

The Question of Indigenouness in Komi Republican Policy 1991–1999



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Abstract

Master's thesis is concerned with the political representation and ethnic mobilization of the Komi people, the indigenous population of the Komi Republic. The aim of the thesis is to investigate to what extent the Komi people influenced the policy of the Komi Republic in the period 1991-1999. The analysis is based on the conflicts and negotiations between the Komi people and the Komi Republican government over the formation of the new administrative and legal system in the Komi Republic in the 1990s.

The thesis is also concerned with appearance, development and activity of the Komi people's organizations. The contribution of the present thesis is to present the period 1991-1999 of the Komi people's history from the indigenous perspective. Master's thesis is combining previous studies on history of the Komi people and ethnic policy towards them with the use of indigenous approach and minority policy models: *acculturation*, *assimilation*, *segregation* and *multiculturalism*.

Key words: ethnic policy, ethnic mobilization, indigenusness, Komi Republic, Komi people, political representation, acculturation, assimilation, multiculturalism

Map 1. Russia's Administrative divisions



Downloaded from <http://www.russiamap.org/images/full/political-admin-01.jpg>

[1] The Komi Republic

Map 2. The Komi Republic



Downloaded from http://map.rin.ru/cgi-bin/main_e.pl?Region=komi

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 The theme

The theme of the thesis is political representation and ethnic mobilization of the Komi people, the indigenous population of the Komi Republic. The aim of the thesis is to investigate to what extent the Komi people influenced the policy of the Komi Republic in the period 1991-1999. The analysis is based on the conflicts and negotiations between the Komi people and the Komi Republican government over the formation of the new administrative and legal system in the Komi Republic in the 1990s.

Studying the indigenous influence on the policy of the Komi Republic provides better understanding of the status of the Komi people in the Komi Republic. It also helps to identify the origin of contemporary problems with the Komi people's rights and the Republican policy towards the indigenous population. The theme of the thesis has scientific importance due to the small amount of research done on indigenous representation on the regional level in Russia and the Komi Republic in particular. In addition the study has relevance as a background for the ongoing political debates in the Komi Republic about the rights of the indigenous people and the development of ethnic policy in the Republic. The established Ministry of Nationality Policy gives evidence concerning of a growing importance and awareness of the ethnic problems in the Komi Republic. Contemporary ethnic problems of the Republic were clarified in the Regulations of the Ministry of Nationality Policy issued in 2009. Protection of indigenous culture and lifestyle is also listed in the Regulations. A historical study of the indigenous representation in the 1990s promotes deeper understanding of the status of the Komi people in the Republic. At the same time it can contribute to clarification of the advantages and disadvantages of the political strategies used by the indigenous people in the 1990s.

1.2 The research area and the research questions

The area of study is the Komi Republic, one of the regions in the North-Eastern European part of Russia (Map 1). The Komi Republic got its name from the indigenous people there, the Komi people, whose ancestors had been living in the territory of the Republic since pre-historic times. The total population of the Komi Republic in 2002 was 1 018 674 people, among them 25.17% are Komis and 59.5% Russians (All-Russia Popular Census, 2002).

The time frame of the thesis is limited to the period between 1991 and 1999. 1991 is the starting point for the Komi people's revitalization process and the appearance of indigenous organizations in the Komi Republic. At the same time, in 1991, the Komi Republic faced start of the political and legal transition period which lasted until 1999. By 1999 the indigenous policy making process in the Komi Republic got its foundation. The period between 1991 and 1999 was the time when the old political and legal structures were being destroyed and the new ones were under construction. The power vacuum in the Republic needed to be filled. The Komi people and their organizations were engaged in the process of filling the power vacuum and securing the rights and political position before the reestablishment of the new governing system.

It is necessary to define what kind of interests the Komi people had. The answer to this question gives the key to understanding the indigenous demands in the Komi Republic. Further, a question is how the Komi people were able to express their interests and demands in the political system of the Komi Republic. When answering these questions we are clarifying the available channels for the Komi people to influence the Republican policy. The last question is to what extent the Komi people affected the policy of the Komi Republic.

1.3 Theoretical framework

To evaluate the extent of the Komi people's influence on the Komi Republican policy it is necessary to define the opportunities given to the indigenous people. For this purpose models of minority policy should be incorporated into discussion, to clarify alternatives and options. It is fruitful to turn to the Einar Niemi's model of four alternatives those of *acculturation*, *segregation*, *assimilation* and *multiculturalism* respectively" (Niemi, 2007: 21-35).

The acculturation model is widely used in culture and art studies to describe the contact between different cultures accompanied by cultural diffusion: all ethnic groups involved in this process apprehend some cultural elements of the others. The Komi people first met the Slavs, ancestors of the Russians, in the 1000s. Nestor Chronicle mentions that in 1096 people from Novgorod were sent to Pechora to collect taxes (Leinonen, 2006: 235). Archeological findings, dated by the 1100s, give evidence of the use of Slavonic tableware, iron locks and items made of bronze by the Komi people. A detailed research on techniques of iron items' production by the Komi people proved their adoption from new coming Slavonic population (Saveleva, 2008: 172–173). These examples represent acculturation from cultural standpoints. Acculturation has also a political dimension. In political terms, acculturation means "a relaxed attitude towards minority groups" (Niemi, 2007: 23). There is no ethnic policy as such, but some power relations have already been established in the Komi Republic way back in history. The Komi people started to pay taxes after the very first meeting with the Slavs. It determined the structure of power relations between the Komi people and the Russians from the beginning of their interaction. The Slavs came to the Komi land to conquer the Komi people and collect taxes. The Komi people lost the battle and submitted to the Slavonic tax-collectors (Saveleva, 2008: 172).

Ethnic segregation is a model usually referring to the position of the Jews in the Russian Empire, but it is not applicable in the case of the indigenous people in the Komi Republic. Distinguishing between the Russian and non-Russian population in Russia is

seen through names, not through the system. The terms “tusemci”, “inorodci” and “jasachnie” were applicable to non-Russian population. These terms are discussed by Sergey Sokolovskii, a researcher at the Institute of ethnology and anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The “tyzemci” are “not newcomers but citizens of the state...living in the territories included into the state” (Sokolovskii, 1999) and seen equal to the other citizens of Russia, as well as their territories have become a part of the Russian state. The name “tuzemci” in official documents was replaced by the term “inorodec” (or plural “inorodci”), “a person of another origin, a representative of another nation” (Sokolovskii, 1999). This term had broader use. It was the name referred not only to the indigenous people but also to other nations within the Russian state. The Polish and Finnish people of Russia were also called “inorodci”. This term was used for the first time by officials in the regulations called “Governing the inorodci” (1822). This document contained state recommendations on governing the territories and people of Northern Russia and Siberia. The term “jasachnie” was also used there as a synonym to the word “inorodci”. “Jasak” is the name of the tax paid with furs. The term “jasachnie” refers to people who paid this sort of tax.

According to the state regulations, all “inorodci” were divided into three categories: settled people, nomadic people and migratory population. Here we are interested in the first two categories, because the Komi people fitted in with them. Each category had different rights. The settled people were equal in their rights to the rest of the Russians and were governed by the same bodies as the Russians with the use of the same regulations as those established for the Russians. (Sokolovskii, 1999) The Komi people, except the Komi-Igemci, fitted in with the category of settled people. They were governed in the same manner as the Russians in the Russian state. The Komi-Igemci were reindeer breeders and fitted in with the category of nomadic people who were governed by special nomadic units. The status of the Komi-Igemci was equal to the Russian peasants.

A short overview of the terms used to name the indigenous people in Russia defines the specific feature of the Russian colonization of the North and Siberia. On the one hand,

the Russians made a distinction between themselves and the other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the Russian state was trying to transfer the other ethnic groups from the category “the other” to the category “Russian citizen”. This was made by establishing the Russian type of governing and legal equalization of the other ethnic groups to the Russian population. The following step was the appearance of the Russian population in the territories of the other ethnic groups and the beginning of *assimilation*, meaning loss of cultural characteristics that distinguish minority group from the dominant cultural group. The Komi people influenced two types of assimilatory policy, those of Russification and Sovetization of culture.

The Komi people faced Russification in the 1700s (Leinonen, 2006: 243). The official concept of Russification was reflected in the Theory of Nationhood formulated by Sergei Uvarov, the Minister of Public Education, in 1833. The theory contained three major principles: loyalty to orthodox Christianity, loyalty to the regime and priority of the Russian nationality. These principles secured the official image of the Russian citizen and were provided through the educational system of the state toward all ethnic groups. The Soviet period brought a new concept of assimilatory policy called Sovetization, based on the supranational idea of the “Soviet citizen”. The distinguishing feature of the Soviet citizen was loyalty to communist ideology and culture. A detailed assimilatory policy towards the Komi people is discussed in chapter 2 of the thesis. Assimilation models in Russia before the mid-1980s provide deeper understanding of the state actions in the sphere of ethnic relations in the post-Soviet period and explain specialty of the demands for indigenous rights.

The last minority policy model mentioned here is *multiculturalism*. The Komi Republic is a multinational state (Scheme 1). Multiculturalism, aimed at accommodating different nations within one state without loss of specific cultural features and rights of groups involved, could be viewed in its connection to the Komi Republic which was in search for the minority policy model during the whole period of the 1990s. The focus is going to be made on the Komi people’s influence on the political transitions in the Komi Republic and the ability of the new Republican structures to accommodate the

indigenous demands. One major aim in this study is to analyze the policy in the period chosen and to relate it to these models to clarify what kind of policy was proposed and what kind of ideas on ethnic status there were in the Komi Republic and among the Komi people's spokesmen.

1.4 Major concepts

Together with the minority policy models there is a number of concepts that will be used: *the Komi people (the Komis), the population of the Komi republic, indigenous interests, central, regional and local level, and indigenous rights*. These concepts require clarification in their connection to the theme of the thesis.

The term the Komi people or the Komis are the terms used to distinguish this specific group of people from the whole population of the Komi Republic. The name “the Komi people” or “the Komis” thus refer to the indigenous people of the Komi Republic. The other non-indigenous groups are named “the population of the Komi Republic”. The most numerous non-indigenous ethnic groups of the Komi Republic are the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Tatars, the Belarusians, the Germans and the Chuvash (Scheme 1.)

Scheme 1. Ethnic composition of the Komi Republic (2002)

Ethnic group	%
Russians	59,59 %
Komis	25,18%
Ukrainians	6,10%
Tatars	1,54%
Belarusians	1,49%
Germans	0,91%
Chuvash	0,74%

All-Russia Popular Census, 2002

As it is seen in Scheme 1, the Komi people (the Komis) constituted 25,18% of the whole population of the Komi Republic according to the All-Russia Census, held in 2002. In the 1990s the percentage of the Komis in the Komi Republic was 23,3% (Nesteova & Popov, 2000: 20).

The concept of indigenous interests is central in the thesis. They are interests of the Komi people in particular expressed through their representative body, The Komi Council. The Komi interests are divided into several groups: cultural interests, economic and social interests and political interests (Kuzevanova, 2006). Cultural interests of the Komi people are associated with the development and protection of the Komi language, schools, lifestyle and traditions. Economic and social interests of the Komis are state financial support of the Komi organizations and cultural clubs, rise of the living standards of the Komi people and social security. Political interests are connected with political representation of the Komis, legal protection of indigenous rights and the political stability of the Komi Republic.

The discussion of indigenous representation in the Komi Republic is not possible without defining the power levels of this representation. The political system in Russia has three levels: central, regional and local. The central level or the federal level is associated with the governing bodies of the Russian Federation, based in Moscow. The regional level for the present thesis is the level of the Komi Republican authorities, based in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic. In the Komi Republic the local level of the political system is represented by rural districts or areas called “raions” and cities. The present thesis is mostly dealing with the regional level, but central and local levels are incorporated into discussion when it is relevant and necessary.

The concept of “indigenous rights” means special protection of culture, traditions and lifestyle of the indigenous people. In contrast to the other types of rights, indigenous rights are group rights. Their distinction from “ethnic rights” is made “firstly, because they [indigenous people] are peoples/nations and, secondly, because of their indigenousness” (Weigård, 2008: 177). The rights to self-determination and land rights

are demanded by the indigenous people all over the world in order to protect their culture, traditions and lifestyle. Special rights were also demanded by the Komis together with their legislation in the new legal system that was under construction in the 1990s.

1.5. Previous research

The political representation of the Komi people has only to a part been researched, though some aspects related to the theme of the thesis have been scholarly analyzed. Historiography of the chosen theme could be divided into several groups according to some major issues. They are publications about the political views of the Komis, the Komi organizations, legal status of the Komi people, self-determination, state policy towards the Komis, and language policy.

Research on ethnic relations in the Komi Republic started in the 1980s by a group of four social scientists, Vladimir Denisenko, Oleg Kotov, Michail Rogachev, Uriy. Shabaev, members of the Komi Science Center. They organized public opinion polls, questionnaires and surveys about ethnic relations, ethno-cultural orientations, political views and activity of the indigenous population in the Komi Republic. Collected data was combined in the report “Contemporary ethnic processes in the Komi ASSR” (“Sovremennie etnicheskie processi v Komi ASSR”) and in a number of articles published in 1982-1987. In the 1990s U. Shibaev participated in the Russian-American project “The pre-election situation in Russia” (“Pridvibornaya situacija v Rossii”). In 1995 a special project “Social-Psychological monitoring in the Komi Republic” was established by Uriy Spiridonov, the Head of the Komi Republic. These projects were devoted to the ethnic policy in the Komi Republic. Statistics from the projects give an overall picture of political attitude of the population of the Komi Republic. Statistical outcomes and their analysis were also presented in Shibaev’s doctoral dissertation (1999). The disadvantage of this work is the absence of clear distinction between the indigenous people and the immigrant groups. Shibaev discusses ethnic problems and conflicts among the population of the Komi Republic on the example of the immigrant

groups. That approach is common to the majority of publications about ethnic relations and ethnic policy in the Komi Republic in the early 1990s.

Research on particular indigenous interests and attitudes in the Komi Republic was made by O. Kotov and M. Rogachev in 1991. The idea of their research was to define the attitudes to ethnic relations in the Komi Republic among the Komi people and members of the First Komi Council. The research outcomes presented a detailed report on ideas and interests of the Komi people depending on their education, occupation, age and place of living. The respondents were asked about ethnic conflicts in the Republic, state ethnic policy and possible measures to prevent ethnic conflicts. Kotov and Rogachev developed special questionnaires on problems of the Komi culture, reasons for these problems and ways of solution. Interests of the delegates of the First Komi Council became the subject of investigation in Olga Kuzevanova's research. Her research was more theoretical. Its aim was to concretize and systematize the indigenous interests. She suggested dividing the Komi people's interests into cultural, economic, social and political interests. Kuzevanova found out that it was hard to define particular indigenous interests and demands (2006: 86–88). The Komi people's interests were incorporated into the demands of the whole republican population and particular social groups, like population of rural areas, for instance. Kuzevanova was also interested in ideology and development of indigenous movement in the Komi Republic. Her article "National ideology during the political transition period in contemporary Russia" was concerned with the role of the indigenous organizations in building a civil society in the post-Soviet Russia. O. Kuzevanova called the indigenous organizations the first non-governmental organizations in the post-Soviet Russia (2005: 565). The Komi people organizations and their contribution to the development of civil society were also discussed by V. Kovalev and U. Shibaev (2002: 281–293) in connection to the benefits gained by the indigenous organizations from the development of civil society and democracy in Russia.

