

Land Reform and the Social Origins of Private Farmers in Russia and Ukraine

JESSICA ALLINA-PISANO

This article examines land privatization in two administrative regions of Russia and Ukraine. In both regions, members of two distinct social groups were the beneficiaries of land distribution for private commercial cultivation: rural elites, and people on the margins of rural society. This double-ended distribution led to the recapitulation of Soviet forms of production. Traditional analysis of agrarian economies emphasizes actual productive capacities, while literature on property rights centres on the presumed legal categories of production. This article integrates these two theoretical concerns to understand how private property regimes affected cultivation practices and thus, participation in markets.

INTRODUCTION

For several years after the fall of the Soviet Union, scholarly research on agrarian reform in Russia and other former Soviet states focused on the development of the private farming sector. The scale and success of the private farming movement did not match the attention it received from either foreign observers or, initially, the governments of the states in which these policies were implemented.¹ Reformers envisioned private farming as a programme that would create a rural class of independent producers who would act as a political buffer in the conservative countryside. Villagers initially expected a ‘black repartition’ that would include a broad swath of rural society. This Jeffersonian dream of a country of yeoman farmers generally was not supported by the local state officials charged with bringing it to fruition, and the new class of market-minded, efficient peasant producers

Jessica Allina-Pisano is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Colgate University, 13 Oak Drive, Hamilton, NY 13346-1398, USA. The author thanks David R. Cameron, Timothy J. Colton, Pauline Jones Luong, Alexandr Nikulin, James C. Scott, Tom Brass and Stephen Wegren for their thoughtful comments. The author gratefully acknowledges research support provided by the Social Sciences Research Council, the International Research and Exchanges Board, and the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. Responsibility for the views expressed herein remains the author’s.

that would provide food for the cities did not emerge the way reformers hoped it would.

By the end of the 1990s, private farmers still comprised a very small group of rural producers, and people who participated in this form of land distribution represented less than one per cent of the rural population. Private farmers in both Russia and Ukraine occupied less than ten per cent of agricultural land during the 1990s [*Ukraina u tsyfrakh*, 2002: 104, 118; *Sel'skokhoziaistvennaia deiatel'nost' khoziaistv naseleniia v Rossii*, 2003: 12]. According to official national figures, in 1994 – by which time most of the private farms that would survive into the next decade had already been established – private farmers provided only a two per cent share of total agricultural production in Russia while they sowed six per cent of cultivated land [*Sel'skoe khoziaistvo Rossii*, 1995: 47, 52].² In Ukraine during the same year, private farmers produced only one-third of one per cent of the value of gross agricultural output in the country.³

In post-Soviet rural Russia and Ukraine, people who wished to exit collective farms and establish their own farms faced a variety of substantial social, material and institutional constraints. Those constraints were largely local and included the resistance of collective farm managers, who often opposed private farming on the grounds that land redistribution disrupted the cultivation cycle and negatively affected land–labour ratios.⁴ Private farming required a level of risk that most rural people were unwilling to accept – not because they were themselves risk-averse, but because it would have been plainly irrational to invite the uncertainties of private commercial cultivation.⁵ Private farmers in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine faced a host of problems that complicated the always precarious enterprise of living off the land: the need to rely on inefficient commodity credits due to a lack of appropriate cash credits; ostracization and exclusion from local networks of exchange; harassment by local state officials; denial of physical access to their land; expensive agricultural machinery; and underdeveloped market infrastructure. A high level of economic risk often meant that individuals' ability or desire to work outside of collective cultivation was not the limiting factor in land distribution for private farms.

Despite the substantial disincentives for engaging in private farming, the conventional wisdom in the policy community at the time was that personal initiative and an affinity or 'mindset' for market processes explained who left collective farms to become private farmers and who did not. A 1998 World Bank report on private farming in Ukraine offered the following assessment:

Private farms established by individuals and families outside large farm enterprises report encouraging economic results. Yet at the present stage exit from former collective structures and transition to

independent private farming appear to be an option only for the bravest. The majority of the rural population prefer the safety umbrella of former collectives, but for these families salaries already account for a smaller share of family income than household plot production [*Lerman and Csaki*, 1998: ix].

Such commentary exemplifies two fallacies in the policy literature on land reform in the former Soviet Union: that exit from collective farms is largely a matter of courage, a marketizer mindset, and acceptance of risk; and that salaries are an accurate measure of the worth of participation in collective forms of cultivation.⁶ This article addresses the first of these misrepresentations, contravening the claim that private farming was an option ‘only for the bravest’.

This article refocuses the debate about social transformation under market reforms away from assumptions about individual initiative and towards analysis of the role of Soviet state legacies.

It explains how and why certain people did manage to become private farmers amidst a broader rural population that either did not wish or was not able to join the ranks of agricultural entrepreneurs. In the 1990s, social capital and informal ties that provided access to production factors seemed to determine who would become an agricultural entrepreneur in Russia and Ukraine. However, observers of land reform often mistook social standing established under Soviet rule for entrepreneurial personality characteristics. The ‘lazy peasants’ hypothesis implied in the World Bank report placed the onus for the apparent failure of reform policy on cultivators, despite the manifest institutional, material and social reasons why the great majority of rural people did not choose to leave agricultural collectives to strike out on their own.

The ‘partial reform equilibrium’ hypothesis developed in the literature on industrial privatization in post-socialist states gives us slightly more purchase on land reform outcomes. This explanation holds that elite early marketizers benefit from redistribution and then thwart the progress of further reform [*Hellman*, 1998]. This model persuasively explains the politics of industrial privatization in former Soviet states; it partially explains land distribution for private commercial farms. In the privatization of agricultural factor endowments, the upper end of the distribution – privatization to elites – roughly matches the partial reform equilibrium model. However, an additional social stratum participated in land reform in Russia and Ukraine: land was allotted not only to elites, but also to people on the margins of rural society.

Paradoxically, an ordinary level of embeddedness in social and state networks was least likely to result in receipt of land or even an attempt to obtain land for private farming. Here, it is not elite behaviour as such that

explains distributive outcomes, but the degree of individuals' access to local state and social networks. People who possessed either a great deal of or very little social capital succeeded in receiving allotments. In the parts of Russia and Ukraine under consideration in this article, those who could afford to risk alienation from informal systems of mutual assistance were not the 'bravest' but those who already lived apart from others, either by virtue of their high social status as local officials, farm administrators, or skilled specialists or because they lived as outsiders in some other way. This second group included ethnic minorities and immigrants from other former Soviet republics; transplanted urbanites; single, middle-aged women; and people in low-status positions on collectives. Thus, private farmers generally belonged to two distinct social categories: rural elites, who were usually male; and people on the margins of rural society, without strong ties to local government. The former category lived above networks of social and economic interdependence, the latter already were outside of them. In other words, private farming was possible for those in rural society with the least to lose.

METHODS

This article departs from many studies of post-socialist rural political economy in its epistemological approach. It focuses on mechanisms of transformation as they occurred, rather than relying on retrospective inferences about the incentive structures present in policy implementation.⁷ That is, I examine the process of reform implementation at the local level in order to identify the causal mechanisms that explain how and to whom land was distributed.⁸ The individual cases highlighted here reflect broader trends in the process of land privatization in the regions under consideration.

