

Lev Centrih

The Demise of Collectivization in Slovenia: A Case Study of the Area around the Settlement Ig near Ljubljana in 1952

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will demonstrate the demise of collectivization in Slovenia through the analysis of a single case, specifically the rural area around the settlement of Ig near Ljubljana, in the spring of 1952.* At that time, peasants across Slovenia began to withdraw en masse from peasant labour cooperatives (*kmečke delovne zadruge*, KDZs) – the Slovenian-Yugoslav counterparts to the Soviet *kolkhozes*. Unlike their Soviet counterparts, however, Slovenian peasants overwhelmingly retained ownership of their land while being members of KDZs –

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a distinction that proved crucial. According to the law, peasants were permitted to leave cooperatives only after three years of membership.¹ Since most peasants had joined in 1949, the mass departures from cooperatives in 1952 indicate that they seized the first opportunity to leave. Collectivization in Slovenia reached its peak in 1951, when 381 KDZs were established. According to Zdenko Čepič, only around 5% of the peasant population in Slovenia in 1952 were members of KDZs. According to Melissa K. Bokovoy, 10.7% of all arable land in Slovenia in 1951 was used by KDZs. This suggests that the extent of collectivization in Slovenia was relatively low, especially when compared to the Yugoslav average: 23.6% of all arable land was under KDZs according to Bokovoy in 1951, and 18.48% according to Dragan Veselinov in 1952.² By the end of 1951, collectivization had stalled not only in Slovenia but across Yugoslavia. Due to peasant resistance, the reluctance of local authorities, and the underwhelming performance of the KDZs, the Yugoslav authorities initiated the first reorganisation of the cooperatives. This reorganization already anticipated the closure of unproductive KDZs – a move that effectively marked the beginning of the end of collectivization.³ By 1954, only 43 KDZs had survived in Slovenia; moreover, the majority of those remaining were dissolved the following year as well.⁴

Collectivization in the Ig area was carried out in a community heavily burdened by the war. During the Second World War, the vicinity of this area was the scene of ruthless military conflict not only between the partisans and Italian/German occupiers but particularly between the partisans and their domestic armed adversaries. The war took an enormous toll in human lives and brought economic devastation. The Ig area was, after 1945, administratively part of the Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts (*Okraj Ljubljana – okolica*, OLO), which had a population of 61,782 residents in 1948.⁵ In the early post-war years, territories in Slovenia and Yugoslavia were governed by people's committees (*ljudski odbori*), which acted as authorities over broader areas encompassing multiple settlements and villages. Below them, individual settlements had their own Local

1 *Uradni list FLRJ*, No. 49, 1949, 713, Art. 30, Temeljni zakon o kmetijskih zadrugah.

2 Čepič, *Kolektivizacija*, 938. Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 147–48. Veselinov, *Sumrak*, 37. Cf. Čeferin, *Kotarski poslovni savezi*, 1188. In fact, Bokovoy most likely refers to the total available agricultural land, including forests, meadows, and pastures. The *Yugoslav Cooperative Encyclopedia* (1957) reports a very similar total area of land available to KDZs in 1951 – 76,796 hectares – compared to Bokovoy's figure of 79,478 hectares. However, the *Encyclopedia* does not define this as arable land but more broadly as the »total area« (*ukupne površine*). Interestingly, the *Encyclopedia* also notes that Slovenian cooperative members contributed only 52,902 hectares of land to the KDZs, meaning that the remaining land was most likely provided by the Land Fund (*Zemljiški sklad*), which administered nationalized land resulting from the agrarian reform in Slovenia. For a more detailed explanation of this issue, see note 46 in this text.

3 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 149–52.

4 Čeferin, *Kotarski poslovni savezi*, 1188. Čepič, *Oris*, 183–85.

5 *FNRI. Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948*, Vol. 1, 263.

People's Committees (*krajevni ljudski odbori*, KLOs); for example, the settlement of Ig had its own KLO. A 1952 reform initiated the process of abolishing KLOs and merging settlements into municipalities (*občine*), with Ig designated as the planned administrative center of the new municipality. Various political organizations existed at all levels of local government – including the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF), the Antifascist Women's Front (*Antifašistična fronta žensk*), the People's Youth of Slovenia (*Ljudska mladina Slovenije*), and the Union of the Fighters (*Zveza borcev*) – all under the dominant influence of the Communist Party of Slovenia (*Komunistična partija Slovenije*, KPS), whose control extended deeply into local governance as well as into enterprises and KDZs. At the local level (KLO, municipality), membership across these structures – political and economic – often overlapped, further reinforcing the Party's authority.

Although the area of Ig had a relatively small population (3,442 in 1953)⁶, as many as five KDZs were operating here by the spring of 1952. For comparison, there were only 15 KDZs in the entire Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts in 1950.⁷ Nevertheless, these KDZs had vanished by 1953. The 1953 census indicates that only one individual in the whole Ig municipality was recorded as a member of a KDZ.⁸

Ig and its surroundings during the war and the early years that followed have already been the subject of historical research. Using a microhistorical approach, Ferdo Gestrin thoroughly elaborated on wartime events and the roles of various groups and individuals. The appendices to Gestrin's work are particularly valuable for the present study, as they contain extensive lists organized by individual settlements in the Ig area, with brief biographical notes on OF activists, partisan fighters, internees, members of Anti-Communist Militia, and Home Guard units who were active between 1941 and 1945. These lists also include the names of victims. Gestrin compiled this information using archival sources, data preserved in the 1980s by local socio-political organizations, and oral testimonies.⁹ Since several individuals from Gestrin's lists and descriptions of wartime events in the main body of his book also appear in the documents consulted in the course of this research, it is possible – at least to some extent – to reconstruct the wartime and immediate postwar trajectories of certain key local figures. Naturally, this must be done with great caution. In small village communities, it is not uncommon for multiple people to share the same name and surname. Postwar documents, however, do not always contain sufficient identifying information to

6 FNRJ. *Popis stanovništva 1953*, Vol. XIV, 325.

7 Čepič, *Oris pojavnih oblik kmetijski politike v letih 1945–1960*, 185.

8 FNRJ. *Popis stanovništva 1953*, Vol. XII, 489.

9 Gestrin, *Svet*, 143–202. A more recent study on the same topic, albeit with a focus on the violence perpetrated by the quisling forces: Piškurić, *Prispevek*.

determine with complete certainty whether a particular individual corresponds to the one listed by Gestrin.

