

THE IZHMA KOMI AND THE POMOR: TWO MODELS OF CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

The article* analyses Pomor and Izhma Komi identities. The Pomor and Izhma Komi, who live in the European north of Russia, practically lost their identity during the 20th century and are currently undergoing a process of re-identification. The authors delve into the reasons and circumstances stimulating this process of re-identification, analyse which social groups are the initiators of this process and what is the content of Pomorian and Izhma identity today.

KEYWORDS: cultural status • ethnicity • identity • indigenous peoples • the Izhma Komi • the Pomor

INTRODUCTION

The Izhma Komi and Pomor are of conspicuous interest for anthropological researchers, with the focus not solely on the archaic elements of their cultural tradition, which are largely lost, but also on their historical memory and ethnic (local) identities, which are the basis for the cultural positioning of these groups. In both cases, i.e. among the Izhma

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Komi and Pomor, there is some reason to speak about the processes of re-identification as the ethnonym Izhma (*Izhemtsy*) was used in the official statistics in the census in 1926 and thereafter in 1989, (although as a variant of the ethnonym Komi (Komi-Zyrian)), whereas the Pomor appeared in the records of the 1989 census, also as a variant of the main ethnonym Russian (Sokolovskiy 2004: 225–226). Prior to the 2002 census, a large-scale public discussion took place in the country, associated with the re-designation of these groups under their former names and the rethinking of these names as the ethnic determinants of extant ethnic groups. The census of 2002 was also distinct due to the fact that during the preliminary phase, native ethnologists managed to include in the census documents “a possibly wide range of the ethnic composition of the population”; this allowed the registration of 6,500 Pomor and 16,500 Izhma, i.e. relatively significant groups of the population preferred to identify themselves by way of local determinants rather than by general ethnic markers. Nonetheless, the formal registration of citizens’ groups, who identify themselves with the help of these or other ethnic markers, does not allow the confirmation of the existence of a cultural group as a whole. Moreover, in the majority of instances, the use of these local ethnonyms did not mean that the people, who for self-referral purposes identified themselves as the representatives of these separate communities, instead considered themselves within the much wider ethnic community (Pomor among the Russians, Izhma Komi among the Komi people, etc.). Therefore, in order to evaluate what constitutes a certain group of people who identify themselves with the same ethnic markers, it is necessary to look at a whole array of complex cultural phenomena: group solidarity, group ideology, the essence of this identity, capability of the group to formulate and express group interests and other factors characteristic of the cultural situation within each particular group. In this regard, we assume that a more adequate method for studying group dynamics is that which is based on three components: processes, participants and circumstances, relying on the logical approach to discourse analysis as proposed by Norman Fairclough (2003), which seems to be appropriate in the given context. With regard to general methodology, this article follows the constructivist concept of the essence of ethnicity (Sollors 1996), yet at the same time is not confined to this approach and utilises the theoretical concepts of ethno-symbolic theories (Brubaker 1996; Calhoun 1997; Özkırmılı 2000).

THE HISTORY OF GROUP FORMATION

From among the ethnographic groups of the Komi people, the Izhma (*изъватас* ‘Izvat-as’) probably have the most distinct cultural specificity. Formation of the Izhma Komi group commenced at the end of the 16th century. During the 1568–1575 period, an Izhma settlement (*sloboda*) was founded on the River Izhma, a tributary of the lower Pechora.

According to a folk legend, the founders of the settlement were Komi who had resettled from the Glotova *sloboda* beside the upper Mezen River, and the Russians from the Ust-Tsilma *sloboda*, a quarter of a century before the Novgorodian Ivashka Lastka. For a long time, the Izhma *sloboda* was the only Komi settlement on the lower Pechora; it was only at the end of the 18th century that a group of new settlements appeared in the vicinity: Mokhcha, Sizyabsk, Gam, Bakur and Moshyuga.

The process of formation of the most northerly ethnographic group of Komi was principally completed during the 17th and 18th centuries. As a result of long-term inter-ethnic amalgamation and reciprocal ethno-cultural interaction, the Izhma obtained certain indigenous features as an anthropological type and also had a specific dialect of the Komi language, with Russian and Nenets borrowings in the vocabulary. Likewise, the Izhma underwent certain changes in the traditional economic sector, and also acquired other different traits in comparison with other ethnographic groups of Komi. During the 19th century, the Izhma significantly expanded the territory of their habitat, founding a number of villages along the entire length of the middle courses of the Pechora river, and also settled at the Usa River, a tributary of the Pechora, in the Bolshezemelsk and Kanin tundras, crossing the Urals and establishing their villages on Ob River; in addition, a large group of Izhma settled on the Kola Peninsula. (Lashuk 1960; Zhrebtsov 1982; Konakov, Kotov 1991)

Reindeer herding became the main form of subsistence for the Izhma – they had already borrowed this approach from the Nenets in the 17th century, taking not only this method of keeping animals, but also the entire cultural complex, including clothing, mobile homes, vehicles and even folklore. The Izhma guarded their herd 24 hours a day with the help of dogs, raising large herds of reindeer in the Bolshezemelsk tundra and using the outcome of reindeer herding in trading (they sold hides and produced suede).

The Izhma sustained a complex economy, with different sectors therein complementing each other; the entire system was relatively flexible and adapted to the environment. In addition to reindeer herding they were also involved in hunting and fishing, animal husbandry and, to some extent, gardening; they traded across the entire northern part of Russia and West Siberia and supplied their goods to Moscow and St. Petersburg. The economic and practical application of these skills among the Izhma seemed to be more efficient than that of the Nenets in the Bolshezemelsk tundra, or the Sámi on the Kola Peninsula, or the Khanty. In addition, the Izhma assumed the role of buyers and market suppliers for products from Nenets (and also Khanty and Sámi) households. Therefore, the Nenets and, partly, also other ethnic groups considered the Izhma as dangerous competitors and complained to the authorities about the Izhma pressuring them.

Izhma reindeer herders intentionally increased the size of their herds, and by the mid-1830s the Nenets had already lost their primacy in the tundra – an obvious evidence of this is the Decree on the Administration of Samoyed Living in the Mezen Rayon of Arkhangelsk Province, adopted in 1835. According to this document, all “foreigners” who pastured their reindeer in the lands possessed by the Samoyed, had to pay a fee for each grazing reindeer. Researchers have also noted that by the 1840s, the ratio of reindeer herds belonging to the Nenets and Komi was 1:4, and this situation continued also in the subsequent years (Konakov 2004: 154).

Similarly to the Izhma Komi, the Pomor also successfully occupied their ecological niche in the North and created an efficient economic complex.

According to the widely held view, the self-identification of the group (Pomor) had appeared already in the 12th century (Gemp 2005), although it probably took place during the later period. In the North, between the 15th and 17th centuries, the designation Pomorye referred to the south-western and south-eastern banks of the White Sea – the Pomorye and Letniy shores. Later, it became the name for more extensive

areas of Arkhangelsk Province and the northern parts of Vologda, and at times even for the whole northern territory all the way to the Urals. The term *Pomor* first appeared in Russian chronicles in 1526. In the late 17th-century sources it designated the residents of the seacoast and lower reaches of the Onega, Northern Dvina, and Mezen rivers, who engaged in fishing and hunting at sea. The formation of the Pomor as a cultural group took place over the course of several centuries and ended only in the 18th century. The main role in the formation of the group was played by people from Novgorod; however, during the later phases (the 13th to 15th centuries), the migrants from the upper courses of the Volga river and from several other areas were of relevance. In addition, Finno-Ugric components had a certain role in the ethno-genesis of the Pomor (Vlasova 2005). The building of Arkhangelsk was remarkable for consolidating the group – the town became the centre of Muscovy's international trade and served as an important economic centre for Northern Europe. Local people sold fish, hunting products and other goods here. Arkhangelsk was not only a venue for exchanging commodities, but also a place for the cultural integration of different local groups and the formation of common self-awareness, therefore it is not by chance that the designation Pomor was taken into use to refer to local fishermen and hunters.

