army, and for export to the Soviet Union. Thus, local officials had rigorous plans to fulfill for increasing livestock production in order to generate taxes and provide livestock products for state purchase. The achievement of plan targets was the foremost responsibility of these local leaders¹² (and their superiors at the provincial and national level) and the primary basis on which their work was evaluated. Since the vast majority of animals still belonged to private herders,¹³ it was essential to keep private production as high as possible. Moreover, with the collectivized livestock exempt from taxation, private herds provided more than their proportional share of income from the district. Under these circumstances, collectivized animals were of little value to Ikh Tamir's local officials in reaching plan targets (which was at this time a more compelling and concrete goal than providing assistance to the cooperatives), and these leaders were reluctant to offend the private producers, on whose cooperation they had to rely, by implementing the land utilization code. Therefore, in practice, the leaders in the district favored the private herders, who were given access to the land they wanted. The cooperatives were kept from utilizing the most suitable hayfields and pasture, and cooperative members were called up for irksome forms of local short-term government service. The actions demoralized the members and discredited to some degree the image of the cooperatives in the district.

Organizational weaknesses plagued the negdels (collectives) in these early years. After the war, there were adjustments in labor organization and the payment system, reflecting these ongoing problems. Statistical control was tightened to reduce abuses, since the negdels were being cheated by both outsiders and members taking advantage of ineffective bookkeeping and leadership. Negdel members, for example, sought to fulfill plan targets for herd size with the counterproductive strategy of trading young female animals for adult males. In this setting, it was not difficult to make exchanges unfavorable to the negdels; members reportedly exchanged their private animals for negdel livestock and traded negdel animals to relatives and friends. Through this practice an individual could claim credit for increasing the herd under his control while in fact reducing the value of the collective's property.

In 1947, pastoral production of the Ikh Tamir collectives indicated serious signs of stress. Although environmental conditions were not adverse, three of the four cooperatives reported significant declines in herd size (ranging from 430-784). For one of the collectives, as an example, this represented a loss of 33 percent of its collectivized livestock in 1947. Only 110 young were born to 733 adult female animals expected to give birth - a strong indication of livestock mismanagement.

The Political Bureau of the MPRP discussed Ikh Tamir's situation, and concluded that the decline in livestock in the district was due to lack of leadership from party and state organizations. In particular, the "vanguard role" of the party members in the district, both negdel members and non-members, was judged to be weak. The first task of the party member is to set an example in one's own work. Yet, of the forty-nine party members in the district with private livestock, forty of them had a decrease in the number of animals from the previous year.

This situation in Ikh Tamir was noted in the general report of the Central Committee to the Eleventh Party Congress. This specific reference was a conspicuous signal to the party and administration of the district to improve their work. In early 1948, the provincial party organization took steps to end discrimination against the cooperatives by local officials. Those local leaders who had ignored government policy, such as the 1942 land utilization law, were criticized. The local administration consequently began implementing policies providing support for the collectives, and in 1948 all four negdels increased their herd size and made progress in all other indexes of pastoral production, thereby increasing the income of the negdels.

Thus the provisions of the land utilization code in particular gave significant impetus to the development of the negdels in Ikh Tamir. In addition, the tax structure in general, including state purchase obligations, was an important form of support for collectivization, as will be seen below. As the negdels of Ikh Tamir later gained strength, these policies were to prove a valuable investment resulting in higher income for the members and the state, despite the income lost to the state in this early period due to tax exemptions and other costs associated with these policies.

Beginning in 1950, the regime began to act decisively to strengthen the cooperatives, focusing on policies to increase membership and the quantity of collectivized livestock. A specific agency was created on the national and provincial level to oversee these communities. The most influential policy was the introduction of a new system of state purchase obligations for private

herders. Under the previous system, people had to sell a certain percentage of their livestock production to the government at the state purchase price. After selling the required amount at the lower state purchase price, they could sell their remaining products at the higher market price. Prior to 1950, the degree of state purchase obligations depended on the actual number of livestock. In 1950, however, the quantity of those obligations became based on the planned number of animals. The private herders had to pay for any difference in cash or produce. For example, if a household had 115 adult milk cows, and for the following year, according to a regional formula, it was to have raised that number to 130 (the planned number), it would be expected to sell animal products at the state purchase price based on the production of 130 cows. If, due to poor herd management, lack of manpower, or some other reason, the household only had 120 cows instead of 130, it had to pay the price differential for the products from the missing 10 cows.