In her monograph, largely based on oral sources, Jelka Piškurić presents an in-depth portrayal of daily life in and around Ljubljana during the socialist era. At the same time, in one of her articles, she provides a detailed examination of the economic, political, and everyday life in Ig from 1945 to 1952. Since the thematic scope of her research is broader, Piškurić understandably dedicates very little space to the topic of collectivization. Piškurić wrote more about local cooperatives in the areas of trade, craftsmanship, and post-war reconstruction.¹⁰

Collectivization in the Ig area during the early post-war period was partially addressed in the monograph by Lev Centrih and Polona Sitar from the perspective of the integrated peasant economy. A more comprehensive depiction of collectivization in Slovenia can be found in the works of historians Zdenko Čepič, Mateja Čoh Kladnik, Žarko Lazarević, Marta Rendla, and Janja Sedlaček.¹¹

In this article, I will analyze the decline of collectivization in the Ig area, particularly based on two documents: 1. Report on the Extraordinary Review of the KDZ »Ljubo Šercer« Brest (November 12–14, 1951). 2. Political and Economic Analysis of the Ig Local People's Committee Area near Ljubljana (April 20, 1952). The first report, written by OLO representatives at the request of the Executive Committee of the OLO, spans 20 pages and describes in detail the collapsing KDZ in Brest, a village near Ig, focusing on the poor relations between cooperative members and the resilience of private family farming within the collective agricultural enterprise.¹² The second, around 100-page report was submitted by the members of the Party Revision Commission at the request of the Territorial Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, OLO. This report comprises 22 appendices, which include reviews of individual economic organizations and statements from various individuals. The Commission had planned as many as 27 meetings with different local stakeholders, including members of basic party organizations (*osnovne partijske organizacije*, OPO), boards of agricultural cooperatives, and local people's committees.¹³ As Piškurić concludes that the archival materials of the socio-political organizations in Ig, such as the KPS, the Antifascist Women's Front, the People's Youth of Slovenia, and the Union of Fighters, for the period 1945–1952, have actually not been preserved, rich document »Political

10 Piškurić, »Bili nekoč so lepi časi.«, 60–61. Piškurić, Ig, 317.

11 Centrih and Sitar, *Pol kmet*, 108–19. Čepič, Oris, 182–87. Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi*. Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina*, 165–77.

12 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951.

13 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Politična in gospodarska analiza področja KLO Ig pri Ljubljani, April 20, 1952. Since the report comprises several separate documents, I am citing only the titles of the latter. However, some of these documents are neither paginated, dated, nor have proper titles – in such cases, I am citing the first line of the document, which meaningfully summarizes its content.

and Economic Analysis» at least partly fills this void.¹⁴ The Commission, which submitted this report, conducted interviews with the most relevant local KPS members, thereby providing a colourful picture of the political life in the area. Regarding my topic, the document also offers valuable reports about all five KDZs in the area.

The process of dismantling collectivization in Slovenia between 1951 and 1952 was marked by the authorities permitting peasants to withdraw from KDZs, as these proved less profitable than the private sector.¹⁵ Collectivization was fading, yet a coherent framework for a new socialist agricultural policy had not yet been formulated. The Party still held political power, but it had yet to determine the precise direction in which to channel it. The case of Ig demonstrates this, as the Party's Revision Commission conducted investigations not only within local Party organizations but also in civil authorities, enterprises, KDZs, and cooperatives, doing so seamlessly and as a matter of course. However, it was equally incapable of providing explanations for the numerous issues it encountered, let alone proposing tangible solutions. At the outset of collectivization, the Party anticipated the most serious resistance from the »capitalist, exploitative elements« in the countryside, popularly labelled as *kulaks*.¹⁶ However, by its end, at least in Ig, it encountered yet another unlikely adversary – one emerging from within its ranks, consisting of active Party members, war veterans, and local officials serving in government bodies, cooperatives, enterprises, and collective farms, who were deeply divided among themselves. In her study of Yugoslav collectivization and its failure, focusing mainly on Serbia and Croatia, Bokovoy outlined the resistance of lower-level Party cadres.¹⁷ The case of Ig confirms that local, unreliable Party cadres had played a pivotal role in collectivization. Still, it also suggests that the dysfunctional performance of the latter was, in many cases, based on the interpersonal brawls between partisan veterans, as well as on their dissatisfaction and resentment for reasons often well beyond collectivization itself. More specifically, collectivization, in which war veterans were obliged to participate, further deepened and intensified their mutual conflicts.

In the first section, I will analyze the economic and political issues in the Ig area at the end of collectivization, considering the various conflicts between officials in local governance and enterprises, as well as rank-and-file Party members. In the second section, I will analyse the issues faced by the KDZs in the Ig municipality. A conclusion follows.

14 Piškurić, Ig, 310.

15 Čepič, Oris, 187. Čeferin, Kotarski poslovni savezi, 1188.

16 Resolucija o osnovnih nalogah partije na področju socialistične preobrazbe vasi in pospeševanja kmetijske proizvodnje, in: Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi*, 115.

17 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 126–34. Bokovoy, *Collectivization*, 296–97, 310–11.

CONFLICTS IN THE IG AREA

In the spring of 1952, the secretary¹⁸ of the municipal committee of the KPS Ig found himself in despair. According to his testimony, the situation was hopeless; neither he nor the committee was able to manage it. The problems had accumulated to such an extent that he lacked both the strength and the time to address them. »A member of the Communist Party in Ig can succeed only if he is a hypocrite.« It was not slander; this was a position openly presented to the Commission by prominent members of the KLO Ig, led by its president, Janez. Moreover, even the Party secretary himself agreed with this stance.¹⁹ What was going on?

In 1952, the KPS Ig municipal committee oversaw several basic Party organizations encompassing members from the surrounding villages, enterprises, and KDZs. These included Ig, the Ig Teritorial Metal Company (*Okrajno kovinsko podjetje Ig*), Iška vas and KDZ, Tomišelj and KDZ, Golo and KDZ, Škrilje, Zapotok – Vidno and KDZ, and Želimlje. At that time, local people's committees, as administrative bodies of smaller areas, were being dissolved. The mentioned villages (along with several others) were in the process of merging into a single municipality, with its seat in Ig. Regrettably, the Party commission did not provide a detailed overview of KPS membership by locality and work organizations. However, some of the available data indicate that the numbers of Party members were, at least in some areas, far from negligible. A particularly notable example is the village of Zapotok, with 82 inhabitants, of whom approximately 35 were reported to be members of the Party. The village of Golo, with 153 inhabitants, had more than a respectable 30 Party members, while village Škrilje, with 145 inhabitants, had 16 Party members. In contrast, Ig, with a population of 807, had only a modest 38 Party members. However, Ig boasted nearly 300 members of the Liberation Front, the mass organization established in 1941 to fight against the occupiers. Among the 38 employees at the Ig Teritorial Metal Industry, 9 were Party members. We do not have precise data on how many members of the KDZs were communists. Still, the numbers mentioned above, as well as the Report, indicate that all local KDZs, at least for a time, certainly had Party members, particularly the KDZs in Iška vas and Zapotok. It is also evident from the report that, besides Ig, even smaller villages, such as Golo, Iška vas, Zapotok, and Brest, had their local socio-political organisations, including OE, the People's Youth of Slovenia, and the Union of Fighters. For example, the village of Golo had 39 OE

18 In this article, to ensure protection of personal data, all names and surnames of individuals mentioned in the cited documents have either been omitted or altered.

