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Agriculture: A Conspicuous Weakness of Communism

"In our times only a dense ignoramus would dare say that Marx, Engels and Lenin were entirely unfamiliar with agricultural economics." (Literaturnaya Gazeta -- Literary Gazette, Soviet weekly -- 8 May 1968 commenting on Agence France Presse interview on 25 April 1968 of Jan Prochazka, Czech Communist writer.)

"...Literaturnaya Gazeta gets irritated and recommends that I get acquainted, at least in general lines, with the basic works of the founders of our teaching. I must have done that really somewhat superficially, because otherwise I would have been able to explain to myself quite easily why such a grandiose theory has for so many years been getting results which are just the opposite..." (Note signed by Jan Prochazka in Literarni Listy -- Literary Leaves, Czechoslovak weekly -- 16 May 1968.)

The viewpoints of Literaturnaya Gazeta and Jan Prochazka -- a translation of Prochazka's note is attached -- provide frank statements by Communists of two opposite assessments of Communist agriculture. Other Communists, particularly political leaders, have engaged in unending and often bitter public controversy over agricultural questions.

Western economists have exhaustively studied the Communist practice of agriculture in the Soviet Union over the past fifty years and have reached certain general conclusions to explain its shortcomings; they might be summarized as follows:

a) The Soviets' approach to agriculture lacks rationality because the Marxist school has never understood the peculiar differences between agriculture and industry. It tried, in vain, to treat farms like factories and to turn peasants into industrial workers.

b) Stalin sacrificed millions of peasant lives and suppressed peasant initiative during his ruthless drive to industrialize the USSR.

c) Inefficient centralized direction of agriculture, inadequate investment funds, and a low priority status during most of the Soviet era have caused agriculture in the USSR to stagnate at production levels little higher than in Tsarist times.

d. Even though Khrushchev devoted substantial efforts to agriculture and introduced many dramatic technical and organizational changes, his successors cited the failure of his farm policy as a key reason for deposing him.

e) The Soviet leadership has generally been so concerned with immediate agricultural production problems that inadequate attention has been paid to necessary basic reforms; the third Kolkhoz (collective farm) Congress, which is supposed to adopt a new charter to replace the outmoded 1935 charter, has been postponed repeatedly since it was initially scheduled for 1959.

f) The individual farmer when working on his own plot has had the incentive to produce more than the collectivized or state-employed farmer working on communal or state land.

g) The USSR is faced with a major dilemma: its economy depends on agriculture more than most developed countries; yet, because it is ideologically tied to the collective method, it lacks the flexibility to solve the basic problems of farm production.

The results of Soviet farming are often expressed as comparisons with results in the U.S. This is because the Soviets themselves have frequently used U.S. agricultural achievements and know-how as bases for setting their own goals. Dr. Werner Klatt\* cites the following:

"At the end of Khrushchev's reign (October 1964) the farming industry of the U.S. produced, with one-fifth of the Soviet farm labor force on an area equal to two-thirds of the Soviets' own acreage, a volume of farm products approximately three-fifths larger than that of the Soviet Union ... In Khrushchev's own assessment, five to seven times as much labor as in the U.S. was needed in arable farming in the Soviet Union, and up to sixteen times as much in livestock farming. At the time of his fall the pattern both of farm productivity and of food production was that of a backward country."

The current agricultural situation is dominated by memories of consistently underfulfilled five-year plans and occasional years of critically low production. Khrushchev's production goals for 1970, which he customarily set at an optimistic level, have been cut back by more than one-third by the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime. Under the as-yet unratified 1966-70 plan, the Soviets hope to increase production by 5% per year. While less than Khrushchev's planned average annual increase of 7.9% for 1959-65, this still

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far exceeds the attained average annual increase of 1.85% during the same period. Poor crops, especially of grains, in 1963 and 1965 account for a large share of this underfulfillment. As a result, the Soviets were obliged to import 28 millions of tons of foreign grain during 1963-67 at a cost of close to \$2 billion and, to hedge against possible further shortages, they contracted to buy 9 million tons of wheat from Canada in the 3-year period ending 31 July 1969. (Of this amount, some 4 million tons remain to be shipped.)

The present Soviet leaders recognize that they must intensify agricultural production and increase incentives. As a consequence they have established rather optimistic goals for the coming years: Mineral fertilizer production is to double between 1965 and 1970. Irrigated land is to double in the 10 years ending in 1975, and the area of drained land is to increase even more rapidly. Farm machinery and spare parts production is planned to expand more than 50% between 1965 and 1970. The use of improved seeds and pesticides is to increase.