Historically the Pomor were engaged in fishing, maritime trade and shipbuilding. The number of schismatics, forced to leave central regions of the country, began to increase considerably among the Pomor from the late 17th century. In 1695, the first local priestless sect – Pomorian or *Danilovshchina*, i.e. Daniil's sect (according to the name of the founder and Prior of Vygovskaya hermitage, Daniil Vikulich) – was established in Vygovskaya Pustyn.

From the very early stage, the maritime component of the Pomor's economic activity gave rise to a need for literate people, and the constant contacts of the Pomor, with official state representatives and foreigners, fostered the development of literacy among the substantial part of the male and even female population during the 18th century. Old Believers played a significant role in the process, influencing all aspects of Pomor public and private life, as well as self-awareness. Even the incomplete census of 1782 reveals that among the Pomorian peasants there was a considerable number of literate people in comparison with agricultural regions of Russia.

Thus, in Varzuga and Uмба administrative divisions (*volost*), there were at least one or two literate men in each family. Almost every Pomor could pilot the local seas, and the general seafaring experience was summed up in a nautical book, which became a memorial of the maritime culture of Russia and even the whole of Northern Europe. This book is a collection of collective Pomor seafaring experience. The specific nature of economic activities and everyday lives of the Pomor also influenced their public life, family and calendar traditions, and the distribution of roles within the family (Bernsh-tam 1978).

The Pomor made use of the vast expanses of the Arctic Sea, including the archipelagos of Novaya Zemlya and Spitsbergen (Grumant in the Pomor language). Although their economic life was based on fishing, the Pomor were also involved in hunting for both sea and land animals, trade (primarily with Norway) and agriculture, i.e. their economic life was diverse. The role and relevance of different economic endeavours altered according to circumstance. Likewise, the regions of economic operations also changed, and the methods of fishing. During the process of taking into use the different

seas of the Arctic Ocean, the Pomor manufactured different types of vessels that were maximally suited for use in the Arctic conditions. When the Tsarist government began to demand, during the second half of the 19th century, that the Pomor start using more modern types of vessels (schooners, etc.) the Pomor actively opposed this idea, arguing that their fishing method was indeed the best ecological solution, as well as the most effective one (Ruzhnikov 2005).

Linguistically, there was no single Pomorian dialect, and researchers distinguish a whole group of Pomorian dialects in the Arkhangelsk province and the northern parts of the Olonets and Vologda provinces (Kasatkin 1989). These dialects were perceived as local variants of the Great Russian language, and it was not incidental that by the first general census in 1897 the absolute majority of the population of the Arkhangelsk Oblast indicated that their native tongue was Russian (Troinitskiy 1905). This is why the attempt to consider the so-called Pomorian dialect as a Pomor language seems relatively questionable, not from the philological point of view but rather from the 'linguistic self-determination' of the inhabitants of the Arkhangelsk Oblast, evidenced by the official results of the census. The people of the region explicitly indicated that the mother tongue of the majority of the population was Russian. Moreover, one can hardly speak of a dialect as a common language stratification.

The use and meaning of the word "Pomor" began to gradually disappear due to significant economic and social changes during the 19th century. In the 20th century, particularly during the second part thereof, the word became extinct, totally disappearing from use (Bernshtam 1978).

Thus, the Pomor, and also the Izhma Komi, were composed of different ethnic elements and were notably distinct from their parent ethnic communities, with regard to economy and culture. It is necessary to bear in mind that the Pomor and Izhma Komi were both formed at the boundaries of ethnic territories, as was also reflected in their self-identification. This borderline position of these ethnic groups allows us to consider them as specific communities.

IDENTITY

The results of the 2002 census make it possible to talk about the existence of Pomorian and Izhma Komi identities. Yet, can the content of these identities be regarded as stable, and what are the social and age groups wherein this identity is more actively supported? These questions, and answers to them, allow us to make conclusions concerning the circumstances of the particular cultural group today, and the possible development trends in the future.

With regard to the self-identity of the Izhma, the statement of their current leaders, that the group is a specific ethnic community (Anufriyeva 2007), is supported by a number of factors and has also been discussed above. First, the high degree of group solidarity, intrinsic of the Izhma, enabled the official registration of this group, the relevant outcome being seen in the results of the 2002 census. A similar attempt, undertaken by Komi activists in the Udora Rayon, failed due to a lack of group solidarity. Secondly, the Izhma have a sustainable positive identity. Thirdly, in the public consciousness, the Izhma strongly oppose themselves to the Izhma-Zyrians, i.e. they

do not only symbolically distinguish themselves from the Komi environment, but also oppose other groups, this being particularly explicit by way of labelling the cultural boundaries through We – They opposition (“we are Izhma, they are Komi people”), and in using different cultural markers, including nicknames. There are also derogatory names among these nicknames, whereas the most common is the nickname *ezhvaliad* for the Komi, although philologists suppose that the original form was *ezhva liati* (in translation, *ezhva* means Vychegda, i.e. the river in the basin of which live the main groups of the Komi, and *liati* – measles). Fourthly, the Izhma are distinct because of their advanced historical memory (representatives of the middle-aged and older generations can usually refer to eight or nine generations of ancestors). At the same time, it should be mentioned that the Izhma Komi have always been remarkably different from other Komi, not only with regard to the specificity of their economy and dialect but also in folk costumes, culinary preferences, entrepreneurial spirit; by way of this, they have been more oriented towards Russian cultural traditions. As Nikolay Terebikhin and Dmitriy Nesanelis (2008: 145) have noted, “the external piety of the Izhma, concealed behind the Orthodox gloss and sheen, is brought about by being oriented towards ‘Russianness’ and their desire to ‘outdo’ the Russians in everything, even in their Russian ‘Orthodox faith’.” After the establishment of the Komi Autonomous Oblast (1921) commenced the process of nation building, the Izhma were against the Komi language as the language of instruction in local schools, and expressed the desire to obtain education in Russian. This mentality was changed only due to the strict measures enforced by the authorities (Popov et al. 1991). Today, the orientation towards ‘Russianness’ is still partly preserved, and it is not by chance that some of the ideologies of the Izhma movement claim that the Izhma originate from Novgorodians, although it is obvious that several ethnic communities have been involved in the formation of this group.

What is it that provides a reason to talk about this group’s process of re-identification? First of all, here we rely on the results of our studies, conducted at the end of the 1980s, showing that although the historical memory of the group had indeed been preserved, local identity was almost totally lost, and the main ethnic marker for the Izhma, and for the representatives of other groups, was the ethnonym Komi. The Komi of the Kola and Ob regions did not use this ethnonym, assuming that this would only apply to the Komi living within the territory of the republic, and referred to themselves as Zyrian (Kotov, Rogachev, Shabayev 1996: 99). It is not by chance that the process of re-identification was stimulated by active ethnic entrepreneurs, the representatives of these local groups. Today, the Izhma acknowledge the fact that their local identity was in the process of destruction over several decades, but ultimately gave way to general ethnic consciousness. As a rule, the interviewees note that between the 1960s and 1980s “we slightly forgot that we are Izhma”, and that “back then we were being actively taught that we are all one nation and this did have an influence” (fieldwork notes of the authors 2007).