19 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Partijski sestav Občinskega komiteta Ig, 2; Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.

members in 1952 (down from 78), and village Brest, with 214 inhabitants in 1953, had eight active members of the People's Youth of Slovenia; this number had significantly dropped since 1948, when they claimed as many as 30 members.²⁰

A significant portion of the membership in the mentioned socio-political organizations predictably consisted of red partisan veterans and activists, both male and female, who had been actively involved already during the war. Throughout 1941–1945, Ig and its surrounding area belonged to the so-called Ljubljana Province (*Provincia di Lubiana, Ljubljanska pokrajina*), which experienced the highest population loss of all the regions in Slovenia – 9.6%, compared to a national average of 6.7%.²¹ The Ig area suffered particularly severely. According to the 1948 population census, the ratio of men to women (in numbers) in selected villages was as follows: Škrilje (65:97), Zapotok (27:56), Ig (310:369), Iška vas (90:142), Brest (87:95), Tomišelj (86:132), Vrbljene (82:114), Želimlje (92:141), (Dolenje/Gorenje) Golo (63: 78).²²

The course of wartime events in the Ig area largely reflected the complex circumstances prevailing in the Ljubljana Province at the time. The National Liberation Movement, led by the Communists, engaged in a struggle not only against the Italian occupiers but also against groups and individuals who, before the war, were predominantly aligned with the Catholic right. Compared to the German occupation of Styria (eastern part of Slovenia), they viewed the Italian annexation of the Ljubljana Province as the lesser evil. Considering the armed resistance, which, due to the leading role of the Communists, was seen as part of a path toward a socialist revolution, a significant portion of the former Catholic political establishment considered collaboration with the occupiers to be a completely acceptable option. The conflict between the two sides finally erupted in the broader Ig area between spring and autumn 1942. When the red partisan army briefly liberated the Ig area in late spring of 1942, expanded the activities of the OF, and gained a significant number of local supporters, it did not limit itself to executing only actual collaborators with the occupiers and political adversaries, but also targeted completely innocent people, even women and children, including entire families of the local Roma community. In the summer, the Italian army struck at the partisans, but the greatest victims were among the civilian population. Numerous houses were burned and looted by the Italians, many were killed, and many more were deported to concentration camps. From Ig alone, 152

20 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Partijski sestav Občinskega komiteta na Igu; Poročilo o pregledu KOZ Golo, April 4 and 5, 1952; Poročilo o pregledu članstva KP v OPO Ig, April 9, 1952; Ig, 2; Politična analiza Okrajne kovinske industrije na Igu, April 5, 1952, 1; Sedaj vključeni v OPO Škrilje, April 10, 1952, 3; Brest.

21 Čepič, Guštin, and Troha, *Slovenija*, 425–37.

22 FNRJ. *Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948*, Vol. 1, 264–67.

people were taken, including those from the wider area, for a total of 726. From the autumn of 1942 onwards, the anti-partisan side began to organize militarily in Ljubljana Province. Under the patronage of the Italians, it was first formed into the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia (*Milizia Volontaria Anti Comunista*). From the autumn of 1943, under the supreme command of the German SS police, it became the Slovenian Home Guard (*Slowenische Landwehr, Slovensko domobranstvo*). The National Liberation Movement labelled both as White – Guardism (*belogardizem*). The villages in the Ig area were subsequently divided into two factions: red and white. For example, the settlement of Ig provided 97 partisans, but also 68 Anti-Communist Militia members or Home Guards. German and Home Guard offensives, which included death squads that, from late autumn 1943 to the summer of 1944, executed dozens of partisan family members and activists of the National Liberation Movement, effectively dismantled the OF in the lowland villages around Ig by the end of the war. Everything suggests that the OF was only able to survive in the hillside villages of Golo and Škrilje. However, as the war was drawing to a close in the spring of 1945, the situation changed dramatically. Around 170 civilians from the villages in the Ig area fled from the new authorities. Those Home Guards who were unable to escape abroad were mostly executed.²³ In the KLO Ig area, the authorities immediately after the war confiscated the property of 30 individuals, 13 of whom had all their property seized. These individuals were identified as members of quisling formations or their sympathizers.²⁴

After the war, the new revolutionary authorities were compelled to rebuild almost entirely the socio-political organizations (KPS, OF, etc.) that served as the foundation of their power from scratch. According to the report, they were successful on that matter, at least in appearance. According to Piškurič's research, the new post-war authorities in Ig also achieved some success in the fields of economy and public utilities. Ig, for example, acquired an industrial enterprise (Territorial Metal Industry Ig, *Okrajna kovinska industrija Ig*) in 1948, which had developed from a nationalized locksmith workshop. However, it struggled with low productivity and a shortage of necessary materials. Similarly, already in the early postwar years, Ig also had an agricultural cooperative store (for the purchase and sale of goods), a repair cooperative, a cinema, and even a doctor and a nurse.²⁵ As we have seen, even collectivization in the Ig area progressed relatively well. The proximity to Ljubljana provided the residents with additional employment and other opportunities.

23 Gestrin, *Svet*, 61–77, 127, 141, 186–94, 202. Piškurič, *Prispevek*.

24 Piškurič, *Ig*, 312.

25 *Ibidem*, 310, 317–20.

A brief overview of the political and economic developments in Ig gives the impression that, despite the ongoing severe shortages and general hardships, life has begun to normalize gradually, as the revolutionary authorities had hoped. In fact, it has not. The situation was far from normal, as these new institutions, enterprises/cooperatives, KDZs, and socio-political associations became battlegrounds between different individuals and cliques.

