

Highland Rebels: The North Caucasus During the Stalinist Collectivization Campaign

Jeronim Perović


University of Zurich, Switzerland

Abstract

This article investigates one of the most tragic episodes of Soviet history: the collectivist campaign of 1929–33, when the Soviet state forced peasants in the poorest regions of the USSR to join state and government-run collective farms. Research has especially focused on the Russian-dominated parts of the North Caucasus, a region with complex rights where Soviet authorities were not very much, and the social relations of collective communities among themselves, the Red Army and the armed forces of the Soviet police crushed these collective resistance. In a Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and parts of Tatarstan, they were a most effective means for the Soviet leadership to decide to suppress their collectivist campaign altogether and the war 1933. This is the first study to analyse collectivization in the non-Russian parts of the North Caucasus based on material from Russian archives as well as published documents collected concerning Soviet secret police reports.

Keywords

Chechnya, collectivization, North Caucasus, Soviet Union, resistance, violence

In mid-November of 1929, the Bolshevik leadership approved the program of ‘total collectivization’ (*sploshchnaia kollektivizatsia*). This marked the beginning of the state’s frontal assault on the agrarian economic system and way of life across the entire country. The village in its traditional form was to be abolished. The village assemblies with their councils of elders were banned. Peasants were to become proletarians, to be drafted en masse for work in the kolkhoz, the collective farm. 

Corresponding author:

Jeronim Perović, Department of History, University of Zurich, Postfach 8006 Zurich, Switzerland

Email: perovic@history.uzh.ch