According to the data of the 2002 census, the population of the Izhma Rayon of the Republic of Komi was in total 21,511 (the share of the Komi was 90 per cent); 11,401 persons referred to themselves as Izhma Komi, and in total 12,689 people in the entire Republic of Komi. In the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, there was only one person registered as Izhma, whereas more numerous groups of Izhma Komi were registered, as could be expected, in the Murmansk Oblast and in the Yamal-Nenets Okrug. The major-

ity of those who called themselves Izhma Komi were rural people, whereas among the urban population, 1,500 persons used this ethnonym (Shabayev 2005a).

In addition to the relevance of the fact that a significant part of the Komi whose ancestors called themselves Izvatas, now decided to again mark their ethnic belonging with a local ethnonym, it is also important to determine how stable these changes in ethnic identification are, and how different age groups perceive and understand Izhma identity. To this end, we conducted a pilot study in an Izhma village in June 2008 – six years after the census – and interviewed only those people who had agreed to refer to themselves as Izhma Komi. The survey was not conducted according to a formal questionnaire, but instead, using free conversations with the interviewees ascertaining how they perceived their ethnic identity. We paid particular attention to generational differences in understating ethnic identity and distinguished three respondent age groups; in each of the three groups the number of interviewees had to be 25 (a minimal statistically representative group). The results show that in all age groups the dominant notion is that the Izhma are a specific and distinct group from the Komi. Moreover, a significant group of respondents considered the Izhma a separate people. The fact that such perceptions are strongest among the older age group can be explained by their better historical memory. Although the idea of Izhma movement should also not be underestimated, the relevant influence is most significant among middle aged people, as it is prevalingly the members of this age group who are the engine of this movement. It is characteristic that support for the idea of Izhma self-determination has not been and is not very significant in the regional centre. Nevertheless, the results obtained indicate that the society’s support for the Izhma movement is relatively secure.

Table 1. Forms of identification among the Izhma Komi, depending on age group.

	<i>Up to 30 years of age</i>	<i>31–50 years old</i>	<i>51 years old and over</i>	<i>Total</i>
The Izhma are a separate people and should not be mixed with other Komi	2	9	7	18 (23%)
The Izhma can be considered Komi, but are significantly different from other groups of Komi	24	16	11	51 (65%)
The Izhma are just Komi people and there is no difference whatsoever between them and other Komi today	-	2	7	9 (12%)
Number of respondents	26	27	25	78 (100%)

Likewise, other interesting features concerning public mentality were revealed in the course of the survey, for example, it turned out that men are more decisively inclined in favour of talking about the Izhma as a distinct community. The reason might be that men are more intensely involved in economic undertakings, such as hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, which are still valuable for a number of contemporary families as an additional source of the family budget. The main motivation, for those Izhma Komi who do not support the idea of special status, is the potential negative consequence after the acquiring a special status: tenser relationships with other groups and further degradation of a certain part of the population, who would live on social benefits and

experience a parasitic lifestyle. Yet in fact, those who are against special status as a minority indigenous people for the Izhma (see below about status-related problems), deny that the group is distinct due to certain pragmatic considerations, rather than because they do not recognise the cultural boundary between the Izhma and the rest of the Komi.

The content of Pomorian identity is also perceived differently by different age groups, and more than one identity currently exists in the region. In fact a whole 'field of identities' is present, including the understanding of the Pomor as a specific Finno-Ugrian ethnic community, the perception of the Pomor as a separate Slavic community, the acknowledgement of their sub-ethnic group (Russian Pomor), and the understanding of Pomorian identity not as an ethnic, but as a local and regional, identity. Only a small group of Pomorian leaders and activists are willing to refer to themselves as a separate people, whereas the majority of those calling themselves Pomor choose other forms to understand their identity.

According to the results of the 2002 census, the majority of Pomor typically live in the cities of Arkhangelsk and Severodvinsk (4,000), followed by the Primorsk and Mezen rayons. Unlike the Izhma Rayon of the Komi, and the Kola Peninsula, where the inhabitants were actively encouraged to register as Izhma Komi, there was no such wide-scale and extensive campaign organised in Arkhangelsk, although the local press published several articles on the revival of Pomorian identity. Not all people were approached personally, and in some cases, ethnic membership was written down according to the words of relatives and acquaintances, and frequently only the first part of the combination Russian Pomor was left in the records, as double ethnic identity was not provided for in the documents explaining the census. As the leaders of the Pomorian movement have stated, many people realised only after the census that they could have called themselves Pomor.

Nevertheless, the result is likely to be close to the actual mentality in Arkhangelsk Oblast and in several other regions that can be considered the historical Pomorye area (Bulatov 1999). A significant number of the people native to the Arkhangelsk Oblast and with ancestors who called themselves Pomor, still refer to themselves as Russians, with full awareness, although they are often quite positive about the Pomorian idea. Moreover, among the people of coastal villages along the White Sea, who are even today strongly involved in fishing and hunting sea animals, many refer to themselves as Pomor, yet they use this ethnonym without the concept which the ideologists of the Pomorian movement are willing to employ.

It is noteworthy that the traditional population of the Arkhangelsk Oblast also used to identify themselves differently in the past: the inhabitants of southern counties were not called Pomor but instead Vagan (from the River Vaga). However, even in the northern administrative areas (*volosts*) not all people referred to themselves as Pomor. Even today, some of the local inhabitants would say: "We are not Pomors, we are – Novgorodians" (remembering their ancestors who used to come to these places from Novgorod). And their usual answer to the question – when did you ancestors come to the North, would be: "Yes, about three hundred years ago." Moreover, in some parts of the Arkhangelsk Oblast, the inhabitants of several villages still refer to themselves as Chuds. According to some researchers, the term Chud was traditionally used as a local marker to denote certain individuals, a section of the population or the inhabitants of

particular villages, and evidences their Finnic origin (Krinichnaya 1991). There were relatively many such places in the North and particularly in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. Yet all these markers are perceived as positive or neutral, whereas the marker “indigenous peoples” is quite ambiguous and is perceived similarly to the term *tuzemets* – ‘native’, ‘local’.

For instance, in the Mezen Rayon, bordering with the Nenets district where the Pomor have long been in contact with the Nenets, the Pomor are determined as a numerically small indigenous people and this is perceived by the local people as them being identified with the Nenets. In the public consciousness this is unacceptable as the Pomor have always positioned themselves higher in the social hierarchy, and, at the same time, the Nenets were not considered a Christian people (the Izma Komi living in the lower courses of the River Ob had a similar attitude towards the Khanty). Thus, the population involved in commercial farming and referring to themselves as Pomor, maintains the historically traditional way of life and, to some extent, is ready to distinguish itself as a separate ethnic community (although the inhabitants of Pomorian villages cannot give a definite answer to the question “who are the Pomor”) and is indeed different from the dominant ethnic community of the country. However, active campaigning among the inhabitants of coastal villages might alter the public mentality, whereas the growing pressure from state institutions, namely the border guard, fishing monitoring agencies and other organisations might push the inhabitants to look for new forms of adaptation in the changing living conditions. Here, ethnicity might turn out to be the resource that enables them to maintain the way of life and satisfy the economic interests of the Pomor population at the White Sea.