Testimonies recorded by the Party Revision Commission from several Party members indicate that a significant internal conflict had emerged within the municipal Party committee of the Ig during that period. The secretary of the committee began his political life in the spring of 1942 as a fighter in the 5th Partisan Battalion of the Notranjska Detachment (*Notranjski odred*).²⁶ In 1952, he was also the director of the Territorial Metal Industry Ig. He allegedly lobbied – despite the municipal Party committee's opposition – for a peasant with 12 ha of land, with whom he was connected, to be granted a concession for the local inn. According to the same testimonies, the secretary naturally denied the accusations and shifted the blame to the corrupt practices of others within the company. During the committee meeting, he was also once criticized for the fact that his wife, who had formerly been a good Party member, was now teaching children catechism. A serious accusation in those days. On top of that, it was reportedly common knowledge among Party members that their secretary was having an affair with a woman employed at the company. Regardless of the validity of these claims, it is undeniable that the Party secretary's authority was next to zero.²⁷

Nevertheless, the Commission recorded by far the most criticism and complaints against the president of KLO Ig, Janez, who apparently had started his political career as an OF supporter as early as 1941, rather than as a partisan fighter in the Šercer brigade, and had achieved the rank of lieutenant.²⁸ Most of what was said about him came from numerous witnesses from Ig and Iška vas, and prompts the question: what, if anything, did he do right during his time as president of KLO Ig? When the parish land was partially expropriated, it is said that Janez, along with the president of the Agricultural Cooperative, and the secretary of KLO Ig benefited from it. Some people criticized Janez for being the initiator of the KDZ in Iška vas, only to lose interest and neglect it entirely. According to one account, Janez from the »Territoy« (likely the Territorial Party Committee) brought an instruction that all former partisan fighters had to join the KDZ, which they subsequently did. Later, he allegedly received agricultural goods from the KDZ, for which he reportedly owed 12,000 dinars, all while continuing to

26 Gestrin, *Svet*, 62.

27 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.

28 Gestrin, *Svet*, 58, 149, 162.

receive food ration cards. Additionally, he was accused in one instance of unfair tax calculations, appropriating construction materials meant for the cooperative home in Iška vas, and withholding part of the payment for a cow from a peasant during a compensation process for mandatory procurement. It is essential to note that the last accusation originated from the Party Secretary. However, the most serious accusation against Janez, the president of KLO, was related to the arrest of three KDZ members from Iška vas in 1950. Among the locals, there was a strong belief that Janez was responsible for this, as the arrests occurred shortly after he had been criticized for doing nothing for the KDZ. One of those arrested at the time was also his predecessor as president of KLO Ig and a Party member, who was accused on that occasion of being a Cominform sympathiser.²⁹ At the time, this was a grave accusation. Only two years had passed since the Yugoslav Party's conflict with the Cominform, and many alleged – as well as genuine – sympathizers of Stalin's line within international communism faced not only expulsions from the Party, but also full-scale political persecution, including internment.³⁰

According to one communist from Iška vas, the local Party was »only concerned with who would be taxed more, and there wasn't a single pair of members in the village who could stick together, as the division was so deep that no one could reconcile it. « Another villager remarked, »The Whites (*beli, belogardisti*) stand firmly together, whereas the partisans are so consumed by hatred that they would claw each other's eyes out.«³¹ It is unclear whom the speaker was specifically referring to in this instance. Gestrin's research reveals that very few former Anti-Communist Militia or Home Guard members returned home unless they ultimately joined the partisans.³² For the most part, they were either executed after the war, fled abroad, or their fate remains unknown. The Commission's report explicitly mentions only one »White Guardist« (*BE-ga*) who returned after seven years of forced labour and declared his intent for revenge. (His name is missing in Gastrin's list of Anti-Communist Militia members and Home Guards in the area.)³³ Partisan veterans also counted the priest from Ig among the organizers of the White Guard, and it appears they extended this label to the remaining relatives of Home Guard members as well.

At this point, two preliminary conclusions are possible. First, the relations between the KLO as the administrative apparatus and the local Party organization, the bearer of political power, were very poor. Second, regardless of the

29 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Iška Vas – Poročila o izjavah članov.

30 Banac, *With Stalin*, 145–220.

31 SI ZAL, LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Iška Vas – Poročila o izjavah članov Iška vas.

32 Gestrin, *Svet*, 186–94.

33 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.

truth of the accusations, there is a strong likelihood that Janez, the president of KLO, was a much more influential figure than the local Party secretary. While the questionable actions of the Party secretary are mainly discussed in relation to the Territorial Metal Industry Ig, the name of the president of KLO surfaces in nearly all other scandals. In addition, Janez certainly had connections with higher authorities at the OLO level.

It is necessary to mention other conflicts that were taking place in the area around Ig at the time. The members of the Union of the Fighters in Ig complained that the Agricultural Cooperative did not distribute goods fairly. (The irregularities in the cooperative's operations were also confirmed by the Commission.) In the village organization of the Zapotok Union of Fighters, for example, there were disputes over the question of who (does not) deserves the status of the holder of the prestigious Commemorative Medal of the Partisans of 1941. (Disputes over this issue were also taking place elsewhere at the time.) Furthermore, the communists from the villages of Visoko and Zapotok had a falling out and established separate OPOs. According to the testimony of a member of the Party from Visoko, the members of the Zapotok OPO allegedly argued at Party meetings mainly over who would receive financial resources and materials, most likely for the reconstruction of homesteads.³⁴ The villagers of Golo are said to have opposed their annexation to the municipality of Ig because they had heard rumours that they would be taxed more heavily. In addition, despite having 30 organized communists, the village of Golo did not have a Party secretary, and the cell meetings had not been organized for over a year. According to the president of the local OF and a member of the Party, the villagers of Golo were allegedly promised that the village would be electrified if they participated in the elections to the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia (*Ljudska skupščina Ljudske republike Slovenije*, LRS). The promise was later not fulfilled. It appears that a significant amount of discontent was caused by the distribution of cement, which was not made available to everyone at the same price. A local curiosity was undoubtedly the former president of the KLO of Golo, a landowner with 19ha, allegedly a church loyalist (*klerikalec*) before the war, an OF activist since 1942, who was expelled from the Party in 1950 for unlawfully appropriating food ration cards and industrial coupons. During his tenure as president of the KLO, he failed to fulfill his obligations regarding the mandatory delivery of agricultural produce. Despite his expulsion, he refused to return his Party membership card until he received an official certificate of exclusion.³⁵

34 Ibid., (Statements by Party members) Visoko; Nekaterne značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Zapotok, 2.