This study examines land privatization in two administrative regions of Russia and Ukraine: Voronezhskaia and Kharkivs'ka regions, hereafter referred to as Voronezh and Kharkiv (see map). The two regions are part of a fertile expanse known as the black earth region, which stretches from south-western Russia into central Ukraine. Despite the presence of a national border, and despite important differences in institutional change on either side of that border during the post-Soviet era, patterns of rural privatization in the two regions bear a strong resemblance to one another. Virtually identical informal mechanisms governing land distribution operated in Voronezh and Kharkiv; as such, they provide a window into some of the characteristic features of rural privatization in black earth regions and are suggestive of the importance of Soviet social legacies in reform processes.⁹

Additional research will be required to determine with any certainty whether the findings of this study apply to other regions of Russia and



Ukraine. However, the social structures, political obstacles, and economic realities that explain patterns of land distribution to private farmers in these regions may be found throughout the two states. We may have reason to believe that the processes of exclusion and inclusion that characterized agrarian reform in Voronezh and Kharkiv were in some way manifest in other areas of the Russian Federation and Ukraine as well.

The set of land transactions at the centre of this analysis took place at various points during the 1990s. Although particular years in the first post-Soviet decade were characterized by relatively more or less fluidity in land transfers, the socially bifurcated character of distributional patterns persisted throughout the decade. People excluded from ordinary networks of social and economic interdependence turned to small, private farm holdings for survival; elites who saw an opportunity for viable commercial production likewise aspired to create private farms and sought to acquire the land necessary to do so.¹⁰

LAND DISTRIBUTION TO THE RURAL ELITE

Members of the rural elite who became private farmers generally included men who belonged to one of four professional categories: directors of agricultural collectives; men who held high or prestigious positions within collectives; state officials at the village council, district or regional level; and

retired army and security services officers, often with peasant origins. These individuals were well positioned to take advantage of redistribution.¹¹ In the face of sometimes enormous constraints in obtaining land [*Allina-Pisano*, 2003], these individuals wielded the influence necessary to secure land and had access to the material resources crucial for succeeding financially. Their landholdings were large, and they generally did not establish private farms using shares from collective farms.¹² Instead, they received tracts of scores of hectares from district land redistribution funds – sometimes in gross violation of national or district limits on the size of allotments.¹³ The two largest holdings in Semiluki district of Voronezh region were cases in point. Both were headed by former directors of collective farms, and both encompassed more than 1,200 hectares each – well above the district norm for land distribution to private farmers.¹⁴

It is impossible to say exactly how many farmers received land through connections or social status established during the Soviet era, or to know with any certainty whether this was a more widespread phenomenon in Voronezh or in Kharkiv. Such certainty would require extensive network tracing and knowledge of the personal connections of thousands of people. However, it is possible to point to many specific examples of provincial elites with access to land for private farming as well as to acknowledgement of the scale of such a phenomenon by state officials, private farmers and members of collective agricultural enterprises. What I wish to emphasize here is not the fact of iterations of elites receiving land but how and why they managed to navigate the land allotment process successfully. In certain instances, access to state networks influenced distribution in a way that was directly observable at the time.

Distribution of land to the elite and well connected was not a new or unique phenomenon: it was an extension of methods of distribution that had governed Soviet society, and which in turn had roots in pre-revolutionary Russia.¹⁵ The unwritten rules that governed allocation and receipt of scarce goods in Soviet society also helped determine who could obtain land for farming.¹⁶ In the implementation of land reform, informal procedures that had created and sustained social stratification in the Soviet Union provided an alternative to the formal procedures whose efficiency had been hampered by the absence of the appropriate material infrastructure, institutional capacity and material incentives.

Farmers who were members of more than one regional elite – for example, high-ranking former members of collectives who also participated in local government – had special access to land allotments. One of the most successful private farmers in Kharkiv exemplified such a category. In contrast to many others in his situation, this farmer recognized the privilege of his situation and was willing to articulate openly the connection between his

social status and his success in obtaining land. Despite his elevated social position, the process of acquiring land was not unproblematic.¹⁷ When this farmer first started his enterprise in 1991, his land was allotted in seven or eight different plots, all in different locations.¹⁸ His initial attempts to obtain the land were thwarted by changes in the leadership of the collective farm on whose territory the land was located.¹⁹ When, at the end of the decade, he took over the land shares of two collectives, local officials were reluctant to approve his request: according to a regional state official, 'They gave him their word, but processing of the documents was impeded at the local level.' The head of the district administration, however, stood by this farmer and would 'apply pressure where necessary'.²⁰

This farmer's difficulties were resolved through his status and access to bureaucratic processes at the local and district level. As a member of a local governing body in charge of allocating land, he was able to address some of the problems associated with land allotments himself: 'I assigned 200 hectares of land to the reserve – already, so to speak, for myself. Therefore, in contrast to other farmers, I find myself in an advantageous position in that I did that for myself . . . if I were, for example, a simple worker, then it would be impossible.'²¹ That this farmer – who in addition to holding important positions in the district also kept several local processing plants in business by regularly providing raw materials²² – should have encountered obstacles each time he attempted to expand his holdings suggests that the process would have posed even greater obstacles to ordinary people hoping to become farmers: 'I'm not exactly the lowest man on the totem pole in the village or in the district, and even I can't [obtain land]. So a rank-and-file person, a regular person who has the desire and even an idea [of how this all works] will never break through.'²³ It is possible, of course, to imagine a scenario in which it was precisely this individual's existing power that moved local officials to curb his business venture; however, resistance to distribution of land to private farmers was widespread and affected people in both high and middle portions of society. Status and connections acted not as hindrances, but as necessary capital that could be traded for bureaucrats' adherence to lawful procedure in the privatization of land.

Farmers who had preserved state connections established during the Soviet period ultimately were more successful in obtaining land than those without such ties, but even they experienced difficulty convincing local officials to allot land. One of the prominent farmers in Kharkiv district is a former KGB lieutenant-colonel. His experience likewise suggests that even the most influential individuals in the state apparatus sometimes encountered resistance from powerful local interests. This farmer had worked as a specialist in agricultural machinery in Cuba as well as at home before joining the security services. The combination of his elevated status,

specialized knowledge and deep family roots in the district helped him to overcome a variety of obstacles to receiving land. The land that he requested had been cultivated by his grandparents before the collectivization drives of the 1920s and 1930s; he was born and raised on it. He wished to live out his retirement on that parcel, and early in the 1990s he requested 50 hectares on that spot.²⁴

The area was at the juncture of three collectives' territory; allotting land for a private farm at the edge of one of the collectives did not pose any practical problems for the collective farm leadership. The collective from which his land eventually was allotted nevertheless found ways to resist. At first, its director demanded 200 head of cattle from the district administration in exchange for the alienation of collective land. Then, he requested that the allotment be further delayed owing to the collective's financial instability. This farmer was a close acquaintance of one of the members of the district land committee, and the farmer's position in the district likely made the other members of the committee amenable to his requests as well.²⁵ In the end, the district administration compelled the director of the collective to allow the land allotment. If the administration had not played an active role, requiring the director of the collective to step into line with the law, it is likely that the land never would have been allotted for a private farm.²⁶

Other individuals who established private farms were not themselves exceptionally powerful, but they gained the assistance of well-placed individuals in order to obtain land. A farmer in Kharkiv district provides an illustration of this point.²⁷ This farmer had worked as an agronomist on collective and state farms in various regions for 20 years before starting his own agricultural enterprise. When he left his collective in 1993 to begin farming independently, he had been the collective's deputy director. He held a high-ranking position, but he had neither deep roots in the area nor the attendant personal connections that would have smoothed the process of obtaining land.