It is difficult to systematise Pomorian identity as, historically, it has taken shape against a background of other ethnic and regional identities, was not actualised for a long time, and as well as still not being clearly defined, is also highly mythologised. In essence, it is based on the somewhat mythological Pomor connection with the sea, and with the territory adjacent to the sea; a connection that causes this area to be perceived not as a periphery but as a borderline. The Pomorye area is not merely the northern frontier of Russia, it is also a stronghold in the North, and a cultural milestone – a specific outpost of Russian culture.

In order to make the Pomorian idea and Pomor identity an intrinsic part of regional ideology, as proposed by the Pomor leaders, it is necessary to, in intellectual discourse, compare the idea of the Russian North and Pomorye, and in public understanding, the idea of the Pomor and the Northerner. The ideologists of the Pomorian movement unwittingly provoke a conflict of identities in Arkhangelsk, and place Pomor in opposition to Northerners (Moseyev 2005), which is partially conditioned by cultural traditions whereby it was customary to distinguish the ‘other’ (i.e. immigrants who had come to this area) from Pomor, and during the Soviet time, between the locals and “recruited ones”, i.e. those who had travelled to the North because of labour contracts.

It is obvious that the focus on local identities and their increased reconstruction has its own logic and is provoked by social and political changes and processes being undertaken in Russia and the modern world as a whole. Researchers observing the formation of contemporary identities note that

[I]n modern societies where individuals have to cope with a large number of social role expectations, this would also involve the creation of multiple identities.

Depending on the context, a specific partial identity may gain relevance, or instead, retreat to the background and this should be understood not only as a passive reaction to the surrounding environment or the needs of the group but also as a conscious individual allocation of priorities. (Voronkov, Oswald 1998: 13)

The logic, regarding the rethinking of social or group identity, can be understood by paying attention to another significant phenomenon associated with the radical reformation of society and the basic structure thereof, i.e. with the consequences of the so-called cultural trauma caused by a major alteration to the old value system still perceived in Russian society. Moreover, the process of rethinking old identities is closely connected with the emergence of new ones, as old identities are fading out in the dynamically transforming society and, inevitably, new ones come into being. As Yelena Danilova and Vladimir Yadov (2000: 30) have noted:

[S]table social identity is principally not possible in such a society. In addition, there is what we call “crisis identity”, emerging as a normal status of people who, under permanent social changes, are forced to follow their orientation in the “We – They” scale, concerning their social self-determination and societal status.

New identities are formed thanks to the fact that

[P]sychological mechanisms for convergence-remoteness of cultural distance play a significant and often hidden role in creating new identities. With the help of these mechanisms, in a similar way to that in which levers are used in fine tuning, individual and group consciousness seems to look for and find its place in the changing world. (Lebedeva 1997: 81)

The positions of Russian researchers given above are also in line with the concepts devised by Piotr Sztompka (2004) and Henri Vogt (2005); in their approach to the analysis of social changes they see a close correlation between the processes of cultural changes, and political and economic upheavals. It is characteristic of stable societies to enjoy a certain cultural equilibrium, embodied in traditions, values and identities. Significant social changes would disturb this balance and lead to the emergence of new symbols, values and identities co-existing with the old ones. In such an instance, people are often disappointed in modern values and this increases the attractiveness of previous experience and the values of the past.

Social and economic changes in post-Soviet Russia have been extremely extensive, and it is not incidental that these changes were brought about by the abrupt actualisation of ethnicity – this phenomenon was called rebellious ethnicity, ethnic revolution, the ethnic paradox of contemporary times.

Transferring to a market economy brought about the acute social stratification of citizens and also the assignment of Russian regions as either donor regions or depressed (subsidised) regions; inside these regions there are differentiations according to economic and social welfare. The living standard of the population in the Arkhangelsk Oblast lagged far behind the leading regions with regard to a number of economic indicators, while the native regions of the Pomor (Primorye, Mezen) were assumed to be areas of stagnation. The Izhma Rayon of the Republic of Komi is also considered depressed, with a very complicated social situation (high unemployment and suicide

rates, etc.). Without proper economic stimuli for growth, these regions are searching for incentives from their cultural resources.

ETHNOPOLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR IDEOLOGY

The political mobilisation of ethnicities, commencing at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, brought about an increased political activity among ethnic communities and the actualisation of general ethnic self-awareness; in addition it facilitated the revival of local identity and the formation of ethno-political organisations based on the historical memory of former ethnographic groups.

Izvatas, the community movement of the Izhma Komi in the Republic of Komi, was established in 1990, with support from local authorities, during the first founding congress. Affiliates of the movement were later created on the Kola Peninsula (in Lovozero village), and in the Nenets and Yamal-Nenets autonomous okrugs. Vitaliy Kanev, who delivered a presentation at the first congress titled "To Preserve the Izhma Ethnic Group of Komi", and was elected the president of the organisation, referred to the group as of "Izhma ethnicity" and said that it comprises Russians, Komi, and Forest Nenets, and is essentially different "from other Komi peoples, with regard to language, culture and lifestyle".

Since the beginning, this Izhma ideological movement was ambiguously received by their own ethnic community. On the one hand, the ideologists of the movement declared that "the Izhma are part of the Komi people", yet on the other hand, from the beginning of their activities, they talked about Izhma ethnos, which began to take shape during the second half of the 16th century (Khatanzeiskiy 2000). Indeed, it is characteristic that the term "ethnos", being a key concept in Soviet ethnography (Tishkov 2003), was actively utilised by ethnic entrepreneurs, yet they understood it differently, i.e. not in the way this term was used in scientific research. Nevertheless, having marked Izhma as an ethnicity, the ethnic activists realised that by way of this concept, they symbolically increased the cultural status of the group. At the outset, the goals of the movement were relatively limited and not very clearly defined:

Protection and exercising of the sovereign rights and interests of the Izhma Komi at all levels of authority;

Preservation and development of the language and cultural identity of the Izhma Komi;

Facilitation of the revival of traditional economic domains, familiarisation of the population with the history of the Izhma region and the traditions of the Izhma Komi, organising the leisure time of people. (Khatanzeiskiy 2000: 3)

In addition, an important element of their ideology was the concept of the "golden age of the Izhma", considered by the group to have occurred at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. This was the time when the Izhma people were conspicuous, for their wealth and entrepreneurship, from among other groups of the Komi. The prosperity of the group was closely associated with reindeer herding, hence the idea to establish optimum conditions for the development of this branch of economy and the idea to grant the status of national district to the Izhma region. (Filippov 1991) The specific

cultural image of the Izhma was the other marker of identity in the ideological constructs of the movement – they are distinct from other Komi people by way of their original language, culture, rich traditions. In the course of historical development, the Izhma Komi, referred to as Izvatas, could survive thanks to their hard-working nature, wisdom, and respect for other peoples. Modesty, patience, terseness and shyness can be regarded as the typical features of the Izhma character. Writer Sergey Maksimov (1890) has noted that the intrinsic traits of the Izhma comprise “entrepreneurship, wit, resourcefulness and flexibility – in other words, the features characteristics of a business person”. “Izhma are wonderfully knowledgeable about nature, observant and skilful, they have rich artistic potential, a preserved traditional worldview, high morality, the religion of their ancestors” – this is written in the programme of the Izvatas movement (Khatanzeiskiy 2000: 2).