35 Ibid., (Statements by individuals, undated) Golo; (Statements by individuals) Golo, April 10, 1952, 2.

DEADLOCK IN COLLECTIVIZATION IN THE IG AREA

The agrarian reform of 1945–1947 did not radically transform the ownership structure of landholdings in Slovenia. Only about one fifth of Slovenia's prewar land area actually changed ownership as a result of the reform. As Zdenko Čepič has noted, the agrarian reform simultaneously pursued social as well as national objectives. On the one hand, it sought to abolish the exploitative character of private landownership, while on the other, it aimed to eliminate foreign ownership (particularly that of Germans) and to punish collaborators with the occupying forces. At no point, however, was the abolition of private landownership as such envisaged. To be sure, among those dispossessed the majority were landowners for whom farming did not constitute their primary occupation; nevertheless, their share of all confiscated land in Slovenia was marginal (only 5%). In terms of the extent of land lost, the greatest losers of the agrarian reform were non-Slovenes, large estate owners (holding more than 45 ha of land), and the Catholic Church. By contrast, Slovenian peasants who cultivated their land independently, but who exceeded the landholding maximum – set at between 20 and 35 ha of arable land and 10 to 25 ha of forest, amounting in total to 45 ha of land – represented only a negligible share among the dispossessed. Their portion of all confiscated land under the agrarian reform amounted to a mere 1.5%. The largest share of all confiscated land in Slovenia, however, consisted of forests (60%). The share of privately owned land in Slovenia for the year 1949 is estimated to have been 82% or more specifically, 93% of all arable land. At that time, the state was a significant owner of forests, with a 28% ownership share in 1948.³⁶

The structure of land ownership in the Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts in 1948, before the start of collectivization, significantly deviated from the Slovenian average. While in Slovenia at that time, approximately 43% of all peasant households comprised land of up to 5 hectares, and 23% ranged between 5 and 10 ha. In the OLO Ljubljana – Outskirts, only about 25% fell into the former category, and 23% into the latter. In comparison, as many as 52% of all peasant households exceeded 10 ha in size.³⁷ Although I do not have specific data on land holdings in the municipality of Ig, the key documents for this study from 1951/52 frequently mention the presence and role of well-off peasants in the area. The Commission's report, for instance, mentions several estates in the village of Zapotok, which were said to cover between 20 and 30 ha of land. However, these estates were reportedly managed by the widows of fallen partisans or hostages – individuals whom the occupiers had killed in retaliation for partisan actions. These estates

36 Čepič, *Agrarna reforma*, 81–88, 111–38, 245, 248. *Uradni list SNOS in NVS*, No. 62, 1945, Zakon o agrarni reformi in kolonizaciji v Sloveniji.

37 FNRI. *Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948*, Vol. X, XLI, 137.

were either poorly cultivated or not cultivated at all, and they were assigned a low taxable value, like that of small holdings, most likely as a form of social assistance.³⁸ The Commission also recorded the case of the president of the Zapotok Union of fighters, a Party member, and the first president of the local KDZ, who contributed as much as 19 ha of land to the cooperative. However, by 1952, he unilaterally withdrew, claiming that neither the cooperative nor the KLO provided him with the social assistance he needed.³⁹

The above-presented cases suggest that the partisan movement, although radically leftist, also enjoyed support from certain members of the local peasantry's upper stratum. After all, it was no coincidence that even wealthy peasants in Slovenia could become members of the Party. An unsettling assessment emerged among the leading Slovenian communists by the end of the war: small and medium-sized peasants were mainly on the opposing political and military side. In contrast, the well-off peasants were said to be cooperating with and supporting the national liberation struggle.⁴⁰ It was no coincidence that, in the Slovenian context, the 1945 reform set the maximum private landholding relatively high – at a full 45 ha of total land.

In practice, however, the share of wealthy peasants among the peasantry in the KPS ranks was negligibly small – merely 0.62% in the autumn of 1950, or a few dozen individuals.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, this was influenced by the policy of exceptionally high taxes and obligations related to mandatory procurement after the war, which posed significant problems and challenges, particularly for better-off peasants. Not to mention severe penalties for not meeting procurement quotas, including prison terms, forced labour, and even confiscation of property.⁴² As will be demonstrated in the continuation of this paper, threats of repression by cooperative activists also played a role in the collectivization campaigns. For this reason, it was not uncommon for better-off Slovenian peasants to join KDZs, as they saw them as an opportunity to alleviate the heavy obligations imposed by the state, or simply to avoid bullying. Despite the prejudices and proverbial distrust that leading communists harboured toward wealthy peasants, Franc Popit, the chairman of the Peasants' Commission (*Kmečka komisija*) at the Central Committee of the KPS, stated at the end of 1949 that it was a good thing that the *kulaks* had joined the KDZs.⁴³ The authorities hoped that the latter would contribute positively to the productivity of the KDZs. Yet as early as the following year

38 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Golo-Škrilje, Golo, April 9, 1952, 2.

39 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok, 1.

40 Čepič, *Agrarna reforma*, 66.

41 Drnovšek, *Zapiski*, 228.

42 Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi*, 49–100.

43 Ibid., 145.

(December 1950), the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KPS expressed concern that there were already too many *kulaks* – large peasants – within the KDZs. According to the Politburo's assessment, at that time as many as 20–25% of cooperatives in Slovenia were dominated by *kulaks*. It was estimated that 10% of all large Slovenian peasants were members of KDZs, while the membership proportion of small and medium-sized peasants accounted for only 4–5% of all peasants in Slovenia. Party leaders were hardly reassured by another statistical indicator, which suggested that smallholders and landless peasants (*brezzemljaši*) made up as much as 61% of KDZ membership. They emphasized in particular that this latter figure did not accurately reflect the situation in individual territories and cooperatives. The Territory of Ljutomer – Northeastern Slovenia, for instance, was singled out as one where large peasants predominated.⁴⁴ In this context, the situation of the KDZs around Ig appears particularly interesting.

In the following section, I will examine in greater detail five KDZs in the vicinity of Ig, namely those in the villages of Brest, Vrbljene, Iška vas, Zapotok, and Golo. According to Bokovoy, the average Slovenian KDZ in June 1951 encompassed 208 hectares of land.⁴⁵ By comparison, the five KDZs from Ig area appear rather small, with an average size of only 130.58 ha of all land available in 1951/1952. The picture, however, changes once we consider the number of peasant households they comprised. Bokovoy reports that in June 1951 the average Slovenian KDZ included 22.5 families, which statistically amounted to 9.2 ha of land per household. In contrast, the KDZs from Ig area comprised fewer than half as many families – on average 10.2 peasant households – resulting in a higher ratio of 12.8 hectares per household. Two cases stand out in particular: the KDZ in Zapotok, where the average reached 18.5 ha per household, and Brest, with 15.4 ha. It is true, however, that the share of arable land (fields and gardens) compared with meadows, pastures, and forests was small in all five KDZs around Ig. The KDZ in Vrbljene had the largest amount of arable land – 27.37 ha – which also had the highest number of peasant households (13). A relatively large amount of arable land was also found in Brest – 21.88 ha – despite its having the fewest households. Since Bokovoy does not provide such detailed data, I refer here to an analysis by the Ministry of Agriculture of the LRS concerning the state of KDZs at the end of 1949. According to these figures, there were 353 KDZs in Slovenia at that time, each averaging 213 ha of land, comprising 23 families, but with only 56 ha of arable land, excluding meadows.⁴⁶

44 Drnovšek, *Zapisniki*, 239–41. Cf. SI AS 1589 III, box 46, fol. 1495, Poročilo z oceno situacije zadružništva v okraju Ljutomer glede na nadaljnjo krepitev in razširitev, November 22, 1950, 3–4.