Farm income has risen sharply: collective farmers received 19% more in 1965 than in 1964, and an additional 17% in 1966. These rises resulted in large part from increased prices and from large bonuses for above-quota production of grain. The government has also cancelled collective farm debts and implemented old age pensions. Because of these and other measures, collective farmers received two-thirds of their income from communal work in 1966, as compared with only about 50% in 1962-63.

An additional potential stimulus to increased production is the partially implemented reform of farm management. Directors of state and collective farms have been given increased authority to decide what crops to plant and where to market surplus production at the most favorable prices. Also, directors are being given more say in deciding how to spend available funds on equipment and structures to improve the farms' operations.

The initial results have been favorable to the new regime: 1966, a year of exceptionally good weather, was a record year for grain production and over-all agricultural output rose about 10%. In 1967, production remained at a high level, although it fell slightly from the preceding year:

Precisely because of these early successes, Soviet agricultural goals are now threatened by a complacent return to the normal low priority for agriculture, which would mean reductions of investments for fertilizer plants, machinery, and irrigation projects. Dmitri Polyansky, whose responsibilities as First Deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers include agriculture, in a March 1967 speech admonished "certain comrades" who argued for a diversion of investment funds from agriculture to other sectors of the economy in view of the good harvest of 1966. Again, in the CPSU journal Kommunist, No. 15, October 1967, Polyansky warned against the "dangerous" tendencies in some elements of the planning and economic apparatus to shortchange agriculture in favor of other branches of the economy.

The Kremlin's prospects of achieving its agricultural production goals, assuming normal weather through 1970 (a risky assumption, as witness the conditions of 1963 and 1965), depend not only upon a continued high priority but also upon the Soviets' ability to solve a number of long-standing burdensome problems. In one sense, the prospects look good inasmuch as some of the problems seem ridiculously simple to solve. On the other hand, the Soviets have learned to live with these problems and, unless the leaders are willing to unleash and pay the price of greater individual initiative, the problems will probably continue to defy solution. Following is a sample of these problems:

a) Waste is pervasive. For example, the Soviets complain that 15% to 20% of the fertilizer is lost between the factories and fields because of careless shipping, storage and handling.

b) Farm machinery is inefficient. Shortages of spare parts put machines out of operation when most needed. Repair shops are inadequate. Frequently only part of the planting, cultivating and harvesting machines are available when needed at a given farm, as a result of which not all operations are mechanized and thus workers are fully engaged during some operations but idle at other times. Insufficiently trained equipment operators also cause machinery to be under-utilized.

c) Large parts of crops such as wheat, fruits, and vegetables are frequently lost because storage and processing facilities can't handle peak production.

d) Farmers are more inclined to work hard on their own private plots, where yields are substantially higher than on commercial land. For example, with only 3% of the USSR's cultivated area, the private plots contribute more than half the production of eggs and potatoes and nearly half the meat and vegetables.

e) Changes and underfulfillment of plans affect farm production adversely. For instance, the plan for land reclamation has been cut 20% to 25%, according to an announcement in October 1967. Farm machinery production fell behind schedule in 1966 and 1967 and will probably not reach planned goals by 1970.

f) Many young Soviet men have left the farm with the result that a high proportion of farm workers are females above 40 years in age. Many Soviet farms are isolated and lack cultural and recreational facilities.

g) Rural roads are inadequate in number and poorly built, and thus restrict the flow of supplies to the farm and of products to population centers. The corvée, used in the construction and maintenance of provincial arteries, reduces the manpower available for farm-oriented roads.

h) The higher prices and bonuses paid for agricultural products since 1965 may not continue to stimulate farmers, inasmuch as increased

supplies of consumer goods probably will not match their increased money income.

The Kremlin's latest move, according to the government newspaper Izvestiya of 24 June, has been to propose a law designed to introduce "strict order" in the allocation of land for private use by the workers of collective and state farms. This appears to be a reversal of the permissive policies towards private plots adopted by Brezhnev and Kosygin soon after they ousted Khrushchev. The new regime made it clear at that time that their new policy was a short-term measure in the interest of the state, and that in the long run private plots were incompatible with the concept of Communist agriculture.

In other Communist countries agriculture has posed such intractable economic problems that it has become a major political issue. The Eastern European agricultural and economic journals have periodically criticized party-imposed bureaucracy in the management of agriculture. The Czechs, recently freed from the inhibitions of press censorship, have been especially bitter in such criticism.