From the very moment of creation, the Izvatas Association was involved in the Komi movement, and representatives of Izvatas took active part in the congresses of the Komi people, which has been conducted since January 1991, whereas against the background of other regional departments and organisations, the Izvatas movement did not stand out with a particular activity or special position. However, after the launch of a relatively active green movement in the Izhma Rayon of the Republic of Komi advocating the preservation of Izhma ancestral lands and opposing the expansion of oil companies in the area, and in particular when activists from this ecological movement joined the Izvatas movement, the significance of the latter increased remarkably, and the movement became more clearly aware of the priorities of its action, which were not always consistent with the political line of the general Komi movement. The most important task was to maintain control over the territorial areas of traditional land use and find stimuli for the development of the group due to the changes in relationships with operators of subsurface resources. Earlier, attempts were made to achieve these goals by way of altering the status of the region, yet gradually it was understood that it would be more sensible to apply for a change in the status of the group instead. During this phase, the standpoints of the Izhma movement did not always comply with the positions of the general Komi movement Komi Voityr. Overall, however, the ideology of Izvatas lacked a definitive conceptual format and was relatively ambiguous; in addition to this the leaders paid little attention to the development and promotion of the relevant ideas among the population, and, apparently, tacitly supposed that the historical memory of the Izhma was relatively strong and would significantly affect public opinion.

An important milestone with regard to the political positioning of the Izvatas Association was the preparation and execution of the population census in 2002. In August 2002, the branch of the Izvatas movement in Lovozero village, Murmansk Oblast, adopted an address to fellow countrymen in Komi, with an appeal to recognise their ethnic belonging during the census as Izhma Komi, rather than Komi. In September that year, the council of the movement practically unanimously declared their support for this appeal. At the same time, the delegates of the municipal council of education of the Izhma Rayon, in a show of support for Izhma activists, made an appeal to include Izhma in the list of indigenous small-numbered peoples that was officially approved by the government of the Russian Federation in 2000.

The 5th congress of the Izvatas movement took place on 28 June, 2003. Among the presenters were Vladimir Torlopov, Head of State of the Republic of Komi, and Maria Kuzbozheva, Minister of Culture and Ethnic Affairs. In her presentation, Kuzbozheva

accentuated the unity of the Komi people, based on common historical destinies and the cultural closeness of all Komi people. Nevertheless, the congress decided to apply for the status of numerically small indigenous peoples for the Izhma for largely economic reasons. The new chairperson of the movement explained the decision as follows:

Unfortunately, the Izhma Komi are still not subject to the socio-economic rights and benefits and tax incentives in environmental management, enjoyed by the Khanty and Sámi. For example, the nations entitled as numerically small indigenous peoples have the possibility to undergo medical examination on an annual basis and, since 2004, have had the right to substitute military service with an alternative option. In addition, representatives of numerically small indigenous peoples are exempt from taxes when utilising forests for personal need. Industrial operation, which might bring about pollution of the environment, is prohibited on the lands designated as the territories of traditional natural resources of indigenous small-numbered peoples. Why can one of the neighbouring ethnic groups enjoy such rights while the other cannot? This is indeed the situation today... When being granted the status of numerically small indigenous people, it is indeed necessary to follow the rules of reindeer herders living in the villages and rural settlements of the Izhma region, and also these of the Izhma Komi living in other regions. (Sivkova 2003)

The speech, delivered by the leader of the Izvatas movement, allows the conclusion that a conflict of cultural statuses has occurred in the Republic of Komi and the European North as a whole. Not by chance did the initiative to single out the Izhma as an independent group originate from the Kola Komi. The difference between the status of the Komi and Sámi, living in the same settlements, is perceived particularly painfully.

Emphasis on the special interests of the Izhma and their special status will no doubt lead to distancing from the Komi community, with what they were previously associated with, and from the general Komi movement. In late 2004, the Izhma joined the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East, and in April 2005 their delegation took part in the 5th congress of the association. Nevertheless, disputes centring on the goal of the Izhma – to be recognised as a numerically small indigenous people of the North – did not die down.

In one of the interviews given by the former Minister of Culture and Ethnic Affairs, Kuzbozheva (Komi movement activist), the following was stated:

The Izhma Komi claim that they are not Komi. By doing so, they are denying the whole history of the Komi people. They are separating themselves, isolating themselves from other Komi who, having certain distinctive ethnic and linguistic characteristics, are still part of a large-numbered indigenous people of the North – the Komi, the Komi-Zyrian. The intention to obtain special status for government protection is humiliating for the Komi people. (Mezak 2004)

At the beginning of April 2005, an official letter was sent to leaders of the Izhma movement demanding scientific proof of the existence of an Izhma ethnos (Smetanin 2005), making the members of the Izvatas Association indignant. Such a position indicated that local authorities and leaders of Komi movement did not share the ideas of cultural freedom formulated in the UNDP report *Cultural Freedom in a Diversified World*, sug-

gested by Valeriy Tishkov to be used as a guide (2005). In addition, the situation around the Izhma people actually evidences of yet another larger conflict – a conflict of identities.

The attitude of the authorities with regard to the demands of the Izhma has significantly changed in recent years. At first, the claims of Izhma people were presented to legislators, and plans were made to discuss these in the National Council of the Republic of Komi. Thereafter, Vladimir Torlopov, the Head of the Republic of Komi, made an important and explicit statement concerning the application of the Izhma to be included in the list of numerically small indigenous peoples. At the press conference on July 1, 2008, Torlopov said:

I do not see anything appalling in meeting them half way. I am sure that this would not bring about any fissures among the Finno-Ugric movement. We are talking about certain preferences in the socio-economic sphere, with an aim of improving the lives of people in particular circumstances. Nobody would pursue any political objectives in this regard. People want to live a normal life, engage in traditional fields of subsistence – land cultivation, hunting, fishing – and preserve their way of life after the arrival of modern civilisation in their habitat. Why not support them in this? (*Vozvrashcheniye* 2008)

According to the governor, the position of the majority of the leaders of the Komi Voityr Association (a general Komi movement) should not be an obstacle to applying to higher authorities.

At the same time, the leader of Komi movement, and the chairperson of the consultative committee of Finno-Ugric peoples, Valeriy Markov, expressed his severely critical opinion and declared that such a step would jeopardise the unity of Komi people, because such a decision could cause a chain reaction and the Komi in the Udor area and in the south – in the vicinity of the River Luza – might also want to apply for the status of indigenous peoples (Sivkova 2008). During the 5th World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples (June 2008, Khanty-Mansiysk), the panel on ethno-politics and rights recommended the inclusion of the appeal of the Izvatas Association, with a request to grant them the status of indigenous peoples, in the resolution of the congress (such a request was sent by the chairperson of the association, Valentina Anufriyeva, in May 2008, to Dmitriy Medvedev, the President of the Russian Federation, and Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin). However, after discussion, this clause was not included in the resolution.

The process of fragmentation of ethnic communities and the revival of old ethnonyms has not only concerned the Komi, but also other peoples. For example, the Besermyan have identified themselves as being Udmurt, the Erzya and Moksha as Mordvinian, the Kryashen, Mishar and Siberian Tatar as Tatar, and the Cossacks, Kamchadals and Pomor as being Russian. The revival of the ethnonym Pomor was preceded by a long-lasting phase of devising the Pomor idea.

In our opinion, the attempts to construe a new Pomor identity are based, among other reasons, on the political interests of the local elite. The regional elite in Arkhangelsk have put forward an idea to transform Arkhangelsk into an economic and cultural capital for the European part of North Russia, and amalgamate the northern regions around the city.