This farmer's greatest obstacle was obtaining the various signatures necessary to complete the process of documentation: 'they – the conservatives – just sat there, they didn't sign anything'. Individuals seeking to establish a private commercial agricultural enterprise were required to gather signatures from no fewer than ten different offices (the fire commissioner, the land tenure office, the local council, the health and sanitation department, etc.). In Kharkiv district, as in many others, these offices were far apart and required extensive travel. This farmer frequently would travel as many as 50 kilometres to find that the person whose signature was required was not at his or her desk. He was met with absence and 'more important concerns' on the part of officials, not outright refusal. What saved this farmer from permanent delays and entanglement in red tape was his membership in the Green Party of Ukraine. After two years of making the

rounds to state offices, he received land after a Green Party deputy of the Ukrainian parliament stepped in and assisted him by making a few telephone calls to the regional state administration.²⁸

Elite status could mean access not only to land, but also to the infrastructure necessary to run a commercial farm. For example, the head of the district association of private farmers in a southern district of Kharkiv – far from the provincial capital but near the coal basin cities of Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk – is the son of a former director of a *kolkhoz*, or collective farm, in the district. When his father was head of the collective farm, he had a good asphalt road built around the entire farm, which the son now uses. The private farm is three kilometres from a stop on the suburban train. At harvest time, as many as 140 people come to work.²⁹ An auspicious location and transportation infrastructure make both pre- and post-production activity (cultivation and marketing) possible – luxuries most private farmers in the area do not enjoy.

Some members of the rural elite possessed resources they could devote to private farming: financial capital to invest in machinery and social capital to guide business transactions. Others had no intention of running a commercial agricultural enterprise but were able to receive land because of the power they were able to command.³⁰ Conflict arose between those seeking to establish private farms and other, more powerful individuals who wanted to use land for some other purpose – or simply did not want the land used by anyone else.

The first pair of private farmers in Liski district of Voronezh encountered just such a situation. In a letter of complaint they wrote to the district paper, they described what they regarded as the confiscation of the land allotted for their farm. Food scarcity and inflation had prompted the two to organize a peasant farm. They requested land on the banks of the Don that could be used for fish farming. The land was at the time part of a state farm, and its director refused to enter into negotiations with the would-be private farmers. Because the land in question had not been ploughed for ten years, the law allowed the district administration to make the allotment without the consent of the current holder. The two completed all the necessary paperwork and prepared to cultivate the fields. The director of the state farm told them to get off ‘his’ land, and suddenly the two would-be farmers were inundated by ‘visits’ from the local police, fish inspectorate and hunting society. People who were ‘clearly not local’ began to approach them, warning them that high-ranking individuals who ‘didn’t need witnesses’ used the area for relaxation. There was soon a suit filed against them by the district prosecutor and by the director of the state farm, who intended to sue them for ruining the land.³¹

Press coverage sometimes hinted at the Soviet-era credentials of private farmers. These credentials assisted farmers in gaining the support of local

authorities. A successful farmer in Liski district of Voronezh, who grows and processes buckwheat and keeps bees (which pollinate the buckwheat and produce honey from it)³² was the subject of a pair of articles in the local press in 1996. One reporter emphasized Titov's industry and recognition by the earlier regime: 'Vladimir Kuz'mich Titov is the pride of his family. Khrushchev himself came to see him [when he worked at] the poultry plant. V.K. has been to various sorts of conferences and has medals.'³³ Titov had strong party ties – his father became a party member and activist after Titov's grandfather was dekulakized.³⁴ His background, savvy and sensible production model meant a comparatively friendly relationship with the district state administration. When I visited him in 2000, he continued to receive financial subsidies and other limited assistance from state institutions – a benefit unimaginable to most private farmers.³⁵

Elite farmers, especially members of village councils and other organs of local government, sometimes could command the power of the local press to support their endeavours – or at least could prevent the press from undermining them. Press outlets complimented these farmers not for their independence or marketizing activity, but rather for their ability to function efficiently within a Soviet framework for agricultural production. In 1992, the deputy head of the executive committee of a peri-urban settlement in Kharkiv region obtained 50 hectares from Chapaev state farm.³⁶ He was lauded in the district press as one of the few farmers in the district who did 'not badly execute state orders for the sale of grain'.³⁷ When he ran for public office in 1994, the district press described him as the 'chairman' of a private farm.³⁸ Ordinarily, private farms were led by 'heads'; collective farms had chairmen.

Because of the constraints on land distribution, many would-be farmers turned to personal and professional connections – most of which had been established during the Soviet period – in their efforts to obtain land. The following statement of a farmer in Kharkiv illustrates the way this process could work. She and her husband applied for land twice in two different districts: once to start their farm, and once to expand their holdings:

First I went to a member of the regional council, who said 'we'll help you once you tell me where you've been refused land.' My husband and I tried all the district offices, but of course we were refused everywhere. I went back to see that member of the regional council, but he was on vacation. His deputy was there, and an interesting conversation ensued: he took me for a friend of the council member, you understand? He called the village council and solved the problem. But then the village council expected to receive a bribe from us. You know how it is.

...

We had an acquaintance, a journalist, who had a dacha near ours. She was the one who had pushed us to consider private farming. That was in 1993. She said she would help us. She had a very good relationship with the head of the regional administration. She called the head of the regional council, the head of the regional council called the district land tenure office, and the land tenure person immediately came to find us. He solved the problem on the spot. Just like that. Otherwise that would have been practically impossible.

...

If you spend time with private farmers, you'll find that it's practically impossible to obtain land through normal channels. Many people ask me how I did it without paying a cent. I didn't pay off anyone. The first time it happened by chance that the vice-deputy thought we were a friend of his boss and called the village council for us. The second time, our high-level acquaintance gave the order from above.³⁹

The exercise of power this farmer describes does not suggest land was privatized through illegal or extraordinary means. In most instances, legislation was followed correctly; the discretion granted to village councils and district state administrations meant that the letter of the law could be applied selectively. There were always legitimate reasons that could be found to refuse land: land scarcity; a lack of knowledge, seriousness, or capital on the part of the farmer; and that the farmer's paperwork was somehow not in order. The ambivalent posture of state officials with respect to land distribution led to an unpredictable – if technically legal – process. Only those who could muster sufficient power to mobilize local bureaucracies in their favour were able to participate successfully in the process.