Legal aspects of the state nationality policy are among the studied issues. There are two major dimensions of research within this field research on the legal system of the Komi

Republic and research made on the status of the indigenous people on the federal level. Concrete legal acts and their role in the establishment of the post-Soviet political system in the Komi Republic were considered by L. Chetvernikova (2006) and T. Prokopeva (Chetvernikova & Prokopeva, 2005). Constitutional status of the Komi Republic in the Russian Federation was studied by U. Gavrusov (2006). General research on indigenous legislation in the Russian Federation was carried out by Sokolovkii (1999). His aim was to define the names used through the history for the indigenous people of the North and Siberia by the Russian politicians and officials. He defined three types of naming: “tuzemci”, “inorodci” and “jasachnie”, used in politics and legislation in the 1800s-1900s. Language legislation in the Komi Republic was studied by E. Cipanov (2006).

The Komi language issues are, as a whole, the topic which has been studied most. Language policy and development of the Komi language were discussed in publications of A. Napalkov, A. Popov, A. and E. Cipanova. All these authors are representatives of the Komi Science Center. Their works have a practical approach and deal with the practical difficulties of the Komi language revitalization. Assimilatory language policy towards the Komi was discussed by a Finnish researcher Marja Leinonen in the article “Russification of Komi” (2006). The article presents the development and effects of language policy from the 1100s till the 2000s. The article is based on the Russian sources and literature combined by literature in the Finnish and English languages. Language assimilation was presented in the article together with the concept of language contact and language standardization. The article is clarifying the models of language policy of the Russian state towards the Komis and helps to distinguish the type of the minority policy model in concrete time frames. Comparison of the Finnish and Russian language models for the indigenous people was made by P. Kauppala (2007). A special interest in the Komi people and their history among the researchers in the Finno-Ugric countries is the result of the development of scientific cooperation between the Finno-Ugric nations. Scientists from Estonia and Finland were the first among Europeans to undertake the research on ethno-political problems in the Komi Republic. In 1995 S. Lallukka published “Komi Permjaks – People of Parma” (“Komi-permjaki – Narod Parmi”) in Helsinki. This book was published in the Russian language a few years later.

Another important researcher is Rein Taagaper. He has Estonian roots but his scientific career is connected to the USA where R. Taagaper is known as a political scientist. He carried out a general research on the Eastern Finno-Ugric peoples. This research contains a few paragraphs about the political history of the Komi people.

The political history of the Komi people and self-determination issues were the subject of comparative analysis in the article written by I. Nesterova and A. Popov (Nesterova & Popov, 2006). The self-determination principle was implemented by the establishment of the Komi people's national autonomy which existed in the 1920s-1930s and was reestablished in the 1990s. Nesterova and Popov found out that the development of the Komi culture, language, school and protection of the indigenous rights was better provided in the 1920s-1930s than in the 1990s. Such a conclusion was made due to the appearance of the Komi written language and literacy, the appearance of mass media in the Komi language, the Komi national school, etc. Nesterova and Popov's statement was also based on statistical data on the number of Komi speakers, the number of national schools and the established mass media in the Komi language. A detailed analysis of the Komi people's autonomy in the Russian Federation in the 1990s was carried out in O. Shtrailer's dissertation. He was one of the first to determine that there were contradictions between the rights of the indigenous peoples declared in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and those indigenous rights that were legally implemented in the Komi Republic. Another point discussed by Shtrailer is that the Komi people were treated equally to the other ethnic groups of the Komi Republic. The self-determination right was implemented for all ethnic groups in cultural autonomy, both the indigenous and the immigrant groups, without any special support of the indigenous people there (Shtrailer, 2003: 135–138).

An overview of the Russification policy in Northern Russia was published in 2006 in Helsinki (Nuorluoto, 2006). Irina Nesterova and Aleksandr Popov in 2000 published a book "The nationality question in the Komi Republic at the end of the 20th century" (Nacionalnii vopros v Respublike Komi v konce XX veka). This publication aimed at summarizing the ethnic policy in the Komi Republic. The advantage of the book is its

wide resource base and deep analysis of the role and position of the state in ethnic debates. On the other hand, the ethnic policy is viewed from the state perspective. In the introduction it is underlined that the major concept of the research “does not contradict ... the Constitution of the Russian Federation edited in 1993, and the Concept of the Nationality Policy in the Russian Federation...” (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 10). This statement determined the viewpoint of the research. The Komi people were considered by the state on both levels: the regional and the federal. The major focus was made on the state actions and policy towards the Komi people. The interests, needs and demands of the indigenous people were not included into the analysis. Nor were the correlations between the indigenous demands and the state clarified.

Previous research made on the Komi people thus contains a great amount of studies on their political history, language and identity policy, appearance of the indigenous organizations in the Komi Republic and some aspects of its Constitutional status within the Russian Federation. The common tradition for the researches was to present the Komi people’s history in state perspective, from the point of necessity of indigenous policy to the state. The contribution of the present thesis is to present the period 1991-1999 of the Komi people’s history from the indigenous perspective. The present thesis is going to combine previous studies with the use of indigenous approach and minority policy models to introduce the history of the Komi people in 1990s. The major focus will be done on the indigenous political mobilization and its effect on the political transformation in the Komi Republic.

1.6 Sources and methodology

The present thesis is mainly based on qualitative methods. The case of the Komi people is an example of the indigenous struggle for the rights in the regions of the Russian Federation during the post-Soviet transition period. The case study is based on the analysis of data and literature collected during the summer of 2009 in Syktyvkar, the capital city of the Komi Republic. The data and literature were collected at the Komi National Library, the Archive and the Library of the Komi Science Centre and the Komi

National Archive. The collected data consist of newspapers and journals, legal acts, resolutions and programs of the Komi organizations Komi kotir and Parma.

The journals and newspapers were selected according to the principle of scientific reliability. They were the newspapers and journals both in the Russian and Komi languages issued by the Komi Republican authorities and the Komi people's organizations. The Respublika (Republic) newspaper is issued by the Government of the Komi Republic and the State Council of the Komi Republic. It is the most reliable and popular political newspaper of the Komi Republic. This newspaper is issued daily in Russian and contains articles on political matters (the federal and regional ones), reprints of the new legal acts and laws, issued and adopted in the Komi Republic's governing bodies, articles discussing various points of view on the Komi Republican policy, the federal policy and international relations. Respublika is important for the thesis because it represents the state position in the discussion of the indigenous rights. The Komi people's position was reflected in Komi Mu (Komi land) newspaper. It is the oldest newspaper issued in the Komi language. Komi Mu was established in the 1920s as an independent Komi newspaper. It is published daily in the Komi language and contains material concerning politics, culture, international relations and news of the Finno-Ugric world. In the 1990s Komi Mu published a number of articles about the Komi national revival and the activity of the Komi Congress. It also contains materials about the political life in the Komi Republic focusing on the Komi participation in the political debates which take place in the Komi Republic and the rest of Russia. There is also Parma (Spruce forest) journal representing the Komi people side. Parma was established in 1990 in Moscow and is issued four times a year by the Komi organization Parma. It is concerned with social life and culture of the Komi people and other Finno-Ugric peoples. The aim of the journal is to promote the Komi national revival and consolidation of the Komi people on the territory of the Russian Federation. The journal contains materials both in Russian and Komi. The most important materials for the present research are the articles that illustrate the work of the Komi Councils and the establishment and work of the Committee for the Komi national revival, the representative bodies of the Komi people. Articles from Respublika, Komi Mu and Parma in 1991-1999 were specially selected for

the present master thesis. The selection criterion was the content of the articles. Only the articles on ethno-political matters were selected, copied and analyzed. Special attention was given to the articles written by the representatives of the Komi organizations, the articles containing information about the Komi Councils and the articles containing material about the Komi political representation and the role of the Komi representatives in the political discussions in the Komi Republic and Russia in the 1990s.

The analysis of the resolutions, declarations and decisions of the Komi Council combined with the analysis of the legal documentation gives the practical result of the Komi people's struggle for their rights and evaluates the success of the Komi people in representing and securing their interests in the state political system. The first six Komi Councils and their decisions, declaration and resolutions are considered in the thesis. The major legal acts that are analyzed in the thesis are the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993), the Constitution of the Komi Republic (1994), The Concept of the State National Policy in the Komi Republic (1994), The Treaty of Federation (1992), The Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Komi Republic on the division of their jurisdictions, the Komi Republican law "About the languages".

There are also some statistics used in the thesis. Statistical data are used, based on simple statistical methods, for identifying the political activity of the Komi people, the extent of their knowledge about the indigenous organizations, the extent of participation in the indigenous organizations, political preferences and etc. The results of the questionnaires provided by O. Kotov and M. Rogachev (1991), aimed at examining the views of the First Komi Council representatives, are used in chapter 3 of the thesis to illustrate and clarify the indigenous interests. Some statistics are used in the thesis for informational purposes only. These are the results of All-Russia Census and statistics presented by the Information Centre of the Finno-Ugric peoples (ICFUP) about ethnic composition of the Komi Republic in different decades of the 20th century.

1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory part of the thesis, containing presentation of the theme, theoretical models and data presentation. Chapter 2 begins with the historical background of the Komi people. Special consideration is given to the character of minority politics in the Komi Republic before and during the Soviet period. Chapter 3 is concerned with the Komi people's organizations, their appearance and aims. There are two most important points in the chapter. The first point is the interests of the Komi people and how they were formulated by the Komi Council. The second point is the discussions of self-determination of the Komi people and the Komi language policy. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the indigenous political activity and the use of indigenes in particular political situations. Chapter 4 deals with the constitutional debate and needs for legislation in the sphere of the indigenous rights. Chapter 5 is devoted to questions of the indigenous land, resource rights and budget legislation in the Komi Republic. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings and gives the suggestions for the further research.

Chapter 2. Komis: historical background

The Komi people (self-appellation komijaz) belong to the group of the Finno-Ugric peoples. By the 1600s the Russian ethnonyms Zyryane or Komi–Zyryane were established. Komi-Zyryane or Komi live in the territory of the Komi Republic, in the Komi-Permjatsky autonomous district and in North-Western Siberia and on the Kola Peninsula. The majority of the Komi people are speaking and writing the “prisiktivkarskii” dialect. Traditional occupations of the Komi people are hunting, fishing and agriculture. The Igemci, the northern group of the Komi people, adopted reindeer breeding in the middle of the 1600s. The chapter presents an outline of the history of the Komi people before the 1980s and the shifts of the Russian state policy towards the Komi people.

2.1 The Komi people before the 1900s

The Slavonic population appeared in the Komi territories in the 1000s-1100s (Saveleva, 2007: 172). They were merchants and landless peasants from Novgorod. The ethnic differences did not play any role in policy towards the Komi people. There was no particular pressure on the Komi culture from the side of the “new coming” Russian population. At the same time some economic limitations existed. The Komi people had to pay taxes to the Russian administration in their territory already in the 1100s. The remains of small settlements of the Russian tax-collectors dated by the 1100s were found in the Komi territories (Saveleva, 2007: 172–173). The taxes to the Russians were usually paid in furs. The establishment of the Russian tax system in the Komi territory became the first step of incorporating the Komi land into the Russian state. The place of the Komi territories inside the Russian state was legally secured three centuries later. In the 1400s the Komi territories came under the Moscow principedom jurisdiction. The Komi people’s integration into the Russian state was provided along with Christianization. By the beginning of the 1400s almost all the Komis had become Christians. Christianization initiated the spread of the Russian language. The Komi territories were less inhabited than the central parts of the Russian state. The Russian

state encouraged settlement of peasants in less inhabited territories because of overpopulation in the central parts of Russia. Lots of peasants settled in the Komi land because of the possibility to obtain the land and economic benefits from the Russian state. In spite of the Russian influence, the Komi people were able to preserve their traditional occupations, culture, language and beliefs. Even though the Komis had already been Christianized, some traditional beliefs were existing together with the Christianity. Till the beginning of the 1900s the Komi people were the majority population in their territory. According to the census taken in 1926, 92,2% of the population of Komi Republic were the Komis and only 6,6 % were Russians (Nesterova & Popov, 2006: 92).

The first evidence concerning changes in nationality policy towards “non-Russian” population appeared in the first part of the 1800s. Sergey Uvarov, the Minister of Public Education of the Russian empire, developed a theory of nationhood (teorija oficial’noi narodnosti). The theory determined a conservative political doctrine. The “theory of nationhood” was the major political doctrine during the reign of Nicolas I (1825-1855), Aleksandr III (1881-1894) and Nicolas II (1894-1917), who are known in the history for their conservative and tough domestic policy. The theory consisted of three components: the Orthodoxy, the autocracy and the nationality. The Orthodoxy component was understood as loyalty to the official religion of the Russian state. The second component, the autocracy, meant loyalty to the form of government in the Russian empire – autocratic monarchy and the Romanov’s dynasty. The last component, nationality (narodnost’), meant Russianness. The appearance of the theory of nationhood abandoned “any attempt to create a rossiiskii (the civic Russian) state and was a decisive shift to a russkii (the ethnic Russian) path” (Bowring, 2000: 213). The theory of nationhood secured the priority of ethnic Russians over the other ethnic groups of the Russian state. Russian identity and culture became a symbol of the state. All the other ethnic groups in the territory of Russia were considered as Russians too, as long as they were living in the Russian state. In the first part of the 1800s there was no idea that there could be other nations within the Russian state. The term nation was only understood in its connection to the state. Finland was incorporated into the Russian state in 1809 after the Russian–

Swedish war. Before 1809 it had been another state, a part of Sweden. That is why the Finns were seen as a nation within the Russian state. The opposite situation was with the Komi people, who were incorporated into the Russian state before they could establish their own state. The term nation had no association with the Komi people until the 1900s. The Komi people were living in the territory considered as the entire territory of the Russian state and were also considered as Russians by the state authorities. That is why the official language in the Komi land was Russian. All types of education and liturgy in churches were also provided in Russian. The Russian language was used for the purpose of administration and trade. The Komi language became the language of daily life and was used at home.