Under these policies, private ownership of large herds became increasingly difficult. If livestock were not utilized efficiently, or if plans were not fulfilled, then there were the missing products to pay for. Moreover, there was a manpower shortage in Mongolia (a chronic problem), and since herders could move to cities or join negdels if they lacked sufficient livestock themselves, it was difficult to secure hired labor to help manage one's herd (cf. Lattimore 1980:123). Owning more animals than a household could efficiently exploit was proving economically debilitating, and many sought to sell the livestock they could not utilize effectively. Because there were rumors of mandatory livestock collectivization, however, potential buyers were reluctant to invest in animals. Also, the same circumstances causing people to sell livestock were causing others to be uninterested in purchasing them. The market for livestock rapidly contracted.

Unable to sell them, losing money by keeping them, private herders began giving excess livestock to the collectives. Some joined the negdels reasoning they could then share in the profits of the untaxed collectivized animals without the drawbacks of taxes and state purchase obligations characteristic of private ownership. Many joined with the mistaken notion that private animals of members would not be subject to taxes or state purchase obligations. The percentage of collectivized animals in Ikh Tamir, which had risen to 10 percent in 1947, was 23 percent in 1952.

The government also acted to strengthen the organization of the negdels. A national model constitution for negdels was developed, and adopted in Ikh Tamir in 1954.¹⁴ Permanent brigades replaced the loose organizational units in the cooperatives. Under the new brigade system, the negdel, rather than the households or encampments, controlled livestock management decisions such as pasture utilization. A new payment system was adopted which included registration of the quantity of work each member performed, thus implementing the socialist principle of receiving according to one's labor. In addition to this organizational assistance, in this year the debts of the negdels to the government were forgiven.

The negdels were becoming strong both organizationally and economically. Data from 1954 indicate that cooperative members increasingly carried out their share of the labor. In one of the Ikh Tamir negdels, 121 out of 122 members participated in negdel labor, and the majority worked at least the minimum days required. For each labor day worked, a member received three tugrik,¹⁵ 34 grams of red dried curd, 3 grams of white curd, and 34 grams of spirits distilled from milk.

There were still problems. People attempted to manipulate the changing aspects of the system for their own benefit. Petty corruption was common, and people gave their private animals more care than the collectivized livestock.

In 1955, many new regulations were developed to strengthen the cooperatives, and these were adopted by the negdels. Most important was a quota on the number of private animals allowed per household for collective members. Limiting the size of members' private herds was a step in mobilizing people to focus on collective property, and also effectively increased the number of collectivized livestock.

Delegates to a national meeting on collectivization returned to the collectives and a joint three-day meeting of all collective members in Ikh Tamir District was held. They concluded that the key to further development lay in enrolling all members equally in collective labor. For the first time, the trend among many members was to view their interests as lying primarily in the development of the negdel, not in their private herds. (Nevertheless, there was strong resistance to reducing private herd size to conform to the new quotas). The Ikh Tamir collectives voted for a greater number of minimum labor days than those in the new national model negdel constitution. They also voted to increase payments so there would be greater incentives for collective work.

After 1955, labor participation increased substantially. In one of the negdels in 1955, for example, 64 percent of its able-bodied members were enrolled in productive work, and 59 percent carried out the required minimum of labor days. In 1957, 88 percent were working, and 78 percent were carrying out the minimum standard. Members achieved impressive productive results, often competing against each other for higher productivity. Government prizes were awarded for many of these achievements, and the economic condition of the negdel improved. The negdels set up pension funds for old age and disability cases, which to a certain extent increased the prestige of the negdels.

By early 1957, 45.5 percent of all households in Ikh Tamir had joined collectives. Thirty-five percent of all livestock were collectivized. In 1958, this figure rose to 78.8 percent of the households and 55.6 percent of the livestock. The socialist sector was predominant.