45 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 148.

46 SI AS 674, box 98, Analiza dohodkov, izdatkov in razdelitve netto dohodka v kmetijskih delovnih zadrukah Ljudske republike Slovenije (1949), 1 and 1 (Zaključki). Cf. Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 121. It

Despite some pragmatism that existed within the KPS at the time, the case of the failing KDZ named after Ljubo Šercer in Brest near Ig in the autumn of 1951 highlights the resistance of wealthy peasants to the cooperative business model. At that time, seven families were members of the KDZ. According to the Party Revision Commission, the local landowners joined the KDZ to avoid tax burdens and mandatory procurement quotas. Its report also reveals that these peasants had their 1948 income tax debts erased as an »incentive for the newly established cooperative.«⁴⁷ It did not help. According to OLO representatives, five were wealthy, one medium-scale, and one a small-scale peasant. There is no information about how much land individual peasants specifically owned. However, the total amount of land contributed to the KDZ was 107.84 ha (including 21.88 ha of fields and gardens). The members collectively retained an additional 6.19 ha for their house plots (*ohišnice*). It is safe to assume that the wealthiest member families could own significantly more than 20 hectares each, not to mention forests, which they did not contribute as their share of membership to the cooperative.⁴⁸

By comparing the data from this document with the brief biographies of activists, partisans, internees, and Militia/Home Guard members from Brest, as presented in Gestrin's study, it is possible to confirm – with a relatively high degree of certainty – the wartime involvement of three KDZ members, based on matching names, surnames, and details such as economic and marital status. With somewhat less certainty, the same method also allows us to infer the likely wartime roles of several other cooperative members.

Jože, the son of a well-off peasant, initially served as an activist, assisting the partisans. He was later sent to the Rab concentration camp by the Italians. After his release, he was forcibly conscripted into the Anti-Communist Militia outpost in Ig, but eventually escaped to join the partisans.⁴⁹ A married couple, Andrej and Ana, were both activists of the liberation movement and were arrested by the Home Guard in 1944. She was then sent to Ravensbrück, while he was sent to

should be noted again that there is a certain ambiguity in Bokovoy's presentation of data concerning the amount of arable land supposedly available to Slovenian KDZs. For 1949, Bokovoy states that all Slovenian KDZs had at their disposal 75,121 hectares out of a total of 736,000 hectares of arable land, on the basis of which she concludes that they accounted for 10.2% of all arable land in Slovenia. This reasoning creates the impression that the average Slovenian KDZ at that time possessed around 212 hectares of arable land. However, the cited document from the Ministry of Agriculture of the LRS for 1949 indicates that 212 hectares represents, at most, the total area of *all* types of land combined. The ministry's report lists almost the same overall area under Slovenian KDZs – 75,169 hectares – as Bokovoy does, but with the following composition: fields and gardens (15,360 ha), orchards (2,105 ha), vineyards (2,349 ha), meadows (14,058 ha), pastures (19,019 ha), forests (19,855 ha), fishponds (19 ha), marshes and reed beds (144 ha), and barren land (2,259 ha).

47 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Tomišelj, April 7, 1952, 1.

48 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 1, 5.

49 Gestrin, *Svet*, 151.

Dachau.⁵⁰ With much greater caution, we can also identify the president of KDZ Brest and a Party member, Janko, a small-scale peasant, from Gestrin's list. It is possible that during the war, he was a member of the OF field committee (*terenski odbor OF*), arrested by the Home Guard in early 1944, and later sent to Dachau, where he was subjected to medical experiments.⁵¹ With similar caution, Ivan, the vice president of the KDZ and a Party member, can be identified from Gestrin's list as an OF activist. He was later interned on the island of Rab, arrested by the Home Guard, and ultimately sent to Dachau.⁵²

The most contentious case, however, is undoubtedly that of the Medved family. According to our document, they were a wealthy family and members of the KDZ at the time. However, Gestrin's research indicates that several individuals with the same surname in Brest served with the liberation movement, supported partisans with food, were executed as OF activists, but also in the Anti-Communist Militia and the Home Guards. One of the latter initially joined the partisans but, after being interned on Rab, switched to the Militia. Since it is not at all unusual for even small villages like Brest to have multiple households sharing the same surname, I cannot reliably reconstruct the wartime orientation of the Medved family as mentioned in the OLO record.⁵³

In the case of KDZ Brest, OLO representatives did not record any conflicts among cooperative members stemming from the different roles they played during the war. All indications suggest that the most disliked figure was the cooperative president, Janko. According to the OLO representatives' report, one cooperative member, Janko, is said to demean people and pay little attention to their suggestions for improving the cooperative's work. The OLO representatives attributed Janko's unpopularity to the fact that he was a small-scale peasant, while the other members were well-off peasants. The OLO representatives recorded the opinions of the cooperative members, particularly highlighting Jože's wife, who stated that they would not allow themselves to be »commanded by a beggar«. For the female member of the Medved family, membership in the cooperative was reportedly humiliating. She was said to be one of the largest landowners in Brest, upon whom many small peasants depended, yet now the latter were allegedly giving her orders.⁵⁴ Another female cooperative member complained about the workload, claiming that she had never been a »pig-house maid« (*svinjska dekla*) before and that she was now »a slave to the cooperative«. Since Janko was elected

⁵⁰ Ibid., 151, 179.

⁵¹ Ibid., 151–152.

⁵² Ibid. 151.

⁵³ Ibid., 152, 165. Cf. SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 10.

⁵⁴ SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 10.

president by the KDZ members, we have little reason to doubt that the higher authorities put their strong muscle behind his bid. Apart from the president and vice president, all other cooperative members had been actively working on leaving since May 1951, even hiring a lawyer from Ljubljana. According to the report from the OLO representatives, KDZ Brest existed only on paper at that time. The cooperative lacked a brigadier to oversee communal work, and the peasants stored their produce in their own homes. They generated most of their income from their house plots or forests. Individual families maintained cooperative pigs and cattle. The cooperative animals were less well cared for than those kept under private management. The communal fields were either not properly cultivated, or the cooperative members worked only in those areas that corresponded to their individual share. KDZ even hired labour for work in the fields.⁵⁵ During the visit of the Party Commission in April 1952, four cooperative members who had already left the cooperative were retroactively (heavily) taxed because they had failed to deliver their produce to the cooperative or had deliberately not achieved the same productivity on cooperative land as private peasants.⁵⁶ What is most interesting about the specific report is that the OLO representatives limited themselves to describing the problems within the cooperative. It demonstrated its communist sensitivity by emphasizing the class character of the conflict within the cooperative – but omitting the *kulak* menace. Yet, it never even hinted at what the solution might be.