Thus, the Pomor idea was revived at the beginning of the 1990s as a regional socio-political movement, opposed to the federal centre. This was the time when the idea of a Pomor republic was conceived (and also that of a Ural republic, a Vologda republic and a number of other republics). With an aim to implement these ideas, several political parties and organisation in the Arkhangelsk Oblast registered a National Cultural Centre Pomorian Revival in 1992. Even at an early stage, this movement proposed to politically consolidate the regions of the European North of Russia. The federal centre, however, did not want to merge the militarised northern regions into one republic, and deemed this idea as a kind of Pomorian separatism, and actively addressed this problem. Many leaders of the movement, who advocated the idea of establishing the republic, nevertheless rejected the idea of the establishment of an ethno-political Pomorian movement at this stage.

In 1994, Pomorian Revival, the political movement, broke up into separate groups. Likewise, the later attempts to unite the Pomor organisations under one association, The Pomorian World, were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the Pomorian idea became firmly rooted in the regional political discourse. In 1998, Aleksandr Ivanov, the leader of the movement Democratic Revival of the North (which ceased to operate in 2001), attempted to express the nature of the Pomorian idea as follows:

The Pomor have a strong feeling of personal dignity and love for freedom. The reason being that there was no serfdom in the North, and the main form of organised economic life was co-operative, not the community. The Pomor lack the notion of an enemy as there were enough natural resources for everyone, and the foreigners were seen as partners in trade rather than competitors. Contacts with Europe (Edinburgh, Oslo and Bremen are closer by sea than Moscow) commenced in the far past, and developed a Western-European orientation of mind, absence of xenophobia and respect towards democratic institutions. Historically, it has been intrinsic to contempt the power in Moscow – be it tsarist, Soviet or post-Soviet – for its mendacity, cruelty, abuse and despotism. The Pomor do not want to work for the state, and try to be as little dependent on it as possible. Long before the October Revolution, the population of the North was conspicuous for universal literacy, being self-evident for them to render value to education, culture and science. What is regarded as patriotism in the central and southern parts of Russia – indignation towards the West, hatred of freedom and democracy, animosity against the intelligentsia – is seen by the Pomor as insolence. Harsh natural conditions in the North have moulded the characteristic traits of the Pomor – humility, patience, endurance, a particular fusion of practicality and mysticism. Exposed to the elements, we humbly ask God for mercy; and when exposed to the tyranny of Moscow, we also ask for mercy from the God, as it is useless to ask this from the tyrants. (Filatov 2002: 65)

Historical myths about the free Pomor and their deeply rooted traditions of democracy, were destroyed by the Moscow authorities when the vast Pomorian territories fell under the control of boyars as early as during the 15th century, and the entire life of local inhabitants was strictly regulated. Nevertheless, these myths are extremely important for the ideology of the Pomorian movement, as well as the ethno-genetic myths, as they are being constantly reproduced.

Viktor Shnirelman, stressing the relevance of ethnic myths in ideology, indicates that “a myth plays an instrumental role – it serves a very specific contemporary challenge, be it territorial claims, demands for political autonomy or a desire to counteract cultural levelling and preserve one’s own cultural heritage” (2000: 14).

Another complex of myths concerns the characteristic features of the Pomor and their mentality, expressed more completely in the book *Ekologiya Pomora* (, is their lifestyle, seen as an algorithm of behaviour within the surrounding environment. For a Pomor, the “sea is our field”. This is why it was weird to hear that the former governor of Arkhangelsk Oblast had registered himself as a Pomor during one of the censuses. Is it possible to be a former or hereditary Pomor? Probably not. It is only possible to be a descendant of a Pomor. A Pomor is not only a person who lives by the sea but, rather, is primarily a person who follows certain self-restraining traditions in interaction with the surrounding natural and social environment. The basis of such behaviour is to achieve natural balance, harmony in the relationships within the system of the “individual (family, kinship) and nature”. Such a balance ensures long-term sustainable existence in the harsh nature of the North. (Lisnichenko, Lisnichenko 2007: 81)

The coming to power of Anatoli Yefremov, the above-mentioned governor and Pomor by birth, was not only of no help for the Pomor movement, according to local experts, but even inhibited its development. Yefremov positioned himself as the “main Pomor”, the “Russian Pomor”, and would not tolerate any other Pomorian leaders. Yefremov’s successor as governor of the Arkhangelsk Oblast, Nikolai Kiselyov, was against the idea of a Pomorian renaissance, although in 1989 he established the Pomorian movement, with the membership mainly comprising government officials and business executives, which on several cases won local elections. However, Kiselyov did not intervene in the development of the Pomorian movement, and his administration actually supported the appeal of Pomorian leaders to the federal authorities to provide governmental support for the Pomor. The next governor Ilya Mikhaltchuk remained totally distant from the Pomorian problems and did not in any way support the Pomorian movement or idea.

The results of the 2002 census gave a significant impetus to the Pomor movement as it was evident that the Pomor identity was real and could also be registered in statistical records. The National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk was registered in Arkhangelsk in 2003, and at the beginning of 2004 the community was registered as a numerically small indigenous people of the North. Their current leaders claim that the Pomor are not merely an ethnographic group and a sub-ethnos of the Russian people, but rather are an independent ethnos. Likewise, they insist that the Pomor are a Finno-Ugric people, since their substratum comprises the Finno-Ugric tribes who lived in the European North before the arrival of Russian colonists. In our opinion, the revival of the Pomor and construction of new content for their identity can mainly be explained as results of political and economic interests, rather than their desire to set themselves apart culturally and preserve traditions.

In his treatise “Ethnic Self-determination and the Ethno-genesis of the Pomor”, the chairman of the National Cultural Centre in Arkhangelsk, Ivan Moseyev, has formulated the ideological foundation for Pomorian national cultural autonomy:

Despite numerous attempts to assimilate the Pomor and represent them as just a component of the Great Russian ethnos (an ethnographic group, sub-ethnos, popu-

lation, status, etc.), the Pomor have preserved their ethnic self-identification, this being evidenced in the results of the 2002 census. The Pomor are an independent ethnos, the primary culture of whom was not brought in from outside (from Russia) but developed in the course of the gradual fusion of local Finno-Ugric 'proto-Pomorian' cultures and the culture of the first Old Russian (but not Great Russian!) population. In contrast to other Russian ethnic communities, which were dissolved in the nation of Great Russians and lost their ethnic consciousness (for example, the Vyatichi, Krivichi, etc.), the Pomor have preserved their ethnic self-identification up to the present day and continue to consider themselves Pomor. Today the term Pomor is used by the indigenous population of the Russian North to distinguish themselves from the supra-ethnic community of 'Northerners' – the non-indigenous population of the region. (Shabayev 2003)

This position is also shared by the chairman of the National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk, Pavel Yesipov (2006), who notes:

The ancestors of the Pomor were Finno-Ugric tribes such as the Sámi, Vepsians, Korela (hence the village name of Malyye Korely), and the Yem (village of Yemetsk). Later, the first ancient Slavic peoples, who each had their own name, began to move into the lands of Zavolochye populated by the Finno-Ugric tribes.

Russian ethnographers have a different view of the ethnic history of the European North. In particular, Irina Vlasova (2005) writes:

Although the Novgorodians and Rostovians, involved in the formation of the Russian population in the North, were regional agrarian communities belonging to the same ethnos, they were nevertheless of mixed origin from an ethnic point of view, since they lived and developed in different natural and economic conditions and, when they settled in Eastern Europe, and in the North, they came into contact with different groups of Finno-Ugric origin. As a result, the local groups of Russian population inherited and, for a long time, preserved the specific features of folk culture.