2.2 The establishment of the Komi Republic

The beginning of the 1900s is the time of change for the concept of nation in Russian political theory. The concept of nation started to be associated with the unity of people having common language, territory, culture and economic connections instead of being associated with the state (Strailer 2003: 11–15). Nation and citizenship became separate definitions. Such distinction between citizenship and nationality led to the appearance of ideas of self-determination of ethnic groups within the Russian state. In political terms, it meant that the particular nation was the source of political power (Bogomolov & Blashenkova, 1998). This idea was developed in the communist concept of self-determination. The Bolsheviks seized the state power in Russia in 1917 and proclaimed the right for self-determination for all the peoples and nations within Russia (Smith: 1999). The implementation of the self-determination principle was provided by the formation of states in the territories with compact settlement of a particular nation. The compact settlement of the Komi people in the North-West of the European part of Russia led to formation of the Komi autonomous territory (Komi avtonomija) in August 22, 1921. The Komi autonomous territory was a district with its own self-government.

In period 1918 – the beginning of the 1920s, during and after the Civil War and Intervention in Russia, the Bolsheviks were interested in political stabilization in the

country. They were struggling for political support on regional level. The idea of self-determination of the peoples seemed to be the best variant to get support in those places where the indigenous people were living. The Komi Republic was one of these places. Wide support of indigenoussness in the Komi territories became the implementation of the Bolsheviks' self-determination concept and at the same time served the needs of social peace in the Komi Republic torn during the Civil War. The Komi people got the right to self-determination and started its implementation. The meaning of self-determination was expressed in the meaning which followed.

In the 1920s the state policy towards the Komi people was concerned with language and education. The Komi people had lots of local dialects; there was illiteracy and no teaching in Komi. First of all, the Komi literacy was formed. The Komi alphabet was developed by V. Molodcov and was based on the Komi-Zyryans dialect, spoken in the area of Syktyvkar. Unification of language and culture gave the name to that period – “zyryanisation”. The establishment of the Komi national school is also related to the 1920s. In 1924-1925 there were 217 (98%) of schools with teaching in the Komi language (Smetanin, 2003: 294). In 1924 a special decree of the Soviet authorities proclaimed the equality of Komi to the Russian language and compulsory use of the Komi language in office work in the Komi territories (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 23). A new concept of economic regionalization of the Soviet Russia was adopted in late 1920. The Komi territories became a part of the Northern District (Severnii Krai) without agreement of people living there. For the Komi people this meant the loss of their self-government and the ability to be represented on the regional level.

2.3 The Soviet policy towards the Komi people in the 1930s-1980s

According to the new Constitution of the USSR of 1936 the Komi territories got the status of the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic (the Komi ASSR). The Komi people got their self-government again. The seats in the governing bodies of the Komi ASSR were occupied only by communists, members of the regional department of the Communist party. In the 1930s -1980s the communist ideology did not associate the

concept of nation with any particular nation within the USSR. There was an idea to create a “super nation” – the Soviet people, who were not distinguished by ethnicity or religion. They were united by one territory, one ideology and one language - the Russian language. The Komi ASSR as a part of the Soviet state suffered the same fate as the other parts of the USSR. The Komi people were affected by political, economic and cultural unification. In 1937 the Constitution of the Komi Republic proclaimed the Russian language as the official one. The Komi schools were slowly disappearing, as well as the newspapers in the Komi language. Since the 1960s the Russian language has been everywhere: in schools, on the streets and in mass media. It was used by officials and was associated with progress, education and better life. The Komi language and culture were left behind the social processes in the Republic. The Russian culture and language combined with the Soviet ideology became the main source of communication among peoples in the Republic as well as in the USSR in general.

Industrial development of the Komi land led to the appearance of a great number of specialists from different places of the USSR. Some of the former GULAG prisoners also settled in the Komi Republic. Statistics give evidence concerning the decrease of the Komi population in the Republic. By 1939 there were 72,5% of the Komis and 22% of the Russians there. In 1959 there were only 30,5 % of the Komi people and 48,6% of the Russian population (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 24). The increase of the “non-Komi” population in the Komi Republic during the Soviet period together with the state support of the Russian language and culture led to success of assimilatory policy toward the indigenous people in the Komi Republic. The suppressed identity of the Komi people along with hard economic and social problems led to the appearance of the Komi national movement in late 1980. The Komi national movement claimed freedom of speech, political and ideological pluralism, freedom of associations and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. By the 1980s national relations in former USSR had no regulation. Things became worse due to the assimilation policy towards the indigenous people, other ethnic groups, autonomous territories and republics carried out by Moscow authorities in the 1930s-1970s. The demands of Moscow government were seen as predominant over the interests of ethnic groups. Such policy caused the feeling of

national offence and inequality among the indigenous people in the Komi Republic. They felt encroachment on their political, economic and cultural rights. In the Komi Republic the problems of indigenous population were strengthened by the crisis in the agricultural sector. The majority of the Komis lived in rural areas. The economic situation in villages was especially difficult due to constant money flow from the countryside in order to fill in the financial gaps in the industrial sector. The Komi Republic is very rich in natural resources, such as gas, coal and oil. Their extraction was started in the 1930s. The Moscow authorities got all the benefits from the extraction of natural resources. Pulp-and-paper industry in the Komi Republic brought lots of income to Moscow, too. The outcome for the Komis got was diminishing of their natural resources and worsening of the ecological situation.

A long period of rejection of any ethnic identity and rights during the Soviet time and the free spirit of Perestroika in the late 1980s led to revival of the Komi peoples' movement for the rights and recognition.

Chapter 3. The Komi people's national movement in 1991-1992

Since 1987, when Gorbachev's programs of glasnost' and liberalization began, the peoples of Russia (RSFSR)¹ have been in search for their identity (Dunlop, 1997: 29). During the seventy years of communism they accepted the regime and its attempts to decide over people's interests and needs, which were provided by the top-down power relations. In the transition period, the period of the regime crisis, the authorities initiated public discussions of social and national problems and legitimized the existence of political pluralism. The new identifications based on suppressed or ignored communities of historical past, religion, and political views appeared. The crisis of the Communist regime in Russia in the late 1980s caused the replacement of identities among the indigenous population. The debates about human rights in the USSR, economic policy and ideological pressure discredited the Soviet identity and made the identification "Soviet people" negative in the public opinion (Lebedeva, 1999; Ivanova, 2003). The USSR citizens changed their value orientations and started to turn to those identities that used to be suppressed by the Communist regime. Indigenousness became the foundation of new identities in national-territorial formations (republics) of Russia. That process also took place in the Komi Republic. The indigenous population there was one of the first to decide the question of identity in favor of their historical past and culture that had been under pressure of the Russian assimilatory policy for centuries (see chapter 2). The first Komi people's organizations were established in 1989-1990 to promote the revival of the Komi language and culture.

The present chapter is concerned with the appearance and development of the first Komi people organizations in the Komi Republic. The aims of the chapter are to present characteristic features of the Komi people's organizations and to define their interests. The chapter is also concerned with the extent of indigenous influence on the Komi Republican policy-making in 1989-1992.

¹ RSFSR: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic, one of the 15 union republics of the USSR

3.1 The first organizations of the Komi people

The idea of establishing a Komi national organization came in 1989 at the conference “Contemporary problems of the Komi language” (“Problemi funkcionirovanija Komi jazika v sovremennih uslovijah”) held in Syktyvkar. It was decided to establish a special organization that would deal with the problems of the Komi culture and would promote the Komi cultural revival. It was also decided to name it Komi kotir (Komi people) (*Krasnoe znamja*, № 38, 30.03.1989: 2). The same type of cultural organization had been established in 1918. It was also named Komi kotir. In the 1930s the Soviet authorities proclaimed that the activity of Komi kotir was nationalistic and the organization was dissolved. The new Komi kotir was reestablished on December 1, 1989 at the meeting of the Komi people’s representatives of all of the Komi people’s communities. The idea of the Komi national organization was supported by the Komi Republican authorities because of its relevance to the political situation in the Republic (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 58). The Komi Republic was preparing to discuss ethnic problems together with the other regions of the USSR at the Session of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in September of 1989. The Republican authorities needed some background in ethnic discussions in order to present some of their outcomes on the central level.

From the beginning Komi kotir was a non-governmental organization aimed at providing the cultural revival, promoting the development of the Komi language, literacy and education and activating the contacts between the Komi communities in the other territories of Russia. The establishment of Komi kotir led to the appearance of several local Komi people’s organizations in the Komi Republic. The Izvatas organization was one of the first to appear in the Komi Republic after the establishment of the Komi kotir. The word *izvatas* is the self-naming of the Komi-igemci, the northern group of the Komi people. The appearance of *Izvatas* and its active role in cultural development helped the Komi-igemci to be included into the State List of the Indigenous Peoples of the North. It meant that the Komi-igemci was recognized as a separate indigenous group on the federal level. The activity of *Izvatas* was concerned not only

with cultural development and language protection, but also with the ecological policy in the North. Members of Izvatas succeeded in their struggle against nuclear tests on Novaja Zemlja Island. Novaja Zemlja had been used for military purposes since the mid-1950s. Reindeer breeding, fishing and fur trade were stopped there. The population of the island was moved to the mainland (*Respublika* № 46, 15.11.1991: 3). The nuclear tests on Novaja Zemlja negatively affected the ecology in the territories inhabited by the indigenous population (the Nenets and the Komi- Igemci), whose traditional occupation was reindeer breeding. The initiative of Izvatas to stop the nuclear tests on Novaja Zemlja led to the limitation of the military activity in the North of Russia. One more organization, established by the Komis, appeared in 1989 in Moscow. It was Parma (Spruce forest). Its position in the immediate proximity to the central authorities and participation in Moscow debates about the fate of the indigenous and minority culture offered support to the position of the Komi people on the central level.

August 1990 became the turning point in the activity of the Komi people's organizations. On August 29, 1990 the Ministers Council of the Komi Republic adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic (DSSKR). Article 1 of the Declaration proclaimed that

[t]he Komi SSR [Soviet Socialistic Republic] is a sovereign national state, voluntarily incorporated into the RSFSR [the Russian Socialistic Federative Soviet Republic] and the Soviet Union... (DSSKR, 1990)

The preamble to the Declaration states that the Declaration is adopted in order to “provide political, economic and legal guaranties” for the population and to “keep and develop centuries-old culture, language, traditions and lifestyle of the Komi people” (DSSKR, 1990). The Declaration stated that the Komi Republic was a “sovereign national state” and the statement about protection of the Komi culture started the debate on the role of the Komi people in the politics of the Komi Republic.

Adoption of the Declaration meant changes in the political structure of the Republic: the removal of centralized governing bodies and establishment of the new ones. The proclamation of the state sovereignty also meant the necessity of new legislation for the Republic. Transitions in the Komi Republican governing and legal systems gave the opportunities for the indigenous population for political revival and securing their rights. Under such circumstances it was important to reach an agreement among the Komi people's organizations, to formulate demands and to work out the strategy of struggle for their rights. For these purposes Komi kotir initiated the meeting of the Komi people, the First Komi Council.

3.2 The First Komi Council

The First Komi Council gathered in January 1991. It was the first council that represented a particular indigenous group of Russia. The First Council gathered 481 delegates: members of Komi people's organizations of the Republic, representatives of the Komi communities from Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Tumen oblast' (district) and members of Parma in Moscow. 93% of the delegates of the Council were Komis, 6% were Russians and 1% representatives of other ethnic groups in the Komi Republic (Kotov & Rogachev, 1991: 154). A huge variety of interests and points of view among the Komi people was revealed from the beginning of the Council's work. 31% of the delegates were not sure in the success of the Council, 8% were absolutely sure that the meeting of the Council would be unsuccessful. Especially skeptical were representatives of the Komi elite (academics, culture workers, politicians, managers, etc.). Their uncertainty in the success of the Council to unite the indigenous people and work out common demands and strategies was between 43% and 50%, depending on current occupation of the respondents (Kotov & Rogachev, 1991: 155).

The public opinion poll, held before the Council started to work, underlined the Komi people's view on the ethnic problems in the Komi Republic. There were 365 delegates (76%) (Kotov & Rogachev, 1991: 154) of the First Council who responded to the questionnaires (Scheme 2).

Scheme 2. To what extent are the nationality problems solved in the Komi Republic?

The type of national problems	How is it solved			It is difficult to say	Total amount of delegates voted
	Solved	Partly solved	Unsolved		
National Komi school	1 (0,27%)	41 (11,2%)	48 (13,1%)	9 (2,5%)	99 (27,07%)
The Komi language in the mass media and in book printing *	2 (0,54%)	61 (16,7%)	22 (6%)	13 (3,6%)	98 (26,84%)
Komi people's representation in governing and political bodies	4 (1,1%)	46 (12,6%)	34 (9,3%)	14 (3,8%)	98 (26,8%)
The Komi culture	1 (0,27%)	56 (15,3%)	32 (8,7%)	8 (2,2%)	97 (26,5%)
Development of the Komi language **	-	48 (13,1%)	42 (11,5%)	7 (1,9%)	97 (26,5%)
Attitudes of other nationalities towards Komi people	8 (2,2%)	48 (13,1%)	23 (6,3%)	17 (4,6%)	96 (26,2%)
Development of the Komi traditions	-	45 (12,3%)	40 (10,9%)	13 (3,6%)	98 (26,8%)

Source: Kotov O., Rogachev M. (1991): "Pervii Sezd Komi Nadora: Sociologicheskii Aspect" (The first Council of the Komi people: sociological aspect) *Rubeg* №1 1991, p. 160

* the use of Komi language in press, on television and books in Komi language

** the use of the Komi language in school system and Komi language courses.

As it is seen from the statistical data in Scheme 2, the problems of the Komi national school, language and traditions had the first priority for the delegates of the First Council: 48 (13,1%) delegates pointed out the necessity to solve the problems of the Komi national school, 42 (11,5%) underlined the importance of dealing with the development of the Komi language and 40 (10,9%) prioritized the development of the Komi traditions among the unsolved problems of the Komi people. Political issues had the second priority for the delegates of the First Council. It could be explained by higher involvement of the Komi people and their organizations in the cultural issues. The questions of cultural protection and development have been major in the activity of the Komi people's organizations since their appearance.

The political issues were rather new for the Komi organizations. Since the 1920s the Komi people had no opportunity to discuss political matters or participate in the Republican policy as the indigenous representatives. Such an opportunity arose only after the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic. 34 delegates of the First Council thought that the problems of the Komi people's political representation were unsolved. Among the reasons of limited political representation the majority of the delegates (62%) named "disinterested attitude to these problems" and 48% of respondents called "the limited freedom of the Komi Republican authorities to be the barrier to the ethnic peace in the Republic" (Kotov & Rogachev, 1991: 160). In fact, this barrier was removed by the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty. The Komi Republic got freedom in domestic policy-making.