The use of connections was largely a hidden phenomenon. The formal documentation that accompanied the process of distributing land to private farmers usually does not directly reveal the social origins of those farmers. One of most comprehensive types of documentation of land transfers are district-level farm registration records. These records include the names of the individuals to whom land has been allotted, their ages, gender, education, and basic information about the use of the land: how much was allotted and the acreage of each crop planned. Even these records, however, do not show the names of many of the rural elite who became private farmers. Discovery of the linkages between prominent rural families and land distribution requires extensive local knowledge – one reason why professional observers

of land reform in Russia and Ukraine could mistake status for bravery and industriousness, and why in this particular policy environment, examination of only formal outcomes or of only one type of evidence can result in misleading conclusions.

It was a common practice for directors of collectives and state officials to have their wives – who usually held less prestigious professional positions – register as owners of private farmland.⁴⁰ For example, the wife of a former head of the division of agricultural management for a large grain-producing region neighbouring Kharkiv⁴¹ registered as a private farmer in Kharkiv district.⁴² The Kharkiv district paper, publishing the names of people to whom land had been allotted for this purpose, reported her identity simply as ‘a female worker on Chapaev state farm’.⁴³ That she had received the largest allowable tract of agricultural land – 50 hectares – would have suggested to local readers that she was no ordinary applicant for land.

How widespread was this practice? The exact proportion of private farmers who obtained their land through connections or because of their status is difficult, if not impossible, to determine on a regional or national level. However, the phenomenon was sufficiently widespread to be an open secret in provincial communities. An excerpt from a newspaper editor’s interview with the chief economist of a district division of agricultural management in Kharkiv in 1994 offers implicit acknowledgement of the *modus operandi* for distributing land:

Editor: A delicate question for you, Volodymyr Hryhorovych. Among our farmers one glimpses last names renowned in our district: Abramenko, Kravtsov, Fedotova . . .

V.H.: Yes. Familiar last names. Kravtsov is the former director of the Kalinin state farm, and Tetiana Abramenko and Hanna Fedotova are the wives of current directors of state farms. But this is a normal phenomenon. Ukrainian legislation does not prohibit anyone from becoming a farmer.⁴⁴

As this district official acknowledged, the transfer of land to the relatives of powerful people was not unusual. What was uncommon was the open admission by a state official that insiders were the beneficiaries of land distribution.

Rural elites were not only the husbands and wives of heads of collective farms and top district or regional state officials. They also included the lieges of much smaller kingdoms. One of the first private farmers in Liski district of Voronezh belonged to such a category. A reporter visiting the home of this farming family in 1991 first encountered an older woman’s description of her

son and daughter-in-law, who had begun a private farm two years earlier as part of a leasing brigade: 'Viktor wasn't the last worker in the collective farm, and no one would say a bad word about Galia – she worked in a store.'⁴⁵ At first glance, such a statement may seem an innocuous – and not very meaningful – compliment offered by a mother about her son of whom she is proud. But the statement is telling of the couple's position in the community. To work in a store at the end of the 1980s meant not only status within village society, but also substantial power at the local level. Employees of stores had control over distribution of scarce consumer goods. No one said a bad word about Galia not because she occupied a high position, but because wind of an insult could deny the speaker sausage for as long as Galia saw fit to 'run out' when the speaker got to the front of the line. Such minor positions of power became significant when it came to doing favours, like putting paperwork through for a land allotment for private farming.

LAND DISTRIBUTIONS TO THE MARGINS OF RURAL SOCIETY

Members of the rural elite made up one category of individuals who were able to form private farms; the second category was composed of people on the margins of rural society. If elites were granted land because they could not be refused, this second group of people generally were allotted land because of their persistence and the fact that owing to their outsider status, they were not considered to pose a serious threat of competition to collective forms of production. These farmers were ethnic minorities, newly arrived from other former Soviet republics; they were women, usually single, middle-aged and socially marginalized; and they were city people who moved to the countryside seeking a way to make a living off the soil.⁴⁶

State officials at the district level treated people on the margins of rural society differently in their attempts to obtain land from the way in which they treated rural elites. Farmers on the margins were more likely to be subject to difficult treatment, including intrusive queries about how they intended to manage their land and their finances. The state institutions charged with distributing land also were responsible for overseeing land use and management – in other words, for controlling its use. Because of their multiple mandates, state officials were protective of land when they could afford to be. Officials demanded higher standards from farmers on the social margins, who were more likely to be engaged in expanded household production than in strictly commercial activities. Interactions with state officials were likely to include humiliation and criticism followed by refusals of farmers' requests.

One such farmer attempted in 2000 to obtain pasture for her livestock from a district administration in Kharkiv. She and her husband had obtained land in

Kharkiv district and were seeking to trade it for ten hectares of pasture in a neighbouring district adjacent to her farm. When she arrived at the district administration land tenure office, a high-ranking official immediately attacked her intentions and credentials: ‘What do you think this is, a bazaar? Like an apartment – here you are, here are the keys, go ahead ...?’ A representative of a local NGO supporting private farmers argued on the farmer’s behalf but was in turn rebuffed with questions intended to expose her ignorance of agricultural practices.⁴⁷ An official present demanded a business plan from the farmer and then used a common strategy for emptying a state office of supplicants: he suggested she return to the district administration after she had filled out additional paperwork.⁴⁸

In Voronezh, there was an initial effort in the early 1990s to portray farmers as outsiders and the private farm as an alien institution. There was a racialized aspect to these efforts.⁴⁹ Some of the first private farmers in Voronezh were from the Caucasus: Chechnya and Dagestan. These farmers were outsiders not only by virtue of their relatively recent arrival in Russian villages, but also because of their ethnic background. In Liski district, the press did its best to emphasize this fact. Among the first farmers in the district was a family of migrants from Grozny and Rostov who leased land from a local collective farm. The local paper described them as a ‘large family’ of four brothers and their wives.⁵⁰ Such business arrangements among family members were not uncommon among ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, but those went unremarked upon in the press. In a subsequent newspaper article about this ‘settler’ family, the author assured readers that there were also [ethnically] Russian men interested in private farming – Kiselev, Sichkov, Grachev – who would do no worse than the settler family: ‘And that’s reassuring, right?’⁵¹

Some farmers who were not members of ethnic minorities experienced difficulty simply because they had not been born in the village or region in which they farmed. Fear and suspicion of outsiders is an enduring feature of life in some black earth villages; some residents who had spent ‘only’ 20 or more years of their lives in the area encountered special difficulty in obtaining land. In such cases, as with farmers from the Caucasus in Voronezh, conflicts over land distribution became – or were at least perceived by locals as – battles for the establishment of territory.⁵² Suspicion of outsiders did not always manifest as overt prejudice. Sometimes, being from somewhere else meant simply that members of the community or state officials ‘didn’t particularly help’.⁵³ In an environment and economy in which local ties could mean the difference between commercial success and failure, being excluded from circles of mutual assistance was a form of economic discrimination.