As the negdel economy strengthened, the remaining hired laborers joined the collectives rather than work for the wealthy. The wealthier herders, mainly those still outside the negdels, were increasingly losing the ability to manage their herds as their employees left to join the negdels.

By this time, the four negdels had combined into two. During June and July 1958, 78 households joined the collectives, and most of them were wealthy herders. In November, of more than 50 members joining Geralt Zam collective in Ikh Tamir, the majority had over 200 head of livestock each at the time they joined.

In the summer of 1958, one of the Ikh Tamir negdels voted to again decrease the number of private animals allowed, thereby further identifying the interests of the herders with the collective economy rather than their private herds. The limit was ten bod or thirty animals per household.¹⁶

A law was passed in 1958 to provide incentives for collective labor. Those

who carried out the minimum number of labor days were relieved of 10 percent of the state purchase obligations on their private animals. In addition, if members achieved yields from negdel livestock higher than the plan targets, part of that surplus would be kept as a bonus.

New incentives followed. There was higher pay for working surplus labor days. Those who overfulfilled plans were awarded with a seven to twenty-one day leave at state rest homes and sanatoria at negdel expense (50-100 percent of the cost to be paid by the negdel depending on degree of overfulfillment). Socialist competition began to play an increasingly important role in the negdels. Competitions between and among herders, units of the cooperatives, and negdels took place for various prizes.

Economic power had swung to the negdels. Experiencing the difficulties of staying outside the collectives - taxes, state purchase obligations, lack of hay and fodder crops, lack of agricultural machinery, unavailability of wage labor, and insistent propaganda workers depicting the advantages of the negdels - and observing the growing prosperity and obvious permanence of the negdels, people began to flow into them. The collectivization movement was moving toward completion. By the end of March, 1959, 99.3 percent of all households in the nation were in negdels, as compared to 75 percent in late 1958. Several Ikh Tamir households did not join, and the last of these became members in 1970.

Since 1959, the methods of carefully rewarding people according to the quality of their labor have been considerably refined (Rosenberg 1981). People are paid according to a formula based on detailed aspects of their work. The system is now so complex that in 1974-75, all herders in the negdel were participating in a year-long course, meeting weekly in their encampments to learn all aspects of the payment and reward system. According to the local leaders, this complexity is needed because it is not enough for people to work hard; they must carry out their work in the most effective way. By linking rewards as directly as possible to specific economic behaviors, the regime attempts to establish adequate control over production in a nomadic pastoral society where direct supervision would not be practicable. Moral incentives, including competitions, mobilizations, medals, awards, prizes, and public recognition, are also a part of this socialist incentive system. These moral incentives are especially important in helping create and sustain an ethos in which status, prestige, and self-esteem are related to contributions to the productivity of the community.

Ikh Tamir is today a prosperous community of approximately 5,000 people, and its productive organization, Geralt Zam Negdel, is a well organized and successful enterprise offering its members a secure and comfortable standard of living. Although pastoralism is still the basis of the negdel economy, supplementary productive activities such as land cultivation, chicken and pig production, and a dairy factory also provide income to the negdel and its members.

Summary and Conclusions

This study of collectivization in Ikh Tamir seeks to illuminate the underlying process through which planned change succeeded in transforming a nomadic pastoral society from a feudal to a socialist mode of production ("by-passing capitalism," as it is termed in Mongolia). Having failed at a strategy of establishing socialist production relations by administrative fiat (the Left

Deviation), the Mongolian regime responded cautiously. Learning through experience, reacting to the responses of the arats to its policies, and drawing upon fluctuating political, social, and economic resources, the MPRP pursued its dual and sometimes conflicting goals of collectivizing pastoral production and avoiding political and economic setbacks. To achieve its goals, the regime pursued a twofold strategy: (1) policies supporting the cooperatives made membership increasingly advantageous; and concurrently (2) the viability of private livestock herding was gradually reduced. These policies are oriented toward manipulating interests to elicit desired behavior, a process that continues to be the basis for mobilizing the population to achieve the goals of the regime.