Further work of the First Council clarified the priorities of the Komi people presented in the Resolution of the Komi Council "On the State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic" (OSSKR). The Komi people agreed that it was important to secure that the source of the state sovereignty of the Komi Republic is the "centuries-old development of the Komi people in this territory that is their historical homeland" (OSSKR, 1991: 187-188). This statement shows the interest of the Komi people to be recognized as the indigenous population of the Komi Republic and secure their indigenusness in the Declaration of the State Sovereignty. This would have been impossible to do without the Declaration,

and stronger republican governing system. That is why the Komi people are also interested in state sovereignty of the Komi Republic. The Resolution also pointed out that there was no developed nationality policy in the Komi Republic. For this purpose the Komi Council suggested establishing the State Nationality Committee in the Komi Republic (OSSKR, 1991: 187-188).

The resolution “On the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic” showed a careful attitude of the Komi Council in revealing its demands. On the one hand, the Council supported the Republican authorities in their aspiration to establish an independent power system, legally equal to the federal one. On the other hand, the Komi Council was struggling for the development of a proper indigenous policy in the Republic, hiding its own demands for broader political representation and influence in the Republic. The existence of these demands was indirectly expressed in the Resolution, which stated that “the Komi people were the source of state sovereignty” (OSSKR, 1991: 187-188). In other words, the Komi people were the reason for the Republican authorities to demand political independence from the federal centre, because the Komi people as the indigenous people regarded themselves to self-determination rights. As long as the Komi people gave the Republican authorities an opportunity to appeal to these rights (in preamble to the Declaration of State Sovereignty), it seems to be fair to give the Komi people broader political representation in the Republic than to any other ethnic group. If mentioned directly, it could cause national conflicts between the Komi people and the other ethnic groups of the Republic. The Komi Council decided to choose the mild variant and to lobby the indigenous interests while supporting the Republican authorities and revealing demands, common to all the people of the Republic. For instance, these could be such demands as sovereignty of the Republic and development of nationality policy.

The wish to reveal common demands was, however clearly seen in the second resolution of the Komi Council “On Social and Economic Development of the Komi Republic” (OSEDKR). The Komi people demanded better living standards, social care, and development of agricultural production and additional financing of the rural areas. The

second part of the 1980s had been a time of economic crisis in all the territories of the Soviet Union. By the beginning of the 1990s the economic crisis directly affected the traditional lifestyle of the Komi people. The cultural centers, clubs and schools were closed because of the lack of financial support. The unprofitability of farming and the lack of work in the countryside led to the outflow of Komi people from the rural areas. They moved to the cities, tried to be integrated into social and economic relations there, and to forget their cultural roots. Social care system and support of the rural areas could help to solve these problems. Again the interests of the Komi people were interconnected with the interests of the other ethnic groups. The rural areas consisted of the majority of the Komis living together with the other ethnic groups. The resolution “On Social and Economic Development of the Komi Republic” did not contain the statement about special support of the Komi people in the rural areas, but all the rural population (OSEDKR, 1991: 188-191). The resolution on social and economic matters pointed out the importance of land and resource use issue. The Komi people’s and the Republican authorities’ demands were the same – the Republican property of land and resources. Before 1990 all natural resources of the Komi Republic had been the common property of the peoples of the USSR. Article 11 of the Constitution of the USSR (edited in 7.10.1989) stated that “the state has the exclusive right to the land, its resources, water and forests...” Article 4 of the Declaration of State Sovereignty (DSS) of the Komi Republic proclaimed that “the land, its resources, water, air, flora and fauna and other natural resources...are the property of the Republic” (DSS, 1991, Article 4). The First Council did not make any statements about the Komi people’s land rights and resource use. There was no particular resolution on these matters adopted by the First Council. This could be the result of undeveloped strategy of struggling for the land rights among the Komi people’s organizations and absence of clear ideas about legal initiatives or fear of sharp confrontation with the state. Opening the question of land rights would meet strong opposition both on republican and federal level. The Komi people had no strong arguments against the state position, neither their own suggestions on how to improve the situation.

In comparison to the other issues, discussed by the First Komi Council, more attention was given to the problems of the Komi language. Particular indigenous interests became visible through the attitude of the Council towards language matters.

3.3 The Komi language policy

The Komi people experienced, as described, intensive language assimilation during the Soviet period. In the 1960s -1970s the Komi language was totally removed from school education. Several generations of the Komi people grew without any knowledge of the Komi language. School and university education was provided only in Russian. Fluent knowledge of Russian was required during the employment process. The amount of mass media in the Komi language was less than the amount of the Russian newspapers and TV channels. In the beginning of the 1990s only a part of the Komi people had fluent Komi language knowledge. There were 176 schools (16579 pupils) with the Komi language teaching in the Komi Republic (Gabov, 2005: 563).

The Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic (DSS) proclaimed the Komi language to be the official language of the Komi Republic together with Russian (DSS, 1991, Article 15). The Komi language had never been the official language of the Komi Republic. It was unclear how the Komi language would become the official one as it was spoken by a small part of the minority of the Republic. Therefore, there was a need to establish the system of Komi language learning, but the Declaration did not have any statements about it. It was also unclear how the Komi language would coexist with the Russian language. The First Council of the Komi people decided to work out a law draft that would secure the equal role of the Komi language, its protection and development. The linguists from the Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Komi Science Centre devised the Komi Republican law draft "On the Languages" in 1991. The Komi people's organizations, however, opposed the law draft. They did not agree with the time limits devoted to the implementation of the law. The law concerned a long-term implementation, for a period up to ten years. One more point against the law was the practical inequality of the Komi and Russian languages in office work and education.

Fluent knowledge of Komi was not required for employees even in governing bodies. The Komi language was not taught at colleges and universities of the Republic. The number of secondary schools with Komi language teaching was also limited.

The most radical comments and suggestions to the law draft “On the Languages” were expressed in the article “Illusion of equality” (Mnimoe Ravnopravie), written by Dmitrii Napalkov, the member of the Komi people’s movement and journalist from the Komi Mu (Komi land) newspaper:

The concept of bilingualism, understood as the equality of two official languages in one territory, is impossible to implement. I think that... it is necessary to define “national” territories with one official language there. The national territories in the Komi Republic could use the Russian language as the language of communication. (*Respublika* № 50, 13.12.1991: 3)

Inability to implement the concept of bilingualism in the Komi Republic in the 1990s is obvious. It was realized that the Komi and Russian languages would never be equal until all the population in the Republic was able to know both of them. Both Komi and Russian use Cyrillic script, there are common words, but the grammar is different. Knowledge of the Komi language requires several years of intensive learning. The Komi people constituted 23% of the population of the Republic, the rest of the population was Russian speaking. Data presented in Scheme 3 indicate the reduction in the amount of the Komi people knowing the Komi language during the period of 1970–1989. The percentage of Komi speakers among the Komi people in 1989 was 76.1%. (Scheme 3.)

Scheme 3. Knowledge of the Komi language among Komi people, 1970-1989

Year	Amount of Komi people in the Komi Republic	Knowledge of the native language
1970	276,200	88.0%
1979	280,800	81.7%
1989	291,500	76.1%

Source: The Information Center of Finno-Ugric peoples
<http://www.suri.ee/eup/komis.html>

The law “On the languages” only proclaimed the equality of the Komi and Russian languages in the Komi Republic, but there were no statements on how the equality would be reached. Should all population of the Republic know the Komi language or should it be used everywhere together with Russian? Should the Komi language be used when dealing with the indigenous people, in office work, education, mass media, etc? These questions were not clarified. Napalkov understood the difficulty of the situation. In his article he offered to divide the Komi Republic into “national territories” according to the majority of language speakers, the Russian or the Komi. Napalkov thought that only one language could be the official one in each of the “national territories”. Russian could be used as the language of communication between these “national territories”. Napalkov’s suggestions got no support from the Komi Republican authorities. His ideas also got negative evaluation among the Komi people. The idea to create “national” territories with one official language there got lots of criticism from both sides for its nationalistic tone. Such measure could strengthen the gap between the ethnic groups in the Komi Republic. The political crisis in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s required solidarity and peace inside the Republic. The law “On the official languages” was

adopted by the Parliament of the Komi Republic on May 28, 1992, edited by the linguists from the Komi Science Centre, and got several amendments.

The final version of the Komi Republican law “On the official languages” became a compromise between its draft and the demands of the Komi people. The final text of the law contained clarified statements about the use of the Komi language (in schools, legislation, office management, geographic names, etc.), as this was demanded by the Komi people. Article 19 of the law “On the official languages” (1991) stated that the citizen of the Komi Republic had the right to choose which language to use. The most controversial is Article 18 of the law:

... the lack of knowledge of one of the official languages cannot be a reason to refuse the application for the job position. The knowledge of both languages does not give any advantage when applying for the job position, including management positions... (The law of the Komi Republic “On languages”, 1991, Article 18)

Article 18 together with Article 19 stated that studies of the Komi language were not necessary. What kind of language equality is it if it is not compulsory to know one of the state languages? Article 18 was the evidence that knowledge of Komi was not necessary to know when applying for a job. Article 19 stated that the person could choose which language to learn and to speak between the two state languages. There were no problems with using the Russian language, but at the same time there was not enough support for the Komi language though it was proclaimed the second official language and equal to Russian. Article 18 was opposed not only by the Komi people but also by the authors of the first draft. G. Feduneeva and E. Cipanov published the article in the Republican newspaper demanding to remove it from the text of the law (*Respublica* № 79, 8.07.1992: 2). However, the article was not removed.

3.4 Self-determination

The concept of self-determination has two meanings that are appropriate the thesis. First meaning is “associated with secession, encompasses the demands of minorities that intend to break away from the state they belong to” (Archibugi, 2003: 488). This meaning of self-determination was connected with the concept of state sovereignty of ethnic groups. It was the major concept that was used by the ethnic groups during the collapse of the Soviet Union in early 1990s and resulted in appearance of a number of new states on the map of Eastern Europe. The second meaning of self-determination “refers to certain ethnic or cultural groups which, although intending to remain part of the state they belong to, wish to archive certain collective rights” (Archibugi, 2003: 488). The Komi people’s demands for self-determination combined both meanings. On one hand, Komis supported the idea of the state sovereignty of the Komi Republic within the Russian Federation. On the other hand, Komi people demanded self-determination within the Komi Republic.

The concept of self-determination in the Russian political and philosophic thought is seen through the discourse on ethnic and cultural autonomy of ethnic groups and nations within the state. Such understanding of self-determination was based on the multinational character of the Russian state. In the 1980s-1990s Genadii Popov underlined the necessity to discuss the concepts of self-determination as the possible measure to decide the ethnic question in the post-Soviet space – the ability to develop the language, culture and traditions of a particular ethnic group. The concept of self-determination got political nuances after the “parade of sovereignties” of the USSR republics in 1990. Since that time it has been understood as the demand for the state sovereignty.

The Komi people and the First Council started to develop the concept of self-determination by identifying themselves as an indigenous people. Further development of the concept is seen in the resolution “On the State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic” (OSSKR), adopted by the First Council of the Komi people in 1991. The resolution

stated that the Komi people, who had been living in the territory of the Komi Republic for centuries, were the reason for state sovereignty of the Republic (OSSKR, 1991: 187-188). At the same time state sovereignty of the Komi Republic was “spread” over the people of the Republic – “historically developed multinational unity of people” (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 63) living there. It means that sovereignty of the Republic was sovereignty of its people. Not only did the First Council of the Komi People proclaim the Komi people to be the origin of sovereignty of the Komi Republic, but it also discussed the ethnic limits of the Republican sovereignty – the Komi people as the sole native population of the Republic.

The delegates of the First Council expressed different ideas about sovereignty. 84% of the delegates supported the resolution “On the State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic” (Kotov & Rogachev, 1991: 161). There were also a few delegates who suggested establishing a union of all the Komi people in one republic. Some delegates defended the idea of secession and widening of state borders over the whole territory of residence of the Komi people (Kotov & Rogachev 1991: 162). The moderate deputies of the First Council, who did not claim the secession rights, initiated the discussion about the political representation of the Komi people in the parliament of the Komi Republic. The political participation of the Komi people was seen as the establishment of a bicameral parliament with a separate house for the Komi people’s representatives. The First Council of the Komi people discussed social policy in the Komi Republic, the ecological situation and labour legislation. After the first Council of the Komi people finished its work, the leadership of the Komi movement was passed to the Committee of the Komi National Revival. The Committee was elected during the Council’s work and was its executive body. The first Committee leader was Valery Markov. The aim of the Committee was to promote the resolutions of the First Council of the Komi people and help their implementation through the governing bodies of the Komi Republic. The resolutions of the First Council were ignored by the Komi Republican authorities. In November of 1991 the Komi people gathered their Second Council.

3.5 The Second Council of the Komi people

The Second Council of the Komi people was held to decide how to overcome the insufficient attitude to the indigenous demands among the Komi Republican authorities. The meeting was focused on the role of the Council of the Komi people in the Komi movement and its meaning in the political process of the Komi Republic. For these purposes the Second Council adopted the “Declaration on the Legal Status of the Council of the Komi people” (DLSCKP) and suggested holding compulsory discussions of its resolutions together with the Republican governing bodies. After such consultations in May 1992 the Komi Republican Parliament adopted the law “On the status of the Council of the Komi people”:

Article 1 stated that the Council of the Komi people was a representative body of the Komi nation. Article 2 secured the rights of the Council to present the Komi people in political bodies of the Republic and initiate laws in the parliament of the Republic... Article 5 was concerned with the Republican obligations to provide financial support to the Council’s meetings. Article 6 stated that the activity of the Council of the Komi people couldn’t damage the interests of the other peoples of the Komi Republic (Kiselev, 2001: 11).

Article 1 and 2 of the law secured that the Komi people got a political representative body, The Council of the Komi people. The Council had the right to initiate laws that would be discussed in the Republican Parliament. But the Parliament was to vote for or against the law. The Komi people had limited representation in the Parliament. They could not block unfavorable laws, but the Russian majority of the Parliament could block the Komi people’s legislative initiatives. The law “On the Legal Status of the Council of the Komi people” did not change the situation. The First Council suggested establishing the bicameral parliament with the second chamber for the Komi people. This suggestion got no response from the Republican officials.

3.6 Summary: the Komi national movement in 1989-1992

The Komi national movement was started with the appearance of cultural organizations. The problems of the Komi culture were especially important due to the decades of the Soviet assimilatory policy that damaged the Komi culture and the development of the Komi language. The appearance and the development of the Komi organizations took place along with the deep crisis of the Soviet system and the beginning of the reforms in the Komi Republic. At the same time the period between 1989 and 1992 brought new opportunities for the Komi people to change the situation in their favor. The Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic forced the Komi organizations to unite, to formulate their interests, to work out the demands and strategy of struggle for their rights.