The reports of the Party Revision Commission, which reviewed the broader area of Ig in the spring of 1952, regularly noted most of the issues that were already occurring in Brest, most commonly, the persistence of individual family farming instead of collective brigade work. The main difference was that the operations of the other four KDZs were burdened by disputes that apparently had little or no connection to the class differentiation among their members. It appears that, among the five KDZs in the surrounding area, only the one in Vrbljene functioned effectively. The cooperative comprised 13 families who collectively contributed 117.49 ha of land (including 27.37 ha of fields). There, the biggest challenges arose with the consolidation of land, which is why they primarily focused on livestock and pig farming at the time. This was done using the brigade system, which was virtually unique in the area. The cooperative owned machinery, including a tractor. Relations among the cooperative members were reportedly good, and four out of the five members of the management board were Party members.⁵⁷

55 Ibid., 2–6, 9–11.

56 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Tomišelj, April 7, 1952, 2.

57 Ibid., KDZ Vrbljene, 1–2.

The situation in all the other four KDZs was exceptionally poor. One could even say it was catastrophic. Undoubtedly, the most severe crisis at the time was in the KDZ of Iška vas. The cooperative united 11 families, totaling 130.8 ha of land (including 19.79 ha of fields and gardens). At the time of the Party commission visit, the cooperative did not even have a president. The previous president refused to perform this role because the cooperative members would not allow him to inspect the cooperative's livestock, which was kept in the barns of individual families. The members of the KDZ did not contribute their forests to the cooperative; instead, they used them independently and did not pay taxes on the income generated. The KDZ clearly had shared draft animals, but the members used them on their house plots without paying any compensation, despite being required to do so according to the rules. The cooperative was fatally crippled by the previously mentioned arrest of three members, in which, according to testimonies, the president of the KLO Ig and the initiator of the KDZ, Janez, was allegedly involved.⁵⁸ The cooperative members who had been arrested and then released refused to work. They demanded clarification of the circumstances surrounding their arrest.⁵⁹ One of them, a former president of the KLO, claimed that the information used against him and others was obtained from non-members and enemies of the KDZ. »People reproach me, asking what I have profited from dedicating myself to the KDZ.« He added that he had been a partisan since 1941 and believed he deserved a Commemorative Medal of the Partisans of 1941.⁶⁰ It seems that Janez had only one ally in the cooperative, Cene, but he did not participate in the work on the communal land, as he was employed at a sawmill in Ig. His wife is said to have mocked the remaining cooperative members as they passed by her house on their way to work. Although Cene contributed his arable land to the cooperative, testimonies recorded by the Party Revision Commission report that he nonetheless worked the land for his own benefit on several occasions, typically when cooperative members had failed to cultivate it promptly. The Party commission recommended in his case that he should be charged for the crops he produced. Both Janez and Cene were members of the Party. Among the cooperative members, an opinion formed that if even the two communists were unwilling to work in the KDZ, neither would they.

The conflict surrounding the arrested cooperative members also reveals a tragic and chilling local episode from the early stages of collectivization. The wife of one of the arrested, Tina, who had been in the partisans and a Party member since 1944, told the Revision Commission: »My husband, as well as I, worked a

58 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas; Poročilo o pregledu KDZ Iška vas, April 8, 1952, 1–2.

59 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas.

60 Ibid., Iška vas: Izjave nekaterih članov.

lot on organizing the KDZ. I pushed people into the cooperative. I even told them that they would be evicted if they did not join, to get as many as possible. But this was not something I made up myself; it was according to the directive of the activists from the Territory (probably KPS committee).« Tina also mentioned that after the arrest of the KDZ members, people were saying, »It's what they deserve; now they're left with their cooperative«. The Territorial Party Committee was said to trust the president of KLO Ig, Janez, but not them in Iška vas. However, they too began to lose trust in the committee.⁶¹ The expulsion of communists from the Party due to their involvement in religious ceremonies undoubtedly did not contribute to easing the tense atmosphere in Iška vas. Ana was considering leaving the KDZ, and at the same time, she informed the Commission that her husband had been expelled from the Party because he had married her in a church. The church wedding took place solely because it was the wish of her husband's parents, not because he himself held any religious belief. She and her husband did not think this was fair.⁶²

The situation in KDZ Zapotok was not much better either. It appears that the breakup of the unified Party organization Visoko–Zapotok was also linked to attitudes toward the local KDZ. According to the testimony of a local communist, the residents of Visoko reportedly organized shock work brigades in KDZ Zapotok multiple times. At the same time, the members of the cooperative allegedly stood by idly, merely watching them work.⁶³ However, this was far from the only problem. KDZ Zapotok was very large by Slovenian standards, as 8 families managed a total of 147.75 ha of land, including only 7.89 ha of fields/gardens but as much as 28.50 ha of forest.⁶⁴ Established as early as 1946, the cooperative was mainly engaged in sheep farming. The first problem highlighted by the Party commission was the cooperative's forests, which the members were exploiting for their benefit, with the income going into their own pockets. It is said that this was due to the cooperative's extremely poor financial condition, which left the members with no alternative means of earning money. Moreover, five members of the cooperative were privately cultivating a total of 80 ha of land, for which they were allegedly paying a laughably low tax. All of them were members of the Party.⁶⁵ It appears that the core of the cooperative was comprised of very wealthy peasants. Its first president, a Party member, contributed 19ha, but by the time the commission arrived, he had already unilaterally resigned from the cooperative.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas.

63 Ibid., Visoko (Statements by Party members).

64 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok.

65 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok, 1–3.

Despite the undoubtedly strong economic position of many KDZ members, some faced social issues, such as applying for disability benefits and similar forms of assistance. For example, the first president of KDZ applied for a disability pension for his wife, but he was denied. Another KDZ member, a wealthy peasant, a Party member, and father of five minor children, complained because his wife, who had bone tuberculosis, did not receive social support, due to the actions of the previous president of the KDZ.⁶⁶ A similar case involved another female member of the cooperative, a well-off peasant and a Party member, who unsuccessfully requested assistance from the cooperative when her father fractured his spine.⁶⁷ Another example is a female member of the cooperative who had become unable to work due to illness years earlier. Other members of the cooperative felt she should leave, as they believed they were no longer benefiting from her. The Party Commission recommended that these issues be addressed again.