In examining the process of collectivization, as distinct from its achievement, a number of considerations arise. First, the development of an effective policy (manipulating interests) occurred after more coercive policies failed. The Mongolian nomads were able to resist forced collectivization in 1929-32 because of two related factors. First, the arats' livestock was essential to an economy based almost completely on pastoralism. Second, in a pastoral society, mass resistance in the form of livestock slaughter has a long-term impact on production (in contrast to the case of land cultivation, where the fields can still produce a harvest after a period of disruption). Thus the development of gradualist collectivization policies was partly a response to the herder's use of economic power to resist state coercion. Indeed, planned change in Mongolia since the Left Deviation has not been totally dictated from the top; national policies have continued to be influenced by local circumstances and responses.

The collectivization process has had several positive aspects. Collectivization occurred without widescale alienation of the pastoralists from the regime or its policies. As the regime regulated the sanctions associated with collectivization, household economic strategies changed in the pursuit of material gain. As negdel membership became a more attractive economic strategy, attitudes toward collectivization also changed. This attitudinal change resulted not only from personal and social adjustments to the changing economic order. The length of the collectivization process allowed for individual cognitive adjustments to the growing power of the state to implement its policies (although some of those who prospered under private ownership still resent the pressures that led them to collectivize). In addition, education, propaganda, and persuasion¹⁷ fostered attitudinal change. The relative lack of rancor in this process is an important element in the development of Mongolia's relaxed political atmosphere of the post-collectivization era, which is remarkably free of the forms of political hysteria (such as extreme ideological rigidity and "cults of personality") that have characterized many one-party states.

Another important result of this collectivization process in Ikh Tamir has been increased pastoral production. Collectivization provided the organizational basis for further development of the pastoral economy in the period since collectivization was essentially completed in 1959. Like most negdels, Ikh Tamir's has both fodder and food crops under cultivation. In the early 1970's, the negdel (on its own initiative) built a dairy factory and distillery, reducing household production responsibilities and increasing negdel income. Today's negdels are fully integrated with the national economy, reliably providing most of the nation's food as well as raw materials for industrial production and export (Rosenberg 1974;1975). The development of pastoral nomadic communities with socialist production relations in Mongolia has been essential

to the MPRP in achieving its goals, and to the nation in terms of economic and political survival in a territory encircled by the Soviet Union and China.

For the pastoral nomads in particular, collectivization has had positive outcomes: a high standard of living (for Asia), opportunities to retain a nomadic pastoral lifestyle or to enter another sector of production, extensive opportunities for post-secondary education, a remarkable system of human services and social security, assistance in meeting the vicissitudes of pastoral existence in extreme conditions, and relatively egalitarian socioeconomic relations. These outcomes were significantly enhanced by the process through which collectivization was achieved and progress continues.

Notes

Acknowledgements. This paper is based on field research in the Mongolian People's Republic carried out during 1972-1974. Research was supported by a joint program of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, and by a National Institute of General Medical Sciences grant administered by the Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Department of Anthropology, McGill University.

¹This study utilizes the following sources: (1) For national history, interviews with Mongolian scholars, herders, and local leaders, and Shirendev et al. (1976), Shirendev (1968), Lattimore (1962;1980), Vreeland (1954), Humphrey (1978) and Bawden (1968); and (2) for Ikh Tamir District, extensive interviews with residents and local leaders on their experiences during the collectivization period, and local records. Also, I am particularly indebted to a history of the community written by Dash (1970), which presents archival material and other data utilized in this paper, and to Menjuur, the community leader who arranged for Dash's study and furthered my research because he believed in the historical importance of collectivization (and because he thought our activities would help motivate the people of Ikh Tamir). I am solely responsible for the interpretation of these source materials.

²A negdel is a collective based primarily on pastoral production. Negdel literally means "unity." The term "cooperative" and "collective" are used distinctively; cooperatives tend to retain private ownership of most livestock but have collective management; in collectives, livestock is collectively owned and managed but a degree of private ownership is also permitted (Lattimore 1980: 123). In practice, the cooperatives were transformed into collectives gradually, and the terms are utilized in a general descriptive sense. "Communes" in principle are a more developed form of socialist productive organization characterized by collective ownership and emphasis on collective and moral incentives rather than individual material rewards based on labor performance; communes were introduced during the Left Deviation and then disbanded, as discussed in the text. All three forms of organization have memberships which share the profits from production.