The chapter three underlined the types of indigenous people's interests in the Komi Republic. The interests of the indigenous population were shaped during the institutionalization of the Komi people's movement. On the one hand, the interests of the Komi people were closely connected with the interests of the whole population of the Republic. The Komi people were interested in the sovereignty of the Komi Republic and the establishment of new political and legal system. At the same time, the Komi people stood up for social reforms and improvement of living standard for the whole population of the Republic. The commitment to the Komi Republican sovereignty and the consent with the other population of the Republic on social and economic matters became the major political strategy for the Komi people in the beginning of the 1990s. This strategy was revealed by the attitude of the Komi people to agricultural policy and resource use issues. On the other hand, the Komi people had their own interests in development of the language, culture and traditions. The resolutions adopted by the First Council of the Komi people got insufficient attention of the Republican authorities. The Second Council underlined the necessity of broader indigenous representation and participation in the law-making process of the Republic.

Chapter 4. The Komi people and the Constitutional debates in 1992 - 1994

The period between 1992 and 1994 is the second stage in the development of the Komi national movement. The activity of the Komi people was connected with the legitimization of their demands in the new constitution. The constitutional debate started from the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic and continued during the discussions about the adoption of the Treaty of Federation and the work of the Federal and the Republican constitutional committees. There was a need to adopt two Constitutions – the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Constitution of the Komi Republic.

4.1 The Treaty of Federation and the Komi people's initiatives

After the collapse of the USSR the Komi Republic had to choose between two variants of political development: either to remain in the Russian Federation or to establish an independent state. The Komi Republican authorities initiated the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic, but decided to remain in the Federation because of geopolitical reasons and historically determined economic integration with the neighbouring territories, Permsky kray and Arkhangelskaja, Vologodskaja and Kirovskaja oblast', which had already become a part of the Federation.

The Komi people supported the Republican government's intention to stay in the Federation. The Committee for the Komi people's national revival appealed to the people of the Komi Republic to protect the sovereignty of the Republic and to conclude a mutually beneficial treaty with the Russian Federation (*Respublika* №9, 22.01.1992: 1). From the Federal centre the Komi people were seen as one of the groups of the indigenous peoples of the Federation. From the Republican perspective the Komi people were the only indigenous population of the Republic. They could get more opportunities to participate in policy-making processes in the Republic than in the Federation. The

First and the Second Councils of the Komi People had already underlined the indigenous problems and worked out several agreements with the Republican government about the status of the Komi people and the role of the Komi people's Council in the Republican policy. Before the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic, policy-making was totally dependent on the central authorities. Even the positions in the Republican governing bodies were occupied by the Russians, sent from Moscow. State sovereignty of the Komi Republic meant an opportunity to solve the Republican problems in the Republic and by the citizens of the Republic. The Komi indigenous issues were already included into the political agenda of the Republic and the Komi people were willing to solve them inside the Republic. The Treaty of Federation (TF) says that

[r]epublics (states) within the Russian Federation possess the state (legislative, executive, judicial) authority over their territory, except the authority, given to the federal governing bodies according to the present Treaty. The territory and the status of the republic of the Russian Federation cannot be changed without its agreement. (TF, 1992, Article 3.1)

The quoted article secured the sovereignty of the Komi Republic (as well as of all the republics within the Russian Federation) when stated the right of the republic "to possess the state authority over its territory". Article 1 and Article 2 of the Treaty secured distinguishing of authorities between the Federation and the Republic (TF, 1992, Article 1-2). The Komi Republic got freedom in domestic policy-making and establishing the governing and representative bodies of the Republic. Both articles guaranteed self-governing rights of the Republican authorities. The articles created legal foundation for the establishment of independent governing bodies in the Komi Republic, where the Komi people could defend their rights.

Adoption of the Treaty of Federation in 1992 secured the territory of the Federation and the status of its subjects. For the Komi people the Treaty meant recognition of sovereignty of the Komi Republic and a step towards the legitimization of their demands. The Treaty also stipulated that the constitutions of the republics had to

conform to the federal constitution. This statement was legitimated in Article 1 and Article 2.2 of the Treaty (1992):

...the federal governing bodies of the Russian Federation issue the Foundations of the legislation according to which the republican governing bodies possess their own legal regulation, including the adoption of laws and other legal acts (TF, 1992, Article 1–2).

The next step was promotion of the indigenous demands on the central level during the debates on the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The article meant that all the legal acts of the Komi Republic had to be established in compliance with the federal legislation. The Constitution of the Russian Federation should become the foundation for the Constitution of the Komi Republic. The harmonization of federal and republican constitutions was an important step towards establishment of the constitutional right in the Komi Republic. Article 2.2 of the Federal Constitution (1993) was the reason for the Komi people to work out the suggestions and amendments for the federal Constitutional Committee.

4.2 The Komi people's suggestions for the Constitution of the Russian Federation

The draft of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, worked out by the Constitutional Committee, was presented a few months after the adoption of the Treaty. The Komi people got suspicious towards the draft. The resolution of the Third Council of the Komi people stated that the Council rejected the draft of the Constitution of the Russian Federation because of the absence of the Treaty of Federation in its text (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 76–77). The Treaty of Federation was the legal base of Republican sovereignty. Failure to incorporate the Treaty into the Constitution meant that the Komi national movement had to change the strategy in their struggle. The Komi representatives decided to secure general statements about the indigenous people and

their rights in the Federal Constitution and then specify these statements in the Republican Constitution.

4.2.1 The discussions about the term “indigenous people”

The first-priority issue was to clarify and to secure the term “indigenous people” in the Federal Constitution. The term “small indigenous people” was used in the draft of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Valery Markov, the leader of the committee for the Komi people’s national revival, pointed out that in the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) the indigenous rights were mentioned in Article 68.3 and Article 69 (*Respublica* №6, 15.01.1992: 2). The Constitution (1993) states that

[t]he Russian Federation shall guarantee the rights of the indigenous small peoples according to the universally recognized principles and norms of the international law and international treaties and agreements of the Russian Federation (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 69).

This article concerned with rights that were guaranteed for the “small indigenous people”, according to the international treaties and international law”. But there was no term like “small indigenous people” in international law. There was only the term “indigenous people” without any reference to the number of indigenous people. Nikolay Gilin, the lawyer and the member of the Committee for the Komi people’s national revival, pointed out that there was no need to distinguish between the “titular nations”, “numerous nations” and “small nations”, etc in the Constitution draft as it was internationally secured that all the nations were equal (*Respublica* №6, 15.01.1992: 2). The Komi national movement insisted on the use of the terms “the indigenous people” and “national minority” in the Constitution. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) had been ratified by the USSR and the Russian Federation by the time of the constitutional debate. In Article 1 of these documents, it was declared that “all nations have the right for self-determination” (ICESCR 1966, Article 1; ICCPR 1966, Article 1). The same right is secured in the preamble to the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993:

We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation, united by common fate in our land, are establishing human rights and freedoms, civic peace and accord, preserving the historically established state unity, proceeding from the universally recognized principles of equality and self-determination of peoples... (The Constitution of the Russian Federation 1993, Preamble)

The self-determination statement means that all nations are free to define their political status and follow their own economic and cultural development. Using the term “small nations” the Russian authorities were deciding which nation would have more rights and which nation would have fewer opportunities to enjoy their rights. Incomprehensibility of the concept “indigenous” was reflected in the second article of the Constitution about indigenous issues (1993). Article 68.3 about the language rights stipulated that

[t]he Russian Federation shall guarantee to all its peoples the right to preserve their native language and to establish conditions for its study and development (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 68.3).

This paragraph did not specify whose right to preserve the native language was guaranteed. Were these rights secured for the indigenous people, national minorities or immigrant groups? The rights referred to all these groups, and indigenous people have the same language rights as the other nation groups. The central authorities would be the ones to decide which rights the indigenous people should have. It was clear that the indigenous people could not count on the indigenous rights concept because there were no concrete statements about the indigenous rights in the Constitution. The use of the term “small indigenous nations” in the Federal Constitution towards the indigenous people proved that the central authorities restricted the area of use for the concept of “indigenous”. The space for political and legal maneuvers of the indigenous population was also limited, as well as the instruments of political struggle for their rights.

4.2.2 Indigenous land rights and resource use

The Komi Republic announced republican land and resources ownership. That means that all the people of the Komi Republic have the right to land and resources. During the

constitutional debate the Komi national movement did not introduce any land and resource demands. The Second Council of the Komi people appealed to all the “nations” of the Komi Republic for close collaboration with each other. The agreement of the Komi people with the Republican authorities on common rights of all the nations of the Republic to land and natural resources aimed at showing the willingness of the Komi people to collaborate with all the other ethnic groups of the Republic. The strategy of the Komi people here was to improve the support for the Komi people’s movement among all the citizens of the Republic. In that sense, the members of the Committee of the Komi national revival suggested making change in Article 9 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It was proposed to include the statement that “the Russian Federation respects and guarantees the rights and freedoms of all the nations and national minorities of the republics and territories” (*Respublica* №6, 15.01.1992: 2). The Komi people offered the amendments about the land right and the resource use. According to the Komi representatives, the following statement should be included:

[t]he land, the resources, the water, the flora and the fauna are the property of all peoples, living in the republics and territories. They cannot be used for damaging the indigenous peoples, living there (*Respublica* №6, 15.01.1992: 2).

The proposal was not adopted. Article 9 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation secured only the republican property. The Komi people’s initiatives did not get support in the federal center. The rejection of all of the Komi people’s demands during the debates on the new Constitution showed the intention of the federal government to continue the policy of assimilation and resistance towards the indigenous movements in Russia. The debates on the Constitution showed the reality of the Komi republican attitude to the Komi people’s demands neither was the Komi Republic ready to fulfill the demands for equal indigenous political representation and land rights. The Republican policy was aimed at fulfilling the demands of the Russian majority of the Republic.

The draft of the new Constitution of the Russian Federation was criticized by the Komi people for its insufficient attitude towards the indigenous rights and institutions of the indigenous people. In spite of the Komi people's disagreement, the term "small indigenous people" was secured in the Constitution. There were no statements about the role of the councils of the indigenous peoples in the Constitution. Nor was anything said about the mechanism of indigenous and minority representation. The only chance for the Komi people to provide the legal base for their demands was to use the statement of the Federal Constitution that "the Republic...shall have its own constitution and legislation" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 5.2), and to participate in the work of the Komi Republican Constitutional Committee.

4.3 The Komi people and the debates about the Constitution of the Komi Republic

The adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation created the legal space for the regional law-making process. The Komi Republic started to develop its own legal structure based on the principles of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The major aim for the Republic was to clarify these general principles according to the situation in the Republic. The Komi movement was trying to secure its demands and position in the Republican policy. The preparation of the new Constitution of the Komi Republic started in May of 1990 with the establishment of the Constitutional Committee. The Komi indigenous people were represented in the Constitutional Committee by Valery Markov. The first Constitution draft was ready by the end of 1993, just after the adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Committee for the Komi national revival worked out its own Constitution draft in January of 1994. This variant was not published due to financial difficulties being suffered by the Committee for the Komi national revival. The failure of the Komi people's amendments during the debates on the Federal Constitution and the absence of sufficient republican attitude to the indigenous demands made the Komi people prioritize the representation issue in the discussions on the Republican Constitution. The Committee for the Komi national

revival presented a new Constitution draft of the Komi Republic. There it was focused on the Komi people's representation in the governing bodies of the Republic.

4.3.1. Bicameral parliament?

The Constitution of the Russian Federation recognizes the republics as the subjects of the Federation. The federal Constitution contains a statement that

[t]he Council of the Federation [the upper chamber of the federal parliament] includes two representatives from each subject of the Russian Federation: one from the legislative and one from the executive body of the state authority (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 95.2).

Article 95.2 secures representation of the republics in the central governing bodies. But what about the indigenous peoples in the republics? The Komi people had a chance to be represented in governing bodies only if they would win the elections to the legislative and executive bodies of the Republic. After that the indigenous representatives would not be able to represent themselves, but they would have to represent the Republic in the Federal Parliament. The indigenous population in the Komi Republic was the minority and had fewer chances to be elected as the Republican representatives than the Russians. But the Komi people could influence the Republican authorities through the parliament of the Republic. Increasing the representation would let the Komi demands be heard through the Republican representatives. At the same time increasing the indigenous representation in the Republic would serve the needs of fulfilling the demand for equality of all nations regardless of their number. Implementation of the equality principle in the Komi Republic would place the Republic ahead of the federal legislation on the indigenous peoples and create the legal precedent.

In 1990 at the election to the Republican parliament the Komi people got 56 seats or 31,6% (Ilin, 1994), without being formal representatives of the Komi people. The leader of the government was the Komi people's representative, Vjacheslav Hudjaev, and the head of the parliament was the Russian, Uriy Spiridonov. That was fair from the point of view of equality of all the citizens of the Republic without any references to their

nationality. Nevertheless, the Komi people were not satisfied with such a situation. The major principle, advocated by the Komi people's movement, was the principle of equality of all nations and formal ethnic representation. The Komi people were not equally represented in the governing bodies of the Republic. They were the minority in the Parliament and had no veto right as a group. They could not block unfavorable legal acts and legitimate their own suggestions without agreement with the other ethnic groups of the parliament.

The Komi indigenous movement decided to change the situation with poor indigenous representation by the establishment of a bicameral Republican parliament. The Pechora branch of Komi koitir supported the idea of a bicameral parliament with a separate chamber for the Komi people. The Egva branch of Komi Koitir proposed a parliament with a chamber of "commons" and a chamber of the Komi people. The idea of a bicameral parliament was also reflected in Article 3 of the draft, presented by the Committee for the Komi people's national revival:

The State Assembly [the Republican parliament] consists of two houses: the House of Commons and the House of the Republic. Each house consists of 20 deputies, elected from the single member constituencies with the use of the majority and proportional systems. The House of Commons is elected according to the principle – one deputy from each of the territories and cities of the Komi Republic. The House of the Republic is elected according to the principle – one deputy from each of the election districts (Ilin, 1994).

The idea of a bicameral parliament of the Komi Republic was discussed by the first three Komi people Councils. The majority of the Komi delegates to the Third Council voted for the establishment of a separate chamber in the Republican parliament. This suggestion was supported by the head of the Republican government. Vladimir Pistin, the Federal Parliament candidate from the Komi Republic, voted against. He declared that a bicameral parliament would not solve the representation problem of the Komi people. V. Pistin saw the source of the problem in an unprofessional bureaucracy which would not be able to decide the national problems in the Komi Republic (Ilin, 1994).

Nevertheless, the suggestion of the bilateral parliament was adopted by the Third Komi Council.

The resolution and the draft of the republican constitution were discussed in the Constitutional committee. The establishment of a separate parliament chamber for the Komi people was met with suspicion by the rest of the national groups in the Republic. The first objective against was statement in the Federal Constitution:

Man, his rights and freedoms are the supreme value. The recognition, observance and protection of the rights and freedoms of the man and the citizen shall be the obligation of the State (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 2).

This article secured the supremacy of the human rights concept. The indigenous rights were not reflected in the Federal Constitution except the statements about the language. The establishment of a separate chamber for the Komi people's representatives would damage the representation rights of the other ethnic minority groups of the Republic and provoke ethnic conflicts.