One of the first private farmers in Voronezh was a sheep farmer originally from Makhachkala. Kamil Makhmudov obtained ten hectares of land in

Voronezh only after protracted negotiations with the collective farm where he had worked. A reporter in the district press describing Makhmudov's situation immediately called attention to the fact that Makhmudov had moved around – something most Voronezh collective farm members did not and could not do: 'Having changed his place of employment several times, he convinced the chairmen of "Donskoe" V.T. Podvoiskii that he, Kamil Makhmudov, could not live without his farm.'⁵⁴ The chairman of the collective eventually relented and approved the allotment, despite reservations: 'the chairman gave the go-ahead, not trusting much in the undertaking of this guy who looks so different from the local collective farm members'.⁵⁵

Early in the reform process, Makhmudov's farm was located on the territory of a collective farm. As such, it was subject to some collective governance. The local reporter noted that other villagers did not understand what Makhmudov was doing: 'Last summer at the general meeting of the collective farm, in Makhmudov's absence, his farm was formally called into question. Proponents of the "purity" of the collective farm ranks took Makhmudov to task, for they pale beside the farmer. At work, of course, at work.'⁵⁶

There were suggestions of racialized thinking about farming or land ownership in Kharkiv as well. In Kharkiv, the target group appeared to be Rroma rather than people from the Caucasus. At a conference of private farmers in Kharkiv, a high-ranking regional official recounted how 'gypsies' in a district of the region paid off old women with food in exchange for land certificates: 'they found out where [the women] lived'.⁵⁷ Likewise, when a Kharkiv farmer described the business practices of a neighbour of his, also a private farmer, who hadn't kept any accounts for five years and apparently had no regard for the authorities' opinion about his practices, he offered the following explanation – a comment so commonplace as to be almost a cliché – 'He's a Gypsy by ethnicity.'⁵⁸

These were not isolated incidents but expressions of a generalized anxiety. The editor of a Voronezh district paper wrote of the perceived threat of outsiders taking land: 'In places we're threatened by expansion through the transfer of land, including land as private property, to enterprising people from the south.'⁵⁹ The anxiety voiced by ethnic Russian and Ukrainian villagers, combined with local enterprises' sometime refusal to do business with those farmers who began as outsiders, caused many farmers on the margins eventually to lose their land.⁶⁰

Other individuals on the margins of rural society who became private farmers were single, middle-aged women. Official documentation of land distribution belies the actual gender breakdown among private farmers. For example, the Kharkiv district farm registration list in 2000 showed that 35 of the 119 private farms in the district are run by women.⁶¹ There were some female farmers in Kharkiv district, but a number of those listed were not

female-led enterprises; rather, the farms were registered in the names of the wives of prominent men. It is impossible to say, without specific knowledge of every farming family in the district, how many farms fell into this category. However, we do know that this phenomenon was widespread enough to be acknowledged as a social fact. This practice obscured the ways in which private commercial farming was a highly gendered phenomenon and created the appearance of women's participation. In reality, women faced special obstacles in attempting to obtain land. State officials at all levels of government approached women with scepticism and condescension,⁶² and press coverage of private farming recorded this fact without comment or irony. For example, an article in the Kharkiv press took on a derisive tone in describing a 'little lady' who came into the district office asking for 40 to 50 hectares of land for a private farm.⁶³

The contrast between the experience and backgrounds of elite male and less powerful female farmers was made manifest in the history of a Ukrainian regional farmers' association.⁶⁴ It illustrates the vastly different relationship to the state that this second group of private farmers had, and it exemplifies some of the ways in which social inequalities were replicated and deepened through the privatization process.

The Kharkiv farmers' association began as a gender-integrated organization. Over time and apparently in response to a member of the women's association failing to repay loans to the farmers' credit union, most of the women in the organization split off to form their own group. By the end of the 1990s, there were two independent associations. The men's association – which did not explicitly exclude women but rather drove them out by ignoring them at meetings – was led first by an established farmer who had begun his business in the late 1980s and then by the former head of the applied mathematics department at Kharkiv State University. The association council was made up mainly of farmers drawn from collective farm management and the upper echelons of regional and district government. The men's association had offices in the building of the regional administration, a secretary on the state payroll, use of a telephone, and access to the state division of private farms, which assisted the farmers in obtaining information about markets in seed, fuel and other inputs.

The women's association had no access to the state ties and state resources enjoyed by their male counterparts. The leaders of the women's organization were widely known for their chutzpah and eccentricity and generally were not welcome at the office of the official association. Some locally were known as female boors, or *khamki* – listened to but derided and surrounded by scandal that was sometimes of their own making. Their association was composed mainly of women who had held low-status positions in collective farms before they became private farmers. Gosprom, the regional state

administration building that housed the official and predominantly male regional farmers' association, was not available to the women as a meeting place. Instead, these farmers gathered sporadically at various locales: at the home of the leader of the organization, in a library in the city of Kharkiv, and wherever they could find a venue.

Members of the women's association consistently articulated a sense that even if not all of them had begun private farming as marginalized, eccentric members of society, the psychological and material conflicts they constantly faced drove their leadership close to the edge. One of the prominent farmers in the women's organization described how the leader of the women's association was not 'that way' when she began private farming, but that the profession had changed her: 'she was a totally different person when she started'.⁶⁵

There was good reason for such a change. These women's experiences with private farming were qualitatively different than those of their powerful male counterparts. At a conference co-sponsored by the women farmers' association and organizations from Dnipropetrovsk, female farmers told stories of violence and intimidation. One farmer described a letter she received from the chairman of a neighbouring collective farm. The letter threatened to rape, kill and burn her and her children. She related that her niece and others had been beaten because of conflicts over land.⁶⁶

Some private farmers who were neither members of ethnic minorities nor women figured in public discourse in ways that we may regard as a social analogue of what Russian Formalists called *ostranenie*, or defamiliarization [*Shklovsky*, 1917]. The poetic technique of using language to remove familiar objects and events from their usual context – or to remove them from the set of expectations and definitions with which they ordinarily are associated – was applied to press descriptions of farmers in Voronezh and Kharkiv. The parallel is not perfect: the words used to portray private farmers are the words of everyday life and not necessarily of art, but a discernible process of social construction and marginalization was present in the ways newspapers presented farmers to the public. Private farmers, journalists often implied, were in some way alien – whether because of their national origin, their transgression of late Soviet gender–labour norms, or some other feature that removed them from the sphere of the known social world. Reporting about private farmers created a social space between readers and farmers, making this new form of ownership and production seem strange, suspicious and even, at times, worthy of ridicule.⁶⁷

The district press, which for most rural people was the only source of print news available during the 1990s, made private farmers into eccentric outsiders, or *chudaki*, if they were not already. The story of a farmer-leaser on a collective in Voronezh is a case in point. This farmer had become

dissatisfied with the enterprise leadership and charged that it had not fulfilled its obligations to him.⁶⁸ Representatives of regional and district divisions of agricultural management judged his claims to be ‘nothing more than absurd’, and the chief economist of the collective charged that the farmer actually owed the collective 140,000 roubles. In an effort to recover money owed him by the collective farm, this private farmer staged a hunger strike in the building of the regional state administration. The local paper reported that the farmer next had threatened to travel to Red Square in Moscow and publicly immolate himself in protest. His former colleagues at the collective were quoted as wryly telling him to ‘dress warmly’ so as to survive the flames.⁶⁹