³State farms are owned and controlled, and the herders on these farms are state employees, not members as in the case of the cooperatives, collectives, and communes.

⁴There have been few studies of these communities and their transformation. Lattimore (1962;1980) has sketched a seminal political history of collectivization. Humphrey (1978) discusses Mongolian nomadism under pre-revolutionary and contemporary regimes emphasizing the impact of collectivization on pastoralism.

⁵The term "feudal" is widely used by Mongol and Western scholars in describing this system, but the differences between European feudalism and this Asian variant raise questions regarding the applicability of the concept to Mongolian society (cf. Jagchid and Hyer 1979:263-264; Humphrey 1980:32; Krader 1979:230-231).

⁶There is some evidence that local authorities were responsible for at least some of the excesses, and that national authorities called for restraint, although inconsistently (cf., Lattimore 1980:119-120; Shirendev et al. 1976:252-261).

⁷This was also true of Arkhangai Province as a whole. In the eastern part of Mongolia, there were much greater differences in wealth at this time, according to two informants working for the party and government in this period.

⁸Although the insurrection is said to have been led by reactionary elements of the Lamaist leadership, it is likely that the majority of their followers were ordinary herders who had turned against the government because of the Left Deviation. Data on the size and composition of the counterrevolutionary force is sketchy. They killed some local leaders and were then captured by army units and executed.

⁹According to 1935-36 data, the majority of households in the district had 15-50 bod (one bod is equivalent to one head of cattle, or one horse, or one half a camel, or seven sheep, or fourteen goats). The number of households which had over 100 bod was not more than ten.

¹⁰It was also common for relatives to give them livestock.

¹¹All the members of the cooperative had 20-40 bod, except the man chosen to be animal husbandry manager, who had over 100 bod. He was the most skillful member in livestock management and trade, and it was not unusual for such people to have built up larger herds.

¹²From the perspective of the regime, plan fulfillment is the primary goal of all producers and leaders in socialist society. Plan fulfillment (and the system of incentives to which it is related) provided the main basis for the organization of production in these societies, and is a foremost concern of leaders at all levels. Negative aspects of this principle have been widely noted, such as an emphasis on quantity over quality in production, and a lack of flexibility in economic management, but it is difficult to imagine socialist production without plan targets.

¹³Most of the negdel (collective) members were poor, and as a result, only a small percentage of the district's livestock was collectivized. Out of 215 households in three of the four cooperatives in Ikh Tamir District in 1944 (there is a possibility this year is incorrect by one year), 75 percent had less than 30 bod, and most of those had 20 bod or less upon joining; only 6 percent had moderate livestock holdings (51 or more bod per household). Only 1 percent had between 71-100 bod, a very moderate level of wealth at a time when, in some parts of the country, individuals reportedly had as many as 10,000 animals.

¹⁴Such model constitutions are adopted at national meetings attended by delegates from all collectives; each negdel then meets to adopt a version of the document specifically adapted to local needs.

¹⁵For comparative purposes, the 1974 official rate of exchange was approximately three tugrik to the U.S. dollar. An exact equivalent is not possible when converting values between Mongolian and Western currencies.

¹⁶A formula limited the number of each type of animal, with ten bod or thirty animals as the maximum total. Today the figure is somewhat higher.

¹⁷Persuasion played a critical role. Data from interviews revealed that when preparing to accept the inevitable (e.g., leaving a monastery or joining a negdel), the process of persuasion functioned for many to help maintain their integrity. They acted primarily because of the political economic forces shaping the community, but from their perspective they succumbed to the persuasion of local leaders and party members stressing patriotic and communal sentiments, as well as practical concerns, in their appeals. People were far more likely to point to a conversation with a local leader as the pivotal point in their decision, rather than to the circumstances transforming their social world.

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