There was also a compromise variant, worked out by the Committee for the Komi people's national revival and discussed in the Constitutional Committee. The suggestion was to establish a second chamber of the Parliament for the representatives from rural areas and cities of the Komi Republic. The compromise variant consisted of the amendments to the Republican election law. A part of the Parliament would be elected in the election districts and another part in rural areas and cities (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 76). The major idea of the compromise was to give more opportunities for the Komi people to be elected, but it did not give them the mechanism to block the decisions of the majority as a formal ethnically representative group. This compromise version of the parliament arrangement met opposition among the members of the Supreme Council. They insisted on removal of the principle "one deputy from the rural area or the city" that was basic for the Komi people's representation. The compromise variant should be accompanied by the amendments to the Republican law "On the election to the

representative bodies of the Komi Republic”. To secure the role of the Komi people in politics it was necessary to limit the immigrants’ access to power. The Agrarian Subcommittee proposed the statement that the candidates who had been living for more than ten years in the Komi Republic should be able to participate in the parliament elections. The same statement was presented in the Decision of the Third Council of the Komi people “On the principles of the Constitution of the Komi Republic”.

The compromise between the Committee for the Komi national revival and the Republican authorities led to a split in the Komi movement. The radical part of the movement announced the formation of the political party Protect ourselves (Доръям асьнымӧс). The party united the most radical members of the Komi national movement who were in opposition to the Council of the Komi people and the Republican authorities as well. Members of Protect ourselves called the strategy of the Council the wrong track and blamed the Komi elite in disregarding and “compromising attitude to the indigenous rights” (Kanev, 1994: 225). The demands of the party were presented in the article written by N. Mitusheva – the leader of “Protect ourselves”:

The Komi Republican authorities should accept the legitimacy of the...demands to create a separate chamber in the Higher Legislative body; secure its right of veto; adopt the laws about the elections, citizenship and migration which will secure the rights of the indigenous people...and...secure the rights of the Komi people as the indigenous people according to the Constitution of the Komi Republic (*Respublica* №1, 1994: 2).

The party was not popular among the Komis (Nesterova & Popov 2000: 79). The majority of the Komi people shared the moderate political strategy of the Council and the Committee for the Komi people’s national revival. Their view was that the radical demands in ethnic policy could produce one more destabilizing factor for the Republic, which was already experiencing the difficult political transition period. The Komi movement was trying to get as much as possible using the political dialog and active participation in the legal formation of the Republic. The Komis also faced strong

resistance from the Russian majority which was trying to overcome the totalitarian past and prioritizing the human rights and democracy issues. Article 4 of the Constitution declares that

[m]an, his rights and freedoms are the highest value....Recognition, observance and protection of the human and civil rights is the responsibility of the Komi Republic (The constitution of the Komi Republic, 1994, Article 4).

The priority of the human and civil rights is strengthened in the Republican Constitution (1994), in Article 10, which states once again that “the human and civil rights are protected in the Komi Republic” (The Constitution of the Komi Republic, 1994, Article 10). The Constitutional Committee rejected all the amendments of the Komi organizations concerning the establishment of the bicameral parliament. The final text of the Republican Constitution states one-chamber parliament.

4.3.2 Language debates

Language debates in the Komi Republic got new dimension due to the discussions about the Republican Constitution. Language issues became important in a concrete political question: which languages are required for occupying the positions in the governing bodies of the Komi Republic? One viewpoint was presented by Nadeжда Bobrova, one of the authors of the Language program. Bobrova suggested establishing the requirements of the Komi language knowledge for all the positions in the political bodies of the Republic (Ilin, 1994). Bobrova based her argumentation on Article 68 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) and Article 18 of the Komi Republican law “On the Languages” (1992), which stated the equality of the Komi and Russian language in the territory of the Komi Republic. There was no need to establish requirements for the Russian language, because all citizens of the Republic had sufficient knowledge of Russian. The opposite situation was with the Komi language. The number of people with sufficient knowledge of Komi was limited. The Komi people themselves were usually not able to discuss the political issues in the Komi language though it was used in daily routine. The necessity of wide use of the Komi language in

the governing bodies would require compulsory learning of the Komi language both in schools and universities and would increase the prestige of the Komi language and the interest for the problems of the Komi culture.

The opposite point of view was also based on the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) and its' Articles 26, 29 and 32 which forbid the supremacy of one language. Uriy Spiridonov offered the compromise variant, when fluent knowledge of Komi should be required for interpreters, secretaries and editors working in the governing bodies of the Republic. The counter offer was made by Valery Markov, the leader of the Committee for the Komi people's national revival and the member of the Constitutional Committee. He suggested compulsory knowledge of the Komi language for the Head (President)² of the Komi Republic. Markov's suggestion indirectly meant that the Head of the Republic would be a Komi representative. There were no Russians or representatives of other ethnic groups who could speak fluent Komi. The Komi language had never been the state language in the Komi Republic before, that is why it had never been taught in schools of the Republic as a compulsory subject.

The discussion about the language use in the governing bodies, in fact, meant the debate about the ethnicity of the major republican political leaders. The acuteness of that debate was increasing because it was held at the same time as the work of the Constitutional Committee. The outcomes of the language debate would be secured in the Republican Constitution. The position of the Supreme Council reflected the non-Komi majority point of view. Compulsory knowledge of the Komi language for all the republican officials would damage their position in the governing bodies. A large number of officials would have to learn Komi or be dismissed from their positions. The language criterion was very important for the Komi elite as a tool in the struggle for higher positions in the legislative and governing bodies of the Republic. With the adoption of Markov's amendment, the Komi language would become the major evidence of professionalism of the government employees and would guarantee a better position for

² The question about the "Head" or the "President" of the Komi Republic had not been decided, when the language issues of the Constitution were debated.

the Komi representatives. The compulsory knowledge of the Komi by the Head (President) of the Republic would mean the inequality of republican citizens to be elected. This view was in contradiction with that of the Constitution of the Russian Federation that states the equality of all people to be elected. The federal Constitution says that

[c]itizens of the Russian Federation shall have the right to participate in managing state affairs both directly and through their representatives. Citizens of the Russian Federation shall have the right to elect and be elected to the state bodies of power and local self-government bodies, and also to participate in the referendum....Citizens of the Russian Federation shall enjoy equal access to the state service (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993, Article 32)

The arguments against compulsory knowledge of the Komi language moved stronger than the indigenous claims. Markov's suggestion was disposed. The Komi people's loss in the language debate was not only one more step back in the struggle for political representation. It also damaged the prestige of the Komi language among the people of the Republic. The Komi language was the second state language but at the same time the field of its use was still narrow. Inequality of the Komi language in office work and governing bodies was the reason against learning Komi. The only motivation to study Komi would be the understanding of its necessity for keeping the Komi culture from assimilation. The statement about the use of the Komi language in the Constitution of the Republic was one of the conditions that could serve the needs for ethnic revival and keeping the national identity of the Komi people. However, it was not accepted.

4.3.3 Who should lead the Republic?

The language debate opened the floor for further discussions about the leader of the Komi Republic. The first stage of the discussion was about the titles "the President of the Komi Republic", who should be elected by the citizens of the Republic, and "the Glava of the Komi Republic", elected by the parliament. It was decided to arrange a referendum on the necessity of a "president" of the Republic. Only a small part of the

population of the Republic took part in the referendum. 54.5% of all who voted were against establishing a president position in the Republic (Fedorovich, 1994). The Komi people voted against the appearance of a president position because of the small chances for a Komi representative to occupy this position. The delegates of the Third Council of the Komi people in the resolution “On the President of the Komi Republic” appealed to all the Komis to vote against the establishment of the president position in the Republic. An attempt to establish a president position was seen as the final submission of the Komi people’s political interests to the Russian majority in the Republic. Russians in the Komi Republic argued against the establishment of a president position referring to the fact that there was a Russian president already, the president of the Russian Federation. It would be confusing with one more president. This fact could be proved by the popularity of the political parties, like the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) which advocated the need of a centralized state in Russia (*Respublica* №1, 1.01.1994: 2). After the referendum the title “the Glava (the Leader or the Head) of the Komi Republic” was accepted. Then the discussion again turned to the question of who would be able to become the Glava of the Republic. In fact, the discussion returned to the ethnic aspects which had been touched upon during the language debates. As it was mentioned earlier, there were no Russians or representatives of other nationalities in the Republic with sufficient knowledge of Komi. The Komi people’s suggestion of compulsory Komi language proficiency for the Republican leader meant that a Komi would be able to occupy the major state position in the Republic.

The discussions about the new Constitution draft disclosed not only the battle between ethnic interests and ethnic elites, but also the struggle between the political claims of Uriy Spiridonov (Russian) and Vjacheslav Hudjaev (Komi). Both politicians were considering future elections of the Head of the Komi Republic and both wanted to be elected. The new Constitution would be battlefield for the leading position in the Republic. U. Spiridonov had no knowledge of Komi. His opponent, V. Hudjaev, knew both languages. He was interested in Komi language proficiency requirement during the election process. The final text of the Constitution did not contain the statements about the compulsory use of the Komi language in the governing bodies. It was not mentioned

that the Head of the Republic had to know both languages. The only clarified language statement was in Article 82 of the Constitution of the Komi Republic (1994): “The oath of the new elected Glava of the Republic had to be in both state languages”. The final variant of the Republican Constitution was adopted in February of 1994. Uriy Spiridonov got the majority of votes and became the first Head of the Komi Republic.

4.4 Summary: The Komi people and the Constitutional debates 1992-1994

The period of legitimization of the indigenous interests showed the difficulty of the situation. The federal government limited the legal space for the political struggle of the indigenous people for their rights. The concept of indigenous people and indigenous rights did not get any particular explanation in the Constitution of the Russian Federation which secured the priority of individual human and civil rights over the ethnic and group rights. The Komi people tried to get broader political representation during the constitutional debates on the republican level. The Komi national movement suggested a bicameral parliament with one chamber reserved for the Komi peoples’ representatives and worked out amendments to the Republican law “On the elections”. The Komi people also tried to get more representation in the Republican governing bodies by participating in debates about the president of the Republic and about the compulsory use of the Komi language by the Republican officials.

All suggestions of the Komi people were strongly opposed by the Russian majority in the Republic and were turned down. The Komi national movement could not reach the aims, stated in the resolutions of the Councils of the Komi People. The final version of the Constitution of the Komi Republic contained only two points suggested by the Komi people. The suggestions were implied in two Articles of the Constitution of the Komi Republic (1994):

[t]he Komi people are the source of the state power in the Komi Republic. The state policy is aimed at supporting and developing the language, the culture and the lifestyle of the Komi people according to the international

indigenous legislation (The Constitution of the Komi Republic, 1994, Article 3).

The article recognized the leading role of the Komi people in the Republic and stated the support and protection of the indigenous culture. The Constitution draft of the Komi Republic underlined that “the right of legislative initiative belongs to the state bodies together with the Council of the Komi people and its executive body” (The Constitution of the Komi Republic (draft), 1994, Article 76). The Komi people got the legislative power through the Council of the Komi people, but without equal representation in the parliament it could not be used to fulfill the Komi people’s demands.

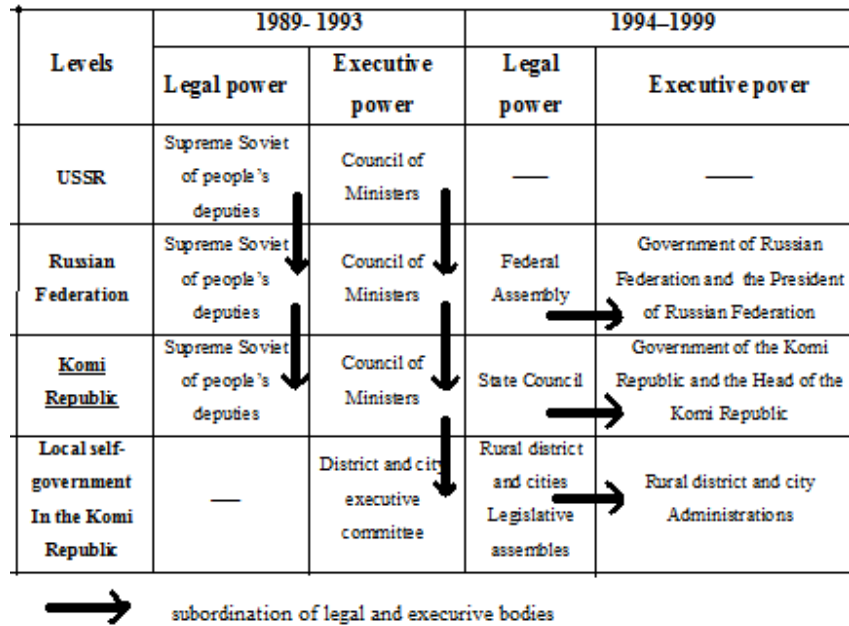
Chapter 5. Domestic policies in the Komi Republic in 1995-1999: indigenous aspects

The period between 1995 and 1999 is characterized by the development of a new strategy of the Komi people in implementing their rights, secured by the federal and republican legislation. The previous chapter discussed the struggle of the Komi people for their rights and political representation on the federal and republican level. It was pointed out that the majority of indigenous demands had not been accepted. The state legislation on both levels, federal and republican, secured the priority of the Russian population over indigenous people and priority of individual human rights over collective indigenous rights. The Komi people did not succeed in getting their own political representation through establishment of an indigenous parliament or at least an indigenous chamber in the republican parliament. Neither were the Komi people's legal initiatives in language policy and land rights supported. The only space that was left for the Komi people was the local level: municipalities and rural areas of the Komi Republic. Article 2.1 of the federal law "On General Principles of local self-government" (OGP of LSG) stated:

[l]ocal self-government is the...independent...activity of people aimed to decide, immediately or through local self-governing bodies, according to their interests, historical or local traditions (OGP of LSG, 1995, Article 2.1)

Before 1995 local self-government in Russia and in the Soviet Union was included into the centralized governing system (see Scheme 4.) The statement in the federal law "On General Principles of local self-government" about the independence of local self-government in regions of Russia gave the Komi people a chance to implement the decisions of the Komi Councils on the local level.

Scheme 4. The place of the legal and executive bodies of the Komi Republic



Source: The Constitution of the USSR (1977), the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) and the Constitution of the Komi Republic (1994).

Scheme 4 shows the dependency of the legal and executive bodies in the Russian Socialistic Federal Soviet Republic and the Russian Federation on the federal, regional (Komi Republican) and local level. It is seen that before 1993 the governing system was centralized. In the case of the Komi Republic this means that each of the executive or legal bodies on the local level was dependent on the same type of body on the regional level, the level of the Komi Republic. And further legal and governing bodies of the Komi Republic were dependent on the same type of body on the federal level. Decision-making took a long time and there was much routine work because of passing through that system. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, the local, regional and federal levels started to represent a closed system. Legal and executive bodies shared the authorities according to the level where they existed: local bodies were dealing with the legal and executive aspects of local policy; Republican (regional) bodies – with regional policy and federal – with the federal one. Freedom of local legislative and governing bodies

gave an opportunity to implement the decisions of the Komi Council on the rights of indigenous population in those places where the Komi people were the majority.