Naturally, ethnic history and historical memory are not necessarily strictly interdependent, since memory is often based on cultural myths and stereotypes (discussed above), rather than actual facts. And the significance of myth is more substantial than the relevance of rational knowledge and ideas.

Hereby it is important to note that the stereotypical opposition between 'Russians' and 'others' is deeply rooted in the Russian scientific classification associated with ethno-national policy, thus simplifying the second part of this opposition, and simultaneously making it ambiguous. In this regard, Sergey Sokolovskiy (2001) notes: "The very ambiguity of *the Others*, which makes it possible to include any number of new members in this category at any time, indicates the protean nature of Russianness." This uncertainty, and the myriad of perceiving ethnic communities, in the discourse of Russian research and political traditions (brought about by legitimate ethnic hierarchies), opens up wide opportunities to construe ethnic communities and cultural groups. In this regard, great relevance is rendered to the perception of the term Pomor, as a deeply rooted local 'brand' in the consciousness of the intellectual elite.

Today, the Pomorian 'brand' is being actively used by the leaders of the Pomorian movement, local politicians and intellectuals for purely pragmatic ideas, while a certain consensus has been reached in the local community about the use of this brand, since the representatives of various social groups have been talking about the positive significance thereof. It is not by chance that we use the term 'brand', because when interviewed, many Arkhangelsk intellectuals used this notion, independently of each other, in their attempts to explain the significance of the Pomorian idea for the local community. This is quite illustrative of the situation as the speaking practices previously mentioned refer to a way of creating cultural boundaries, as well as to the construed nature of these boundaries. It is also important to mention that the constructed cultural boundaries are socially approved.

The attitudes towards the Pomorian idea are relatively contradictory in society and among the political elite of the region. On the one hand, the markers Pomor, Pomorian and Pomorye are always used during election campaigns in promotion materials, and are extremely important for politicians, who underline their loyalty to the region and local interests; yet on the other hand, the leaders of the Pomorian movement are frequently accused of separatism, and of doing certain "Norwegian lobbying", and of receiving money from Norway to carry out their activities.

Nevertheless, such dual perception has not impeded the Pomorian movement from developing and becoming a remarkable political force in the region. An important stage in the evolution of the Pomorian movement, as an ethno-political organisation, was the Congress of the Pomor People, conducted in Arkhangelsk in September 2007. In contrast to other ethnic gatherings, this congress, although conducted in Russia, was organised without government support but with the help of sponsors, and a number of delegates participated at their own expense. The congress, convening nearly a hundred delegates from Arkhangelsk and Murmansk oblasts, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and from many other regions of the Russian Federation, adopted a declaration on the founding of the Council of the Pomorian People, and the elected members to the council; the congress was declared the higher executive of the Pomorian people. The declaration stated:

We, Pomors, are the indigenous people of the Russian North, having traditionally lived in the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk oblasts, Republic of Karelia and Nenets Autonomous Okrug for centuries, declare of our right to exist as an independent nation of the Russian Federation... We declare our right to possess and use the traditional territories and natural resources equally with other indigenous peoples of the North included in the list of the indigenous peoples of Russia. (Shabayev, Podoplekin 2008)

The resolution adopted at the congress states that the refusal of the authorities to include the Pomor in the list of indigenous peoples should be regarded as "a fact of discrimination"; as is the fact that the Pomor are evidently displaced from their traditional natural habitat.

THE PROBLEM REGARDING STATUS

The central focus in the political programmes of the Izhma movement, and that of the leaders of the Pomorian movement, is on their demand to give both groups the status of numerically small indigenous peoples. The very essence of this issue and the relevant conceptual criticism is in detail discussed in the article by Sokolovskiy (2007) and therefore we will confine ourselves to recalling that the list of numerically small indigenous peoples, comprising 40 peoples and ethnic groups, was approved by the government of the Russian Federation in 2000. Granting this status to the group would mean state support for the preferential right to use the land, tax exemption for the use of natural resources, free licence to catch fish and marine animals, giving the young people from among the 'indigenous peoples' access to state-commissioned student places in institutions of higher education, and the right to alternative military service.

The status related problem is particularly acute as the Komi and Pomor, and the Sámi, Nenets and Khanty, are not only neighbours but often live in the same settlements, are engaged in the same economic activities, and face similar problems. Yet at the same time, some of these groups receive government support while the others do not. Thus on the Kola Peninsula, the Sámi and Komi live in the Lovozero, Krasnoshchelye and other villages, and part of them are engaged in reindeer herding, whereas today, there are 30 reindeer herders among the Sámi, and as many as 90 herders among the local Izhma Komi. In the Mezen Rayon of Arkhangelsk Oblast, the Nenets live together with the Pomor in the villages of Ruchyi, Dolgoshchelye, Koida, Maida, and the Nenets are exempted from taxes to use the reindeer pastures, whereas the households in the region were forced to pay land tax, compulsorily transferred to the budget. Moreover, the Nenets and Sámi, as the indigenous peoples, are allocated a quota for catching sea fish, although historically, this undertaking has been exclusively that of the Pomor, while the Sámi and the Nenets used to fish only in the inland rivers and lakes. Fishing quotas for sea fish are never fully utilised and are instead sold to the leaders of the Nenets and Sámi. At the same time, there is an insufficient fishing quota allocated to the Pomor, and they need to pay for this, as they also have to pay for their anticipated fishing capacity. A typical example: in 2008, the Kola Sámi were allocated a fishing quota for 250 tonnes of cod. Sergey Samoylov, the head of the Pomorian fishing cooperative Belomor intended to purchase this quota from the Sámi, as his vessels could not work for more than a month pursuant to the allocated quota. Samoylov had calculated that together with the Sámi fishing quota he could prolong the work on his vessels for another month and a half. However, the price per tonne of quota – five thousand roubles – was not satisfactory for the Sámi leaders as the same price had been paid the year before and now they wanted more. The business transaction did not take place. (Fieldwork notes of the authors 2008)

The status related issue has become particularly topical during recent years, as, for instance, the farms in the Mezen area that had previously been engaged in reindeer herding were not only forced to abandon this pursuit in the 1990s, but under the new circumstances are now obliged to pay for the use of pasture lands and territories in the tundra, whereas the Nenets of the Autonomous Okrug are exempt of such payments. The same applies to sea fishing, which is currently limited and basically illegal for the Pomor, and to fishing on lakes and rivers. Historically, there has been a certain

distribution of labour in the North, between the Nenets and the Pomor, facilitating the formation of different cooperative forms of work between the ethnic groups (Davydov 2006). The former division of labour between the Nenets and Pomor has been ruined, as well as the former cultural positioning of ethnic groups, giving rise to various conflicts between the titular population of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the indigenous population of the Arkhangelsk Oblast.

In Arkhangelsk, many specialists and a number of officials are willing to support the demands to grant special status to the Pomor. Twice, the administration of the oblast has sent a relevant official application to the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, with a request to support the demands of the Pomor and include them in the list of numerically small indigenous peoples. However, as the ethnologists from Moscow and St. Petersburg had provided negative feedback with regard to such a claim, the application has been denied.

On the Day of the World's Indigenous People, August 9, 2005, the National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk issued a press-release, stating that in accordance with the sociological survey conducted by the Foris Centre of Sociological and Marketing Research, 74 per cent of the inhabitants of Arkhangelsk support the idea of recognising the rights of the Pomor as a numerically small indigenous people of the North (*Press-reliz* 2005). Although in our view, the size of the sample was not sufficient to explicitly assess the opinions of the inhabitants of the Arkhangelsk Oblast, it is still possible to talk about substantial support for the Pomorian movement and the ideas proposed by them.