By all appearances, this district press either reflected an existing – and unsurprising – societal disapproval of private farming⁷⁰ or was attempting to turn public opinion against private farmers. Members of this particular local district administration disapproved of private commercial farming.⁷¹ To the extent that the local press acted as a mouthpiece for local state institutions – or at the very least, would avoid openly contradicting the position of district officials – such stories appeared to be attempts to alienate private farmers from the public. A typical report about one farmer expressed some scepticism about his commitment to agricultural activities: ‘It’s unlikely that Vladimir Baranov will plough his 127 hectares this spring.’ Identified in the paper as a ‘former daredevil’, this farmer ‘rides around in his ZIL-133 [an automobile], buys up potatoes and trades in shoes’.⁷²

Similar treatment was also applied selectively to well-connected urban elites who became farmers, but not to rural elites. For example, the former head of a major automobile manufacturing plant in Voronezh who had turned to private hog farming in his retirement found himself featured in a full-page article whose headline, right above his picture, read ‘Pigs made me feel like a real person!’⁷³ This farmer had attempted to obtain land in Khokhol district of Voronezh and had been refused. In Semiluki district, where he eventually received land, he had the support of a collective farm chair and the deputy head of district administration. The Semiluki press made hay of this story of a powerful urbanite drawn to a humbler line of work through high-level connections: ‘Authority, connections, a car, and apartment – he had everything ... But, as happens with city people, he was pulled from the asphalt to the soil.’⁷⁴

It is clear that both the leadership of collectives and local state officials saw reasons to impede the process of land distribution, and that both of these groups used varying tactics to accomplish their goals. In some cases, there was the appearance of free distribution of land; in others, rural people prevailed against substantial obstacles to obtain farmland. The question that requires explanation is how and to whom land was distributed. Where local officials opposed private commercial cultivation, allotments followed a

pattern of grudging distribution to those on the margins of rural society. In Krasnogradskiy district of Kharkiv, one farmer described the dynamic at work: ‘they say that in many cases the local administration sooner gives land to a weak farmer than to a strong one, and afterwards sanctimoniously throws up their hands: “Well, you see [private] farming hasn’t worked here”’.⁷⁵ Likewise, a farmer leasing land from the Kharkiv collective ‘Kommunar’ noted early in the reform process that while there were people willing and able to work and manage the land, ‘every possible agricultural bureaucrat doesn’t trust us, it’s obvious, it’s quiet in the forest. In order not to be suspected of conservatism, they’re inserting sticks in the wheels.’⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Private farmers hailing from elite rural backgrounds were able to muster resources that would thwart resistance to land allocation at the enterprise, village council and district level. By calling on personal and professional relationships established during the Soviet period, these farmers were able to circumvent obstacles that prevented the middle stratum of rural residents from attempting – or even considering attempting – individual commercial farming. People on the margins, on the other hand, could slip under the radar of those who would seek to preserve the land use rights of collectives.

The vast differences in land assets allotted to members of these two strata of the rural population would have implications for agricultural production in Russia and Ukraine later in the 1990s. Elite private farmers with large landholdings and access to credit and other inputs began to evince important similarities with the production practices of collectives; these farmers possessed an economy of scale that allowed truly commercial agricultural production. Farmers on the margin, meanwhile, cultivated small plots using begged or borrowed machinery, animal-pulled ploughs or hand-held tools. Property rights alone did not predict the nature of farmers’ participation in the rural economy. The social origins of private farmers in Voronezh and Kharkiv foretold the bifurcation of the private farmers’ movement into commercial enterprises on the one hand, and primarily subsistence cultivation on the other.⁷⁷

The pattern of land distribution to well-connected men, and to marginalized ethnic minorities and women led to the reproduction of Soviet forms of *de facto* property rights regimes and agricultural production. The bimodal distribution in land privatization explains why new, ostensibly commercial agricultural enterprises tended to cleave to Soviet forms of production: elites with access to large tracts of land replicated Soviet economies of scale, while farmers on the margins essentially engaged in household production. Elite

farmers imitated collective farms' social structure and entitlement systems both with respect to their employees and, as far as they were able, with respect to state institutions: employees were paid in kind rather than in cash; and farmers provided the minimal social safety net that collectives offered, distributing meat and grain to pensioners at holidays and contributing to the community in many of the ways that collective farms formerly had. This meant that for many workers, there was little difference between private and collective farming. Elite private farmers, many of whom already had long-standing relationships with local government officials, were able to secure preferential treatment in the form of subsidies, assistance with procuring bank loans, and special access to information about local markets.

Farmer-outcasts replicated the household forms of production in which the entire rural population continues to be engaged, regardless of landholding status. These farmers did not have adequate social and financial capital to sustain commercial production in the macro-economic climate of the 1990s. That climate included high oil prices at harvest time, a lack of access to appropriate technology for cultivating small farms, and a prolonged scissors crisis, in which the prices of agricultural commodities were low and prices of inputs high. Credit on reasonable terms was virtually absent – interest rates reached several hundred per cent annually, with interest payable monthly; this meant keeping a portion of loans out of the production cycle in order to make interest payments. Many of these farmers eventually turned to other forms of economic activity to support themselves. Some lost their land owing to technical violations of zoning regulations – that is, for improper use or non-use of agricultural land. Many of those farmers who did not lose their land reverted to growing only enough to feed their families. In other words, for farmers on the margins of rural society, a nominally commercial form of land ownership and agricultural production came to resemble household production. Ostensibly commercial farms became glorified victory gardens.

The overwhelming majority of rural residents had no part in this process. By the end of the 1990s, most members of collective farms possessed paper rights to land shares, but the material benefits generated by their property rights were limited to lease payments – typically a couple of sacks of grain each year.⁷⁸ Land distribution in fact was limited to allotments for private farms. While the character of land distribution to private farms in Russia and Ukraine is only a small part of the entire project of privatizing land, its effects are characteristic of post-Soviet reform in general and indeed of neoliberal economic reform programmes in many developing countries: those on the margins were pushed further to the edge of society; the well-connected and powerful increased their wealth and influence; and the vast middle was left out of the distribution process entirely.