The second problem was corruption, which led the Commission to propose a visit from a special three-member committee, consisting of a representative from the cooperative fund, a financial trustee, and a criminal investigator. The mentioned issues include thefts and unauthorized purchases for the benefit of the former KDZ president. Additionally, two prominent members were reportedly using the cooperative's draft animals on their house plots without authorization. In contrast, the other members either did not have this option or were charged for the service. Between 1946 and 1952, as many as nine members unilaterally left the cooperative. At the time of the commission's visit, five more members expressed their intention to leave, citing the unbearable conditions of mismanagement, an incorrect or unfair calculation of workdays (*trudodni*), and their poor social standing. Despite the good weather, the cooperative members did not even begin working the cooperative land, and in general, all activities were at a standstill. The meetings of the managing body of KDZ were reportedly marked by constant disputes. The relationships between the cooperative members seemed hostile.⁶⁸

As noted in the previous section, the villagers of Golo received the Party Commission with displeasure. They faced the prospect of an unwanted merger with the municipality of Ig and were still waiting for electricity to be brought to their village. It was also noted that the local Party organization, despite having a relatively large membership, was inactive. The same was true for the local KDZ Golo, which, according to the Commission, existed only in name. On paper, the KDZ comprised 12 families with a total of 149 ha of land. (There are

66 SI ZAL, LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, KDZ Zapotok.

67 Ibid., Zapotok (statement by a female Party member).

68 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok.

no data on the distribution of agricultural land by use.) However, all cooperative members aimed for individual family economy. The main cause, according to the Commission, was the excessive number of private peasants living nearby who were not members of the cooperative, but who had significantly rebuilt their households and had a better standard of living than the cooperators. KDZ connected three villages: Selnik, Suša, and Golo. In Selnik and Suša, the cooperators cultivated the land in the traditional way, on their family plots, whereas in Golo, this was only partially done according to the collective principle. In Suša, they did not pay any income tax. The cooperative did not have a common agricultural building, and the livestock was located with individual peasants. Furthermore, there were reportedly disputes and divisions among the KDZ Golo cooperators. Somewhat paradoxically, the Commission discovered that the peasants, despite everything, were satisfied with the cooperative, although they wished it had operated under different conditions than it did at the time.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the case of KDZ Vrbljene stands out clearly. Although the Commission may have exaggerated the description of the good conditions in this KDZ, it collapsed by 1953. There can be little doubt, however, that the local relationships, compared to the all-out conflicts that prevailed pretty much everywhere else, were nearly idyllic. The reason behind the near-complete standstill of the KDZs in the vicinity of Ig was likely the significant gap between the expectations invested in the KDZs by the revolutionary authorities in Ljubljana/Belgrade on the one hand, and the aspirations held by peasants in the Ig area on the other. The authorities saw the KDZs as a means to eliminate the fragmented small-scale land structure in Slovenia, consolidating it into larger economic units capable of providing the state with agricultural produce at low prices. Although the Slovenian/Yugoslav model of collectivization was distinctive in that it largely maintained private ownership of the contributed land to KDZs, the long-term vision was nevertheless aimed at the abolition of private family farming. The path to this goal included a different model of management, income distribution, work organization, and, most notably, a transformation of the social status of cooperative members. While the cited documents do not permit a precise determination of the aspirations of various groups of peasants – aspirations that undoubtedly differed among them – it can be asserted with considerable certainty that the core of the KDZs consisted of well-off peasants who likely joined primarily to avoid

69 Ibid., Mnenje o KDZ Golo, Zapotok in Iška vas; Poročilo o pregledu KOZ Golo, April 4 and 5, 1952.

the burdens of high taxes and mandatory procurement quotas. This was most evident in the case of Brest, but certainly not only there, as the brigade system of work (except in Vrbljene) hardly existed anywhere. Family (private) farming continued to prevail in most cooperatives.

Another important insight provided by the documents is the gap between the considerable number of Party members in the villages and KDZs, and the weak influence of the local Party as a revolutionary force in the crisis. The communists have been observed to act as a revolutionary vanguard only in rare instances. Once again, the most striking example is Brest, where it is hard to imagine that a »beggar« would have been elected president of the KDZ without the intervention of the higher authorities. An example of dedicated communists could also be found in the case of the shock brigade action by the peasants from Visoko, who went to work in the KDZ Zapotok, only to be demoralized by the passivity of the local KDZ members. A particularly notable and chilling case was undoubtedly Tina and her husband from Iška vas. With some local partisan veterans, they both answered the call of the Party to join KDZ. Soon, they displayed an above-average level of revolutionary vigilance, as among the persuasive tactics, severe threats of evictions were also mentioned for those unwilling to join the KDZ. Ultimately, this activism was likely halted not only by the arrests but also by the mockery and resentment of their fellow villagers. These examples also suggest that there was probably a limited number of partisan veterans and peasant-communists who were idealistic enough to view KDZs as more than just tax havens. The aforementioned activist enthusiasm likely occurred in the earlier phase of collectivization.

The performance of the local Party in the terminal phase of KDZs gives a relatively poor impression. The limits of the local revolutionary authority were ultimately evident in the fact that peasants frequently evaded paying taxes for certain economic activities, such as the exploitation of forests (Iška vas), as well as their resistance to the brigade system of work in KDZs. It further appears that the Party secretary in Ig, who was responsible for a broader area in 1952, showed no interest in collectivization. Almost all the issues related to his work were limited to the Territorial Metal Industry, where he served as director. Compared to Janez, the president of the KLO Ig, the Party secretary was a significantly weaker figure. Janez, on the other hand, showed more interest, particularly in the KDZ in Iška vas, but only in connection with his interests. His ambitions went far beyond local KDZs. At the end of the day, local – village Party organizations were largely left alone, more often than not without proper direction or guidance from higher authorities. Both commissions, the Party and the »civil« one from the OLO, proposed certain solutions in their reports, but these addressed only acute problems.

In both cases, it was more a matter of firefighting than a thorough analysis that would holistically address the serious issues of collectivization. As for Party meetings – when held at all, the documents suggest that they were primarily a space for disputes (especially in Zapotok). These meetings were more focused on bargaining the material interests of individuals and weighing wartime merits than on addressing the issues of KDZs. There can certainly be no doubt that the conflicts between former partisan fighters and Party members further strained the relations within the KDZs.

It is also significant that the documents (with the notable exception of Brest) nowhere mention conflicts that, according to the participants, had an explicitly class-based background. According to the witnesses, the disputes divided people into partisans and White Guards, more and less deserving partisans, church loyalists (*klerikalci*) and non-believers, KDZ members and non-members, communists, and non-communists, less taxed and more taxed, those entitled to certain privileges and those who were not, those who prospered and those who did not, and so on. The case of Brest once again stands out as the most notable exception. Based on the documents, it was only there, in the conflict situation, that class consciousness came to the forefront. And it came from the wealthy peasants, who felt and vividly described the degradation of their social position.

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