The change towards local level in the activity of the Komi movement was carried through during the years 1995–1999 and was combined with growing state influence on the indigenous movement on the republican level. The present chapter is devoted to this change. We will start with the disagreement between the two parts of the Komi movement and will continue with the shifts of the strategy of the Komi Council.

5.1 The Komi people's organizations in 1995-1999

The activity of the Komi people's organizations in 1995 was connected with the elections to the Komi Republican parliament, The State Council of the Komi Republic (Gosudarstvennii Sovet Respublicki Komi). During the election campaign the radical part of the Komi people clearly revealed itself. The radicals were united behind the political party Protect ourselves (Дорьям асьнымӧс). This party demanded the harmony between the Komi Republican legal acts on indigenous people with the international law and United Nations standards. At the same time, Protect ourselves demanded the official recognition of the Komi people as "the nation having suffered genocide, because of terror and political repressions in 1920-1992" (Shibaev, 1998: 159). Representatives of Protect ourselves were claiming the rights of indigenous people to have special financial support and additional support of rural areas. These claims were negatively evaluated by the non-indigenous population of the Komi Republic, which also experienced the post-Soviet economic crisis. The results of elections showed that radical indigenous ideas were unpopular among the electorate (Shibaev, 1998: 159). The Komi people were annoyed by the disrespectful attitude of Protect ourselves towards the moderate part of the Komi movement (*Respublika* № 227, 28.11.1995: 1). The moderate part of the Komi people participated in a meeting of the Committee for the Komi revival in April 1995 and decided to focus on the election campaign to local Councils (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 83). The ethnic representation in the State Council of the Komi Republic and local councils of the Komi Republic is shown in Scheme 5.

Scheme 5. The ethnic composition of the State Council and Local Councils of the Komi Republic, 1995

Ethnic group	Local councils		State Council of the Komi Republic
	Cities	Rural areas	
Komis	13%	51%	32%
Russians	63%	38%	46%
Ukrainians	14%	6%	6%
Belorussians	2%	3%	–
Jewish	–	–	8%
Germans	–	–	4%
others	8%	2%	4%

Source: Shabaev U. P (1998): *Etno-kulturnoe i Etno-politicheskoe Razvitie Komi v XX veke. Institut jazika, literaturi i istorii Komi NC URO Rossiiskoi AN: Syktyvkar, 159-160*

It is seen from Scheme 5, that the Komi people got the majority of seats in Councils in rural areas. It is obvious because the Komis were the majority of the population in the rural areas and voted for their candidates there. The most influential political leaders of the Komi people, V. Hudjaev and V. Markov, were elected to the State Council of the Komi Republic as representatives of the rural areas. Markov got the position of Deputy Speaker in the State Council of the Komi Republic. The Speaker of the State Council and the first Deputy Speaker positions were occupied by the Russians (Shibaev, 1998: 160). The majority of the State Council was Russians (46%). Two leading positions in the State Council were also occupied by the Russians.

For the Komi people this meant one more failure in their struggle for political representation. It was partly caused by the split among the Komi people's organizations and their division into moderates (the Committee for the Komi people's revival) and

radicals (Protect ourselves). The radicals compromised the Komi movement by accusing the non-indigenous population of genocide of the Komi people in 1923-1992 and by demanding special support only for the Komi people. The post-Soviet years were a difficult period for the whole population of the Komi Republic. The economic crisis made millions of people unemployed. Those who had a job could not get their salary for months. The economic situation in coal mining, lumbering and oil production was severe. There were several strikes in these industries, where the majority of employees were non-indigenous. The same difficulties experienced people employed in spheres supported by the state budget, such as education, medical and social care, theaters, sports clubs, etc. A special research on living standards in the Komi Republic was done two months before the elections 1995 in different places of the Komi Republic, both in cities and rural areas. The total amount of respondents was 964. Scheme 6 presents the self-evaluation of living standards, made by respondents with different ethnic background.

Scheme 6. Evaluation of living standards among the population of the Komi Republic, 1995

Variant of answer	Answers (%)
Living below poverty line	17%
Living around poverty line	56,1%
Living good	23,4%
Living very good	3,5%

Source: *Respublika* № 216, 11.11.1995, p. 3

According to the statistics in Scheme 6, the living standard of 56,1% of the population was around the poverty line, while 17% of people lived below the poverty line. The majority of the population of the Komi Republic was non-indigenous, that is why it is possible to say that the majority of poor people were also non-indigenous. The party Protect ourselves and its demands for state financial support for the Komi people was only seen as oppression of non-indigenous people, who were experiencing the same

level of poverty as the indigenous people. This provoked the non-indigenous population to turn down indigenous claims and demands. The economic demands of the radicals ruined the strategy of the moderate Komi people's movement aiming at collaborating with the republican government and the non-indigenous population of the Komi Republic. The Komi people's movement thus lost opportunities to get stronger support from non-indigenous population after the election program of the radicals had been announced.

5.2 Change of strategy: the Fourth and the Fifth Komi Councils

5.2.1 "What's for to complain to officials about officials?"

Under conditions of political failures the Komi people's representatives gathered at the Fourth Komi Council on November 24-25, 1995. A new composition of the Committee for the Komi national revival was elected two weeks before the Komi Council's meeting. The Minister of Culture and the Minister of Nationalities of the Komi Republic were elected to the Committee by its members (Shibaev, 1998: 165). This fact met lots of criticism from the representatives of the Fourth Komi Council. State officials of high rank should not be members of the Committee. Such a fact evidenced the strong state lobby in the indigenous movement. On the other hand, inclusion of two republican ministers in the Committee symbolized the dependence of the indigenous organizations on the state.

The entire problems of the Komi movement were revealed again during the election of the leader of the Committee of the Komi people's revival on November 24, 1995. There were three candidates for this position. The first candidate, Valery Markov, had already been a leader of the Committee. The second candidate, Valentin Semjashin, was a representative of the environmental group of the Komi Council. Just before the voting procedure Semjashin refused to participate in elections. The third candidate was Mikhail Ignatov, a representative of the Komi Diaspora in St. Petersburg. The former leader of the Committee, Markov, won the elections. Ignatov protested against the results of elections. He had been offered only one minute to talk about himself and his program (*Respublika* № 237, 14.12.1995: 3). Ignatov's article opened the discussion about the

election to the Komi organizations and unfair election results. He blamed Markov in unfair election results. In his article, Ignatov wrote:

The day before the council, V. Markov met delegates of the council, elected from Syktyvkar (15 of 32 elected delegates came) and asked them to sign in the list of his supporters. The same work was probably done with the delegates from raions [rural areas]...who all at once reported about their support of V. Markov at the council (Ignatov, 1995: 3).

Markov's reaction to this accusation is not reflected in the sources used in this thesis. Markov's position was, however, defended in an article written by Olga Sagina, a reporter from Respublika. She pointed out that Ignatov used the time given for presentation of his program for

“the criticism of V.Markov. The chairman of the council interrupted him...and started the voting procedure due to the demand of the delegates to do so. Nevertheless, Ignatov got the right to announce his program. He had to “gabble” his program, but almost no one listened to his speech – they went to ballot boxes. Despite that, Ignatov got 60 votes and Markov – 101” (Sagina, 1995).

From Sagina's point of view Mikhail Ignatov was himself responsible for losing the elections. Nevertheless, Ignatov's statements against Markov made the Komi people doubt in Markov's indigenous commitment. As the leader of the Committee for the Komi people's revival, Markov had also a position of Deputy Chairman of the State Council of the Komi Republic. This fact along with the existence of two republican ministers in the Committee for the Komi people's revival made the Komi people suspect a coalition between the state and the leader of the Komi movement against the Komi people's demands. A report made after the Council's work contained a note about this:

[A part] of the delegates...think that it is not necessary to seek the truth in the Committee for the Komi people's revival. There is no

reason to complain of officials to officials (*Respublika*, № 229, 30.11.1995: 2).

The Komi movement lost trust in indigenous representatives with seats in the Komi Council. The Komi people's suspicion in growing state influence on the indigenous movement became stronger because the Council was also attended by the political leaders of the Komi Republic and by Uriy Spiridonov, the Head of the Komi Republic. He had personal control over the work of the republican legislative bodies, including possible implementation of the Komi people's suggestions of laws after the Fourth Council.

5.2.2 The results of the Fourth Council and its implementation in the Komi Republic

The work of the Fourth Komi Council was divided into sections, on major issues: political section, socio-economic, ecological and cultural sections. The Komi people's representatives, who participated in the work of the political section, discussed two questions: the Komi people's representation and the authority of the Komi Republic within the Russian Federation. In previous years the Komi people had not succeeded, as seen, to have their own representative body in the political structure of the Komi Republic. The question of a bicameral parliament was opened again. A delegate from Ukhta³ proposed to elect members of an indigenous chamber of the parliament at the Fourth Komi Council, but he was not supported by the other Komi people's representatives (*Respublika*, № 229, 30.11.1995: 2). Nevertheless, the Komi people's participation in the development of indigenous legislation and implementation was still a subject of concern. The problem of the Komi people's political position was seen in the federal legislation, but the question of the Komi Republican jurisdictions within the Russian Federation was undecided. To overcome this legal ambiguity, the Fourth Council decided to support the Komi Republic in struggling for broader authority within the Russian Federation and suggested developing a legal act on ethnic policy in the

³ Ukhta is a city in the Komi Republic and the centre of the oil extraction industry.

Komi Republic called the Concept of Nationality Policy of the Komi Republic (CNPKR).

The CNPKR was developed by the State Committee on Nationality Policy of the Komi Republic and adopted by the State Council on April 24, 1996. The Concept consisted of the same statements as the previous legislation on ethnic and indigenous matters. Article 5 of the CNPKR (1996) proclaimed that it relied on international law: UN Declaration of Human rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the ILO conventions 107 and 169, and the Helsinki Final Act. At the same time some of these documents such as ILO Conventions 107 and 169, were not ratified by Russia in the 1990s. The statement of both conventions had no reflection neither in federal nor republican legislation. The Soviet theory of one polytechnic nation was, however, combined with elements of multiculturalism. It is clearly seen from the principles of the CNPKR, formulated in Article 2:

...sovereignty and territorial unity of the Komi Republic;
guaranteeing optimum relationship between rights and freedoms of man and citizen, irrespective of ethnic background, and rights and freedoms of peoples, other ethnic groups;
responsibility for the preservation of historical unity of multinational population of the Komi Republic;
strengthening of ethnic unity and consent;
recognition of rights for free ethnic self-determination, and demission of claims connected with ethnicity;
equality of nations in their right to cultural self-determination, regardless of their size...(CNPKR, 1996, Article 2)

The principles of the Concept of Nationality Policy repeated the federal and the Komi Republican Constitutions. They also aimed to provide the elements of multiculturalism. The Concept defined the population of the Komi Republic as multinational, equal in their ethnic rights and their expressions of identity. The Concept did not imply the differentiation between ethnic minority groups and indigenous people. It aimed to

harmonize ethnic relations in the Komi Republic. Nevertheless, the adoption of the Concept was a step forward in deciding ethnic question in the Komi Republic. It moved the state policy towards ethnic groups (indigenous and non-indigenous) from the policy of assimilation towards multiculturalism.

At the end of the Fourth Komi Council's session, the political section of the Council adopted a resolution, "On participation of the Komi people in politics" (1995). The resolution pointed out that the Constitution of the Komi Republic did not reflect the status of the Komi Council in the political structure of the republic. It was proposed to include the statement about the legal status of the Komi Council into the republican constitution. The proposal was not approved by the republican government, but some shifts in republican ethnic policy were made. The leader of the Komi Republic, Uriy Spiridonov, underlined in his speech on November 24, 1995 the necessity of close cooperation with the Komi Council in order to implement the statements of the law "On the Komi Council", which gave the Komi Council the right to legal initiatives. (*Respublika* № 229, 30.11.1995: 2). This meant that legal acts, amendments to existing acts and legal suggestions made by the Komi Council would not be ignored but discussed by the republican parliament.

Debates on social and economic problems of the Komi people were attended by the majority of the Komi Council. Crisis in the agrarian sector, demographic problems in the rural areas, alcoholism and unemployment were the most discussed issues. Salaries in the agrarian sector in the 1990s were lower than the unemployment benefit paid by the state and twice less than salaries paid in the cities (Ivanov & Terentev, 2008: 46). That caused an outflow of people from rural areas, increase of unemployment and spread of alcoholism among unemployed people in the countryside. Representatives from Uhta suggested establishing a Social Guarantee Foundation (SGF) for Indigenous People of the Komi Republic (Fond Socialnih Garantii Korennogo Naselenija Respubliki Komi) (Nesterova & Popov, 2000: 84). SGF should be financed by benefits from mining factories in the indigenous territories. This suggestion had no practical implementation

in the Komi Republic. First of all it was caused by the economic crisis and decrease of mining production (see Scheme 7).

Scheme 7. Mining industry production in the Komi Republic 1985 –1999

	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Oil mining	19,4	15,8	8,2	8,9	9,3	9,6	9,5
Natural gass	17,8	8,3	3,7	3,7	3,7	3,9	3,9
Coal	29,8	29,3	22,2	21,7	21,0	18,5	19,2
Wood cutting	23,0	21,2	7,9	6,2	4,7	4,8	5,8

Source: State Statistics Committee of the Komi Republic

Scheme 7 shows that in the years 1995–1997 there was crisis in the mining industry of the Republic. The amount of mining industry production was much less than in 1985 and even in 1990. Mining factories did not earn enough to pay salaries to their employees on time. Lots of strikes were held. It was impossible to remit funds to SGF for indigenous people.

The Fourth Council also recommended giving more financial support to education, culture and welfare in the rural areas (*Resbulika* № 229, 30.11.1995: 2). That was also problematic due to the economic crisis in the Komi Republic. Attention of the Fourth Komi Council was moved towards the land rights and ecological issues.

5.3 Land rights, resource use and ecology

Access to traditional resources is central to maintain identity among indigenous people. That is why control over these resources is an important concern in their struggle for self-determination. “Traditional resources” include plants, animals, material objects that may have sacred, ceremonial, heritage, or esthetic qualities” (Posey & Dutfield, 1996: 95). Land is important because of two reasons. First of all, land is the ‘place’ of the nation and is inseparable from the people, their culture, and their identity as a nation. Secondly, land and natural resources are the foundation upon which indigenous

communities intend to rebuild the economies of their nations and so improve the socio-economic conditions of their people (Anderson & Dana, 2006: 46).