GLOSSARY

- kolkhoz* – collective farm
khamka – lout, boor (f.)
ostranenie – defamiliarization
raion – administrative district

NOTES

1. The substantial body of scholarship on the subject of private farming in Russia includes Hivon [1998], Wegren [1992; 1996], Butterfield *et al.* [1996] and Van Atta [1993].
2. At that time, agricultural collectives contributed 60 per cent of total production and household cultivation 38 per cent [*Sel'skoe khoziaistvo Rossii*, 1995: 47].
3. Calculated from data in *Sil's'ke hospodarstvo Ukrainy* [1997: 9].
4. Some scholars [*Wegren and Belen'kiy*, 2002] have found significant support for land markets among farm managers. Despite some intra-regional, district-level variation in the attitudes of managerial cadres towards land markets, I find consistent, widespread and explicit resistance to decollectivization throughout the 1990s on the part of managers in the two regions under consideration. Many farm managers who publicly claimed to support privatization frequently acted privately to stymie land individuation and distribution [*Allina-Pisano*, 2003].
5. For an economic argument on the origins of peasant conservatism, see Scott [1976]. Mieke Meurs [2001] provides one reason why private farming has developed relatively slowly in other Eastern European contexts: namely, that the preservation of collectives reduces significant transaction costs for rural producers.
6. As has been discussed elsewhere, shareholders in reorganized collectives used salaries received in kind as inputs for household production. Even where salaries constituted a small proportion of household income, they were necessary for support of household production [*Kitching*, 1998; *Allina-Pisano*, 2003].
7. This article is part of a larger project on the development of property rights in contemporary rural Russia and Ukraine and is based on 25 months of field research I conducted between 1997 and 2000. Research for this project included review by the author of over 4,000 articles from the Russian and Ukrainian district and regional press; published and unpublished enterprise, district and regional-level statistical data; over 300 field interviews conducted by the author; and extended participant-observation research on a collective farm, with a regional farmers' association and in a district land tenure office. This research was conducted in a multilingual context; communication with those individuals who provide the first-person, empirical foundation for this study took place in three languages – Russian, Ukrainian and Surzhyk (a Creole of Russian and Ukrainian) – and a handful of dialects based chiefly on Russian or Ukrainian.
8. At least one other recent study uses local-level data to analyse the determinants of participation in land transactions. See Wegren [2003].
9. For discussion of the varying climactic and demographic considerations that differentiate black earth from non-black earth areas of the former Soviet Union, see Ioffe and Nefedova [1997] and Ioffe [1990].
10. Towards the end of the decade, the trend of privatization to elites appeared to intensify. This may have been due in part to the discovery by some members of the rural elite of new opportunities for imitating the rent-seeking behaviour that characterized industrial privatization.
11. The executive director of the Kharkiv regional farmers' association described these individuals as 'those who were closer to the [state] apparatus that oversaw distribution'. The executive director, who is primarily a state functionary serving as a sort of secretary to the

- more politically powerful director of the regional organization, characterized Kharkiv farmers in the following way: the first wave of farmers were about 30 years old with one or two children. Low salaries drew them to farming as a way out. The second wave were those elites described in the body of the text; and the third wave were primarily former military officers from peasant families. Interview, executive director of Kharkiv regional farmers' association, 6 Dec. 1999.
12. Later, when a land leasing market developed in some places, and where collective farm directors allowed it, they expanded their holdings by leasing land shares from members of agricultural collectives.
 13. In Ukraine, those individuals who received more than 50 hectares of agricultural land exceeded limits for land privatization established by the Ukrainian Land Code (S2/Ch7/A52).
 14. Interview, head of land tenure office, Semilukskii *raion* (district), May 2000. The head of the district farmers' association provided somewhat different information, asserting that these two enterprises covered more than 1,800 hectares each. Interview, district farmers' association, Semilukskii *raion*, May 2000.
 15. Industrial privatization in Russia and other post-socialist states likewise proceeded along similar lines. Freeland [2000] provides a narrative of some of the most obvious instances of this mode of distribution.
 16. See, for example, Ledeneva [1998] for an explication of various informal channels of exchange during the early and late Soviet periods.
 17. This farmer was a leader in his community, and had held high-ranking positions in local collective farms. In addition to own high status, he had the support of close family members who were lawyers and an accountant.
 18. Interview with farmer, Zolochivs'kyi *raion*, 3 Jan. 2000.
 19. Interview with farmer, Zolochivs'kyi *raion*, 3 Jan. 2000.
 20. Oral Testimony (OT), Kharkiv regional division of private farmers, 4 April 2000. Oral Testimony refers to statements articulated directly to me or in my presence in the context of a group conversation.
 21. Interview with farmer, Zolochivs'kyi *raion*, 3 Jan. 2000. The same farmer was able to use government support for private farmers to bring an asphalt road to his farm and to construct houses with electricity for himself and his family members also engaged in private farming.
 22. One of these factories was a local sugar beet processing plant, which was crucial to the district as it produced a commodity that could be sold for cash.
 23. Interview with farmer, Zolochivs'kyi *raion*, 3 Jan. 2000.
 24. Interview with farmer, Kharkivs'kyi *raion*, 31 Aug. 1999. This is the sole instance of *de facto* restitution in Kharkiv district, and the only example I encountered anywhere in Voronezh or Kharkiv regions. Unlike some other former socialist states in Eastern and Central Europe, restitution was not a part of land reform in Russia and Ukraine. Despite many such requests received by district and regional administrators from Russian and Ukrainian diaspora in the West, it is unlikely that much restitution took place. Ethnographer Irina Koznova [1995] describes the surprise and mirth with which her respondents in Orlovskaiia region of Russia greeted a question about restitution.
 25. Additionally, his son was the head veterinarian for the district – a position that put him in close contact with other district-level agricultural management officials.
 26. Interview with farmer, Kharkivs'kyi *raion*, 31 Aug. 1999.
 27. Interview with farmer, Kharkivs'kyi *raion*, 17 Dec. 1999.
 28. This interview took place in a Kharkiv district state office. The farmer was unwilling to disclose this information in the presence of a representative of the land tenure office; he waited until my colleague had left the room. I never heard the entire story because my colleague returned before he finished telling it.
 29. Interview, executive director of district farmers' association, Blyzniukivs'kyi *raion*, 30 March 2000.
 30. Various regional officials in Kharkiv and Voronezh estimated that up to half of all private farmers fell into this category; none of these officials were willing to go on the record.