At the end of April 2007, the National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk sent an open letter to the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitriy Medvedev. The authors, speaking on behalf of the Pomor people, asked for help in "solving the problems of implementing the current federal legislation of Russia and international agreements with regard to nationality issues". The letter emphasised that "the Pomor have run into the impossibility of implementing the right to ethnic self-identification" as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Russian laws, and declared that the Pomorian culture is endangered and that measures need to be taken to provide government support in order to keep it from perishing. The same subject matter was discussed at the Congress of the Pomor People held in Arkhangelsk in September 2007.

The appeal to the deputy prime minister also stated that the administration of the Arkhangelsk Oblast had twice sent relevant proposals to the Ministry of Regional Development, yet proper measures were not taken. Instead of real measures to support the Pomor, federal agencies presented reference documents from the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and from the Kunstkamera, denying the existence of an independent Pomorian ethnicity. The signatories asked that the Ministry of Regional Development be instructed that it is unacceptable to make decisions regarding the existence or absence of individual ethnic communities in the country, without considering the opinion of these ethnic groups. The refusal to recognise the Pomor as a numerically small indigenous people of the North is seen ungrounded by the authors of the letter – they logically referred to the example of the Kamchadals, who were included in the list of numerically small indigenous peoples approved by the government of the Russian Federation, although ethnographers also consider them

an ethnographic group of Russians. The National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk requested that the question of the Pomor be reviewed by an independent commission, keeping in mind that it would be requisite to involve the Pomor themselves in this endeavour. (Shabayev 2007)

However, it is obvious that the special status is a kind of 'Red Book', necessary primarily for the rural inhabitants with a traditional lifestyle and, in particular, for Pomorian settlements and villages in the hinterlands of Arkhangelsk Oblast, where people live using subsistence methods (garden plots, hunting, fishing, etc.).

Giving special status to the Pomor could provide an additional stimulus for the development of depressed settlements and all the coastal regions. Since the Arkhangelsk "humanitarian initiatives" (Shabayev 2005b) that were supposed to stimulate local initiative and entrepreneurial activity of rural residents have failed, the municipal reform initiated by the federal centre has not been properly implemented, and farming could not be developed, rural settlements have practically no resources for development, and, on frequent occasions, not even enough for survival.

The specificity of the Izhma 'struggle' for special status is not only associated with the importance of reindeer herding for the local economy and the deeply rooted understanding of the reindeer herders as the representatives of numerically small indigenous people of the North, but also with other circumstances. Of great relevance to the Izhma leaders is the fact that the Izhma people were factually deemed as on par with the indigenous people, pursuant to decree No. 22 of the government of the Russian Federation, The List of Areas Inhabited by the Indigenous Peoples of the North, from 11 January 1993, the Izhma region of the Republic of Komi was listed as the habitat of indigenous people. At the time, the authorities of the republic considered this decision as fully legitimate and were not against granting special status to only groups of Komi, and this did not cause major opposition among the people involved in the Komi movement.

Today, however, the situation has changed, partly because of the fact that there is tougher competition for finance, land and resources. Nearly everywhere in the northern part of the Russian Federation, the peoples not marked as numerically small indigenous peoples use traditional hunting and fishing areas by violating federal laws, whereas such land use is necessary for survival and justified from the viewpoint of traditional ethics, as it is based on cultural-ecological stereotypes and conventional law. In this regard, the Udor Komi activist Albert Loginov, who is seeking to register the Community of the Udorachi Indigenous People, told us in an interview: "The state does not recognise us, and we will not recognise the state!"

In response to the government agencies' refusal to grant the Pomor the status they sought, the chairman of the National Cultural Autonomy of the Pomor of Arkhangelsk, P. Yesipov, planned to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (the motion was, however, not sent). In addition, the employees of the Institut für Ökologie und Aktions-Ethnologie (INFOE) in Cologne are willing to support the Izhma Komi, having prepared a report on Russia for the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Likewise, Russian ethnologists also support the demands of the Izhma Komi (Murashko 2007).

IN CONCLUSION

The Russian government, by way of its policy, is provoking a process of re-identification – a process of constructing new ethnic identities. Selective support from local cultural groups and ethnic communities, provided on the basis of formal characteristics (size of group membership, presence of people therein engaged in economic activities), creates conflict situations and encourages efforts towards cultural self-determination in situations where, previously, the prevalent endeavour was to become integrated into the dominant group.

Obviously, the process of re-identification and the construction of ethnicity is based on the desire of local groups to find means of adaptation to the ultimately changing socio-economic conditions at the end of the 20th century, which they had not previously encountered during their existence. Historical memory and ethnicity are resources seen by the local leaders as the more acceptable form, for the local groups, of adapting to the new living conditions.

Upon analysis of the situation as it relates to the Pomor and Izhma Komi, we actually have to evaluate two different cultural scenarios, the implementation of which presuppose the re-identification of the local cultural communities that once formed in the territories of the European North of the Russian Federation, and were thereafter exposed to the process of cultural erosion during the 20th century.

Firstly, in the case of the Izhma Komi, the process of re-identification is indeed obvious, accompanied by the attempts to reconceptualise group identity, and the actualisation of historical memory. Yet the main point of this process is not the cultural distancing of the group from its ethnic environment, rather it is the utilisation of ethnicity to protect group interests, and as a stimulus for socio-economic development. This is why the focus is on the distinctness of the Izhma Komi economy, their knowledge of the natural environment, indispensable for economic prosperity of the group, and their responsible environmental policy.

Secondly, re-identification reveals the process of constructing ethnicity, and a desire, through the use of historical memory, to consolidate the group as a new cultural community. Beneath this construction lie historical and cultural myths associated with the origin and specific mentality of the group. The leaders of the group pay particular attention to the re-creation and actualisation of cultural symbols – the celebration of the Pomorian New Year, organisation of the Margaritinskaya fair, folk festivals, etc.

A purely 'rural project' is being implemented in the first case, as Izhma identity is primarily upheld by those who are directly connected with land. The Izhma leaders are inhabitants of rural areas, and even the current head of the Izvatas movement, Valentina Anufriyeva moved from the city of Syktyvkar to the Izhma village of Mokhcha after she was elected to this position.

The second case is the 'urban project', as the majority of the inhabitants of the Arkhangelsk Oblast who registered themselves as Pomor during the 2002 census were town dwellers, and nearly all of the ideological leaders of the movement are urban intellectuals, relatively deeply integrated into the dominant cultural environment. The only exception in this regard is Samoylov, the chairman of the Council of Pomorian Elders, who still spends a lot of time in Arkhangelsk. It is not by chance that the leaders focus more on the symbolic elements of Pomorian culture and the character of the Pomor,

whereas the issue of sustaining traditional economies, primarily fishing and hunting, is being talked about but is not central in the ideology of the movement and in its political programmes. In any case, the movement has not devised comprehensive and profound strategies to maintain and develop fisheries (in Pomorian villages). Opponents of the movement have already noticed this gap and are actively exploiting it in the debates that take place regularly in the information space of the Arkhangelsk Oblast.

Both of the cultural scenarios mentioned above are not yet in the process of implementation, and it is difficult to say which one of them will become a reality, and how successful this process will be. However, we can say with confidence that these cultural phenomena will not be without traces in the cultural development of the regions where these scenarios will be implemented.

SOURCES

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Fieldwork notes of the authors 2008 – Audiorecording of the interview with the representatives of the Pomor movement in Arkhangelsk in 2008.

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