Before the 1900s indigenous land rights were legally secured. In state regulations called “Governing the inorodci” (1822) indigenous people had collective land rights to the land where they were living. They also had a right to divide the land according to their traditional regulations. Russians could not settle on the indigenous land, but they could have a part of indigenous land for a rent paid to indigenous communities (Governing the inorodci 1822, paragraphs 26-29, 31-32). In the 1920s and 1930s indigenous land rights were stated in a number of legal acts by the Soviet authorities. In the 1930s with the start of the Soviet assimilation policy the land of indigenous people became a property of the state. In the 1980s, due to perestroika in the USSR, a number of new land legal acts appeared. The law “On principles of local self-government and local economy” (Articles 2, 8, 11, 23) included a statement about the rights of local communities to natural resources and control over industry on their territories. The resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “On urgent measures of ecological improvement” (1989) recommended to define the territories of traditional use that should not be used by factories, securing the indigenous people’s rights to these territories.

By the 1990s international legislation had already developed the issue of indigenous land rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 2, states that

[a]ll peoples may freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may people be deprived of their own means of subsistence (ICESCR, 1966, Article 2).

The indigenous rights to natural resources were described in detail in ILO Convention 169 (1989). The analysis of land issue in ILO 169 gives several explanations to the term “land”. Land is “the concept of territories, including the total environment of the areas,

which the peoples concerned occupy or otherwise use” (ILO 169, 1989, Article 13). The same Article of ILO Convention 169 distinguishes between two types of land: occupied land and land in use.

Land rights in this document mean collective rights, and ILO 169 thus deals with the collective land rights of indigenous people. Indigenous land rights are connected with the rights to the resources of their land. It is reflected in the right to participate in resource use and resource management. The states which have ratified the ILO Convention guarantee the indigenous land rights. The Convention is, however, not pretending to be a complete solution of land rights problem. Article 34 of the convention states that

[t]he nature and scope of measures to be taken to give effect to this Convention shall be determined in a flexible manner, with regard to the conditions characteristic of each country (ILO Convention 169, 1989, Article 34).

The Convention intends to regulate the dialogs on indigenous rights in various states. However, the Russian Federation did not ratify this convention. The question of indigenous land rights was decided according to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but its statements are rather general and leave a huge space for various types of interpretations.

The land issues started to emerge in the post-Soviet Komi Republic in 1991. The Komi Republican parliament adopted the law “On land reform” (1991). The law stated two types of property: state property and private property. Private property is individual. The land could be a property of an individual person or a legal entity. The landowner had to pay a land tax to the Komi Republic. The federal legislation in Russia contains a law about land protection of small-numbered nations. According to paragraph 1 of the federal law “On guarantees of rights of indigenous small peoples of the Russian Federation” (1999), the indigenous small nations are

peoples, living in the territories of their ancestors, keeping their traditional lifestyle, economy and occupations, having a number less than 50 thousand people and considering themselves to be a separate ethnic community.

The Komi people were not (and are not) considered a small-numbered nation by the state authorities. Their rights were not protected by the federal and republican legislation. The Komi people could only have land as private property or as rented land on individual level. For the Komi people land issue is also connected with the forests. Traditional occupations of the Komi people are agriculture, hunting and fishing. All these occupations coexisted in the culture of the Komi people, except the Komi-Izemci, who are reindeer herders. The forest (“parma”) has a sacred meaning for the Komi people. There is a great number of legends in Komi folklore connected with “parma”. The forest is also the source of resources for Komi handicrafts. The Fourth Komi Council suggested inclusion of forest territories into the area of rural settlements. The idea was that together with open land a Komi person could also get a part of forest as individual property with inheritance rights. This measure was not beneficial for the republican authorities. The forests of the Komi Republic cover about 300. 000 sq.km and make up 4,1% of all forest areas in Russia (Lopatin & Kolsrtom & Spiecker, 2006 :343). The amount of forest logging in the Komi Republic during the 1990s was around 25 million cubic meters of wood per year (Malkonen, 1999). Logging, timber-making and paper products provided considerable income to the Republican budget. From the republican point of view it was more suitable to leave the forests as Republican property. Indigenous people, as well as the other population of the Republic, were, however, used to exploit forests by hunting and fishing there according to the common norms of land and resource use in the Komi Republic. But Komis had no right to decide the questions of land use, ecology and establishment or development of industry on their territories.

Delegates to the Fourth Council admitted that there was almost no control over the ecological situation in the Komi Republic. The Ministry of forests and the State committee of nature had been abolished. There was no control over ecological programs in the Republic and many of them were ended due to absence of state financing. The

Komi Council was worried about the national park Bright waters (Югыд Ва). The state authorities favored the opening of 247 hectares of land for gold-mining and mining industries there (*Resbulika* № 229, 30.11.1995: 2). Bright waters national park was established in 1994, aiming to protect and research the mountain taiga ecosystems of the Northern Ural Mountains. The Komi people with the help of Finno-Ugric organizations organized the protection of Bright waters and Pechora-Ilich⁴ (Pechero-Ilichskii zapovednik) national parks.

The Fourth Council's resolution "About the ecological situation in the Komi Republic" (1995) pointed out that economic difficulties affected the republican ecological programs and that there was a need to renew and protect natural resources. Especially important for the Komi people was the ecology of forests, reindeer pastures, hunting grounds, reforestation and restoration of fish resources. For these purposes a special legal act, the Concept of Nature Protection was adopted in the Komi Republic.

5.3 The Fifth Komi Council

The work of the Fourth Komi Council showed the shift in the in the strategy of the Komi movement to establish cooperation with the republican government. Participation by the Komi people's leaders in the republican governing system and participation by the republican leaders in the work of the Komi Council determined the milder character of its demands. The period between the Fourth and the Fifth Komi Councils, November 1995-December 1997, was calm. The representatives of the Republican governing bodies were participating in meetings organized by the Committee for the Komi people's revival. The representatives of the Committee were working as experts for the republican governing and legislative bodies. The active part of the Komi organizations' development seemed to be over. The legal governing structures had already been formed. The state policy towards the Komis was also clear. The activity of the Komi people's organizations was focused on improvement of the existing indigenous legislation in the Komi Republic through the work in the republican legislative and

⁴ Pechora-Ilich national park got its name from the names of two rivers there, Pechora and Ilich.

governing bodies. The delegates to the Fourth Komi Council also decided to mobilize the activity of the Komi people and to debate with the federal governing bodies that impeded the adoption of international legal norms on indigenous people (*Resbuplika* № 229, 30.11.1995).

The Fifth Komi Council met on December 5, 1997. The resolutions of the Council give evidence of continuing change in the strategy of the Komi Council. The Committee for the Komi people's revival was renamed to the Executive Committee of the Komi Council. This meant that the Komi people's revival would be the aim of the Komi Council and would be to certain extent controlled by the Republican authorities, as well as they participate in the work of the Komi Councils. It was decided to arrange the Councils' meeting once in a four year period instead of once in a two year period. It was regarded not necessary to meet so often because the indigenous interests were already formulated and the major work on securing and implementing the indigenous demands was done. A new legal system of the Komi Republic had already been established. The Komi people were able to act according to the new legal and political circumstances. It was already seen where and how the development of the Komi people's movement would continue. The activity of the Komi Council moved from the republican level to the local level. The most important thing was to implement those indigenous demands that had been supported by the republican and federal government. This could be done by the activity of Komi organization in rural areas and cities through local conferences of the Komi people and the establishment of local representative bodies of the Komi Council. As a result, a new system of indigenous organizations was established, with had three levels: the Komi Council, its executive body (the Executive Committee of the Komi Council) and its offices in the cities and rural areas.

5.4. Summary: Domestic policy in the Komi Republic in 1995-1999: indigenous aspects

The activity of the Komi organizations in 1995–1999 changed focus. The Komi people became more focused on the practical solution of economic and social problems than

struggling for indigenous representation in the political structure of the Komi Republic and principles of more theoretical nature. The strategy of the Komi Council moved towards deeper integration into the republican political structure. The Komi people's leaders had positions in the Republican government and had to deal both with the demands of the Komi people and interests of the whole population of the Komi Republic. At the same time the Komi movement discredited itself because of the demands of its radical part and debates about the elections of the leader and members of the Council's Executive Committee. The non-indigenous population of the Republic was against the demands for better financial support for indigenous people, made by the Komi people's radical party Protect ourselves. The population of the Komi Republic was also worried about the accusations of genocide of the Komi people during the Soviet period. At the same time many among the Komi people started to suspect the leaders of the Komi movement to be in coalition with the Republican government against the interests of indigenous population.

On the other hand, closer coalition between the Komi leaders and the republican authorities had positive consequences. The Komi Republic finally recognized the role of the Komi Council as a representative body of the Komi people with rights to provide legal initiatives. Some of the initiatives of the Komi Council were implemented with the help of the Republic. The concept of the National policy of the Komi Republic was adopted, as well as the Komi initiatives in the sphere of ecological and environmental protection.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

The period 1991-1999 was one of the most complicated in the Komi people's history, as well as in the history of the Komi Republic. The collapse of the Soviet system led to fundamental changes in the social, cultural and political conditions of Komis. Most drastic changes occurred in the sphere of ethnic relations. The reasons for that was the ethnic assimilation policy prior to the system change in 1990, aiming at oppressing ethnic identities and creating one nation called the "Soviet people". The freer spirit of reforms of the mid-1980s led to the appearance of ethnic movements for recognition and rights. Ethnic organizations were the first civil society institutions in post-Soviet Komi Republic.

The activity of the Komi people in 1990s can be divided into three periods. The first period, 1991-92, was concerned with the establishment of Komi people's organizations. The first organizations of the Komis appeared in 1990. They were mostly concerned with the cultural revival of the Komi people. The period of political transition around 1990 and the debates about the legal status of the Komi Republic gave the opportunity for the Komi people to fill in the vacuum of power and to some degree secure their rights and representation. The Komi national movement started its development with cultural issues. The problems of the Komi culture were especially important due to the decades of the Soviet assimilatory policy that damaged the Komi culture and the development of the Komi language. The appearance and the development of the Komi organizations took place along with the deep crisis of the Soviet system and the beginning of the reforms in the Komi Republic. At the same time the period between 1990 and 1992 opened new opportunities for the Komi people to change the situation in their favor. The Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Komi Republic forced the Komi organizations to unite and to formulate their interests, and to work out the demands and strategy of struggle for their rights.

The interests of the Komi people were shaped during the second period of the Komi people's movement, 1992-1994. These years were the time for legitimization of

indigenous demands. On the one hand, the demands of the Komi people were closely connected with the interests of the whole population of the Republic. The Komi people supported demands for sovereignty of the Komi Republic and the establishment of new political and legal system. At the same time the Komi people stood up for social reforms and improvement of living standard for the whole population of the Republic. Commitment to the Komi Republican sovereignty and concerns with the other population of the Republic on social and economic matters became the major political strategy for the Komi people in the beginning of the 1990s. This strategy was revealed in attitudes of the Komi people towards agricultural policy and resource use issues. On the other hand, the Komi people had their own interests in development of language, culture and traditions. The resolutions adopted by the First and the Second Komi Councils in 1991 got insignificant attention among the Republican authorities. The federal government limited the legal space for the political struggle of the indigenous people for their rights. The concepts of “indigenous people” and “indigenous rights” did not get any particular explanation in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which focused on securing the priority of individual human and civil rights rather than those of ethnic and group as collective rights. The same priorities were seen in the Komi Republican Constitution. The Komi people tried to get broader political representation during the constitutional debates on the republican level. The Komi national movement suggested a bicameral parliament with one chamber reserved for the Komi peoples’ representatives and worked out several amendments to the Republican law “About the elections”. All these suggestions of the Komi people were opposed by the Russian majority in the Republic and were turned down.

The years 1995-1999 were the third period in development of the Komi peoples’ organizations. The Komi people had to change the strategy of their organizations. There were two major reasons for this change. First of all, the Komi movement was split into two major wings: radicals and moderates. The radicals, represented by the party Protect ourselves, demanded strong indigenous self-determination or secession, additional financial support for the Komi people and accused the Russians of genocide in the past of the Komi people. In the debates on economic and political crisis in the Komi

Republic radical demands were regarded unimportant and annoying by the non-indigenous population and the Russian majority. The majority of the Komi people had also doubts about the bringing up of radical demands. That is why the membership in radical organizations was trifling in comparison with the moderate wing organizations. Information about radical organizations and demands in Komi newspapers and journals issued in this period was much reduced.

The moderate wing of the Komi movement, represented by the Komi Council and its Executive Committee, tried to keep a balanced dialogue with the non-indigenous population and republican officials during 1995-1999. The strategy of the Komi Council moved towards deeper integration with the republican political structure. The Komi people's leaders had positions in the republican government and had to deal both with the demands of the Komi people and the interests of the whole population of the Komi Republic. Such a strategy had some positive effects on the political and social conditions for the Komi people in the Komi Republic. First of all, the Komi people were formally recognized as an indigenous people. Secondly, the Komi Council got a special legal status and became an indigenous representative body. But the representation of the Komi people was still limited. The Komi Council had the right to initiate legislative matters, but the decision had to be made by the Republican parliament, where the indigenous people had no special chamber or seats and were in a clear minority position. Thirdly, the Komi language became officially the second state language of the Komi Republic, but there were not any longer many people speaking it even among the Komi people themselves. In addition, a proper Komi language learning system in the Republic could not be established effectively due to the post-Soviet economic crisis. Fourthly, the Komis' land rights questions were decided in favor of the non-indigenous population; individual rights to land and natural resources got priority while collective rights were not recognized.

In the period investigated in this study the policy towards the Komi people in the Komi Republic changed from almost total ignorance of ethnic differences towards formal recognition, from assimilation towards moderate multiculturalism. It was not

multiculturalism in the sense discussed by W. Kymlicka (Kymlicka 1995) and other theorists, but some of its elements were taken into consideration and implemented. First of all, the state was determined to protect the heritage of all ethnic groups, not just the Russian one. This principle was reflected in two major acts on ethnic policy in the Komi Republic: in the Constitution and in the Concept of Nationality Policy. Secondly, the non-Russian ethnic groups were, after all, able to participate in political life without changing their ethnic identity. On the other hand, in practice assimilation policy towards Komi people still existed in 1990s. Russian language was still used as the dominant language of the Republic. Republican governing bodies first and foremost represented the Russian majority, and there were no indigenous or ethnic seats in the Parliament. Further, the legal status of the Komi Council as an indigenous representation body was limited. At the same time Republican officials provided a strong Russian lobby within the moderate wing of the Komi movement, in reality undermining Komi people policies and penetrating their organizations.

The same tendency is still relevant for the ethnic policy in the Komi Republic and is still debated today, in 2010, together with Russia's attitudes towards ILO 169 Convention and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Debates on ratification of international acts on indigenous people, their use in Komi Republican and Russian legislation could be a subject for the further research on contemporary history of the Komi people, their representation and rights, as well as the development of the Komi people's organizations in 2000s.

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