31. I. Getmanov, 'Zemliu dali, shtoby otriat'?' *Leninskoe znamia*, 4 June 1991, p.3. Three weeks later the paper published a response by the assistant to the prosecutor, who (rightly) claimed that land law was inappropriately applied to transfer what amounted to water rights. V. Tereshchenko, 'Kak skomkali 'pervyi blin' ili kto vinovat, chto u fermerov otobrali zemliu?' *Leninskoe znamia*, 29 June 1991, p.3.
32. Successful private farmers generally have not followed a yeoman model but tend to be engaged in diversified but unified industry. The combination of production and processing sometimes allows them special subsidies at the local level. Interview with farmer, Liskinskii raion, 8 May 2000. Also see "' Fermer": vyrastil, obrabotal, prodal', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 5 Dec. 1996, p.5.
33. V. Kolodezhanskii, 'Liskinskii sobstvennik, ne isporchennyi kollektivom', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 30 March 1996, p.2.
34. A reporter writes, 'And it's understandable. He had nine children to raise. That means, you have to live peaceably with the government, with the regime, with the party. Otherwise – calamity. So he tried hard and was active.' V. Kolodezhanskii, 'Liskinskii sobstvennik, ne isporchennyi kollektivom', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 30 March 1996, p.2.
35. Interview with farmer, Liskinskii raion, 8 May 2000.
36. 'Maizhe dvadtsiat' pytan': pro biudzhēt i ne til'ky ...', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 8 Sept. 1992, pp.2–3.
37. V. Lemishchenko, 'Selo na shliakhu do rynku: aktual'ne interv'iu. Fermer dopomozhe derzhavi, iakshcho derzhava dopomozhe fermeru', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 17 Sept. 1994, p.6.
38. V. Lemishchenko, 'Vybory-94: kak golosovat'?' Stavka – bol'she, chem zhizn', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 19 March 1994, p.1.
39. Interview with farmer, Derhachivs'kyi raion, 7 Feb. 2000.
40. An equally common permutation was the following division of labour: the husband as farmer and wife as chief accountant of a neighbouring collective farm.
41. Interview with said farmer, Kharkivs'kyi raion, 3 Nov. 1999.
42. Data obtained by author from district land tenure office, Kharkivs'kyi raion.
43. 'Maizhe dvadtsiat' pytan': pro biudzhēt i ne til'ky ...', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 8 Sept. 1992, pp.2–3.
44. V. Lemishchenko, 'Selo na shliakhu do rynku: aktual'ne interv'iu. Fermer dopomozhe derzhavi, iakshcho derzhava dopomozhe fermeru', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 17 Sept. 1994, p.6.
45. 'Delo Samarinykh', *Leninskoe znamia*, 22 Jan. 1991, pp.1, 3.
46. See, for example, V. Lemishchenko, 'Hospodari na svoii zemli', *Trybuna Trudiashchykh*, 12 Aug. 1995, p.1. Four of the five families composing the farmers' cooperative described are urbanites from the city of Kharkiv.
47. Among the questions posed to the NGO representative was: 'What is the norm for grazing land per head of livestock?' OT, district administration, Derhachivs'kyi raion, 7 Feb. 2000.
48. This official explained his refusal in terms of differentiation among districts, especially from Kharkiv district: 'If we speak of our district, our people don't receive [so many hectares].' The norm for land distribution to private farms was lower in Derhachi, so 'in our district those ten hectares are considered "extra"'. OT, district administration, Derhachivs'kyi raion, 7 Feb. 2000. While some instances of bureaucratic refusal can be ascribed to deficiencies on the part of applicants (insufficient training or background for private farming, intention to use the land for some purpose other than private farming, etc.), the vast tracts of unused and poorly managed collective farmland in the two regions suggest a double standard at work.
49. This occurred in a context generally hostile to people from southern republics and regions. In one district of Voronezh region, for example, Chechens and Dagestanis were blamed for a cholera outbreak in 1995. *Anninskie vesti*, 19 July 1997, p.2.
50. 'Stavka – na arendu', *Leninskoe znamia*, 4 Feb. 1991, p.3.
51. 'Delo dlia nastoiashchikh muzhchin', *Leninskoe znamia*, 6 March 1991, p.3.
52. For an account of similar conflicts in Bulgaria, see Kaneff [1998].
53. Interview with farmer, Kharkivs'kyi raion, 12 April 2000.

54. 'Mechta sbyvaetsia?', *Leninskoe znania*, 1 Jan. 1991, p.2.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. OT, Kharkiv regional farmers' association conference, 18 Jan. 2000.
58. OT, district farmers' association, Blyzniukivs'kyi raion, 30 March 2000. This remark later was followed by a story about how the speaker earlier in life had been a Soviet army officer in charge of 13 tanks driven by soldiers from Uzbekistan. The group dissolved in laughter, wondering how it had been possible to teach Uzbeks to drive tanks.
59. V. Pleshkov, '... Pokoi nam tol'ko snitsia', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 13 Feb. 1992, p.6.
60. Land alienation was as much a feature of the land redistribution process as initial iterations of privatization. Kamil Makhmudov was later among the victims of repossession by the district state administration. See 'Dai! Zapiski po krest'ianskomu voprosu', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 19 Nov. 1993, p.2.
61. Statistics obtained by author from district land tenure office, Kharkivs'kyi raion.
62. I observed this repeatedly over the months during which I conducted participant-observation research in regional and district state offices. I often encountered it myself: only my ties to national and regional-level officials and educated speaking style (and American nationality, when I chose to reveal it), insulated me from constant insult. The situation was far worse for local rural women who had no connections in government and, in many instances, spoke only in dialect.
63. V. Iarmolenko, 'Sovkhoz fermeru pomozhet', *Trybuna Trudiaschchykh*, 19 May 1992, p.3. It might be argued that the meaning of such apparent derision was not gendered as such but rather was rooted in objection to the manipulations of powerful men whose less prominent wives served as the nominal heads of private farms. This was not the case in the instances given here: the names of the rural elite were well known, and the women targeted for ridicule and other informal social sanction belonged to the second category of farmers identified here – those on the margins of rural society.
64. I attended the weekly day-long meetings of this organization for a year in 1999–2000.
65. Interview with farmer from Krasnokuts'kyi raion, Kharkiv regional administration, 22 Feb. 2000.
66. Presentation by V. Ivaniukovych. Conference 'Legal protection of farmers and the fight with corruption in the implementation of land reform', 2–3 Aug. 1999. Ukrainian Academy of State Management, Kharkiv.
67. The treatment of private farmers in local press finds some parallel in the practices of revelation and admonishment described by Kharkhordin [1999].
68. This was not an uncommon situation – some chairs of collectives ensured that leasing arrangements were sealed with a handshake rather than a signed contract. What was uncommon was the fact that the farmer in question made a public claim against the collective.
69. M. Ponomarev, 'On nichto ne proshchal, szhech' sebia obeshchal ...', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 2 Feb. 1993, p.1.
70. Given the excesses of industrial privatization in the 1990s, the long history of collective cultivation in these regions, and the prevalence of industrial crops in the black earth region, such initial disapproval should hardly have been surprising.
71. By the end of the decade, there were only 28 private farms in a district with 148,000 hectares of agricultural land. Interview with member of district land committee, Liskinskii raion, 8 May 2000.
72. G. Aleksandrov, 'Fermerskii "lokotok"', *Liskinskie izvestiia*, 7 April 1994, p.2.
73. S. Eliseev, 'Fermer Aleksandr Riazhskikh: "So sviniami ia pochuvstvoval sebia chelovekom"', *Semilukskaia zhizn'*, 15 July 1999, p.3.
74. Ibid.
75. L. Barkanov, 'Za kem budushchee? Zametki s ochetno-vybornoi konferentsii fermerov oblasti', *Trybuna Trudiaschchykh*, 23 March 1995, p.2.
76. G. Chub, 'Na slovakh – chto na gusliakh', *Tribuna Trudiaschchykh*, 6 Aug. 1991, p.3.
77. This bifurcation echoes the deepening of economic inequalities in former collective farms generally, as many rank-and-file individual shareholders fell deeper into economic crisis

while power increasingly became concentrated in the hands of the rural elite [Allina-Pisano, 2002].

78. The value of those payments typically was less than the entitlements collective farm members had received during the late Soviet period [Allina-Pisano, 2003].

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