One practical step taken by the Eastern European countries has been to study non-Communist agricultural techniques. Since the early 1960's, East Europeans have carefully examined Western agricultural practices, aiming to apply them where possible in order to decrease their high costs of farming. The Poles and Czechs have been particularly interested in the agricultural cooperative institutions of Denmark and Holland.

The Polish experience is a strong condemnation of Communist agriculture. Before 1956, agricultural production was stagnated and thus was a major underlying cause of the changes in Polish leadership. Since 1956, Polish agriculture has been decollectivized and private initiative has been allowed to play a greater role. As a result, Polish agricultural production has increased more than that of any other Eastern European country, except for Rumania. The Polish regime has tried to induce the peasants to abandon their individual farms; but completely without success.

## TO OUR COMRADES

I said that no doctrine is holy, and the Literaturnaya Gazeta in Moscow wrote that there is nothing holy to me. I was thinking out loud about how, under the conditions which prevail in our country, we must utilize every square meter of the land, because we do not possess country where it would take a hundred kilometers to get to the next tree. And Literaturnaya Gazeta wrote that I should do what I like in my little garden, but that I should not pass it as a theoretical discovery. I described Canadian and Soviet agriculture as unsuitable for Czechoslovakia because of the differences of the conditions, and Literaturnaya Gazeta gets irritated and recommends that I get acquainted, at least in general lines, with the basic works of the founders of our teaching. I must have done that really somewhat superficially, because otherwise I would have been able to explain to myself quite easily why such a grandiose theory has for so many years been getting results which are just the opposite. I confided foolishly to the representatives of the AFP agency that under the conditions which prevail in our country, where meadows are frequently interrupted by orchards, the Danish or Dutch type of agriculture would probably be the most appropriate. Literaturnaya Gazeta claims, in answer, that to my sorrow I missed the train for emigration in 1948. I would like to explain that I was really of the opinion that the mission of agriculture is to feed the nation, and not only to satisfy a doctrine. Apparently I was thinking about these things too much in a profiteering way. Of course, in spite of the nervous objections of the Moscow friends, I am reluctant to believe that one model of agriculture would be ideal for the Ukraine, the Himalayas, and the Blata. It is against the spirit of nature, because nature is varied and colorful rather than uniform. Otherwise we would not have 600 types of birds and each bird a different color, but all animals would be more or less like a standardized horse. I admit that our situation would be rather different and more advantageous if we had gold mines and could fill our granaries with surpluses of wheat of the capitalists. But we don't have profitable mines any more, either. It seems to me that unfortunately there is nothing else left for us but to try to get the maximum possible crop from every square centimeter of our native soil. That does not have only disadvantages. A state which is agriculturally self-sufficient is at the same time much more independent. Literaturnaya Gazeta also blames me that I slander my homeland by claiming that in the recent past we did not have any foreign policy. Any reader can judge this question for himself. I must admit that I did ask that our new foreign policy be modest. That it correspond to our real interests and facilities. We are not exactly in the pink, we ought to save. In addition to foreign policy, I know about several other fat items of the budget where we could save a great deal. We can benefit world socialism much more by being a flourishing country. Naturally, I do not want our country to become an insignificant province, as charged by the Soviet comrades against me, but in the same way I am not fascinated by the vision that we should eternally remain merely a significant province. I took the liberty of talking about these things so openly only because I was born in this country, all my ancestors were born in this country before me, I want to live here and die here, and I hope that my children and the children of their children will continue to live here in the future. I am sorry if my interest in our Czech and Slovak fate is classified as bourgeois nationalism. But even that is nothing entirely new. I can explain that only by the fact that a distance of 5000 versts [a Russian unit of distance (1.067 kilometers) -- a term also used in old Czech, translator] apparently distorts extraordinarily the view of events, things, and people....

CPYRGHT

LITERARNI LISTY, Prague  
16 May 1968.

## Soudruhům

Rekl jsem, že žádná doktrína není svatá a Literaturnaja gazeta v Moskvě napsala, že mi není nic svatého. Přemýšlel jsem nahlas o tom, že v našich poměrech musíme využívat každého metru půdy, neboť nevládneme krajiny, kde by k nejbližšímu stromu bylo sto kilometrů a Literaturnaja gazeta napsala, že si na své zahrádce mám dělat co chci, ale že to nemám vydávat za teoretické objevy. Typ kanadského i sovětského zemědělství jsem pro odlišnost poměrů označil za nevhodný pro Československo, a Literaturnaja gazeta mi podrážděně doporučuje, abych se alespoň v hrůbách svých seznamil se základními pracemi zakladatelů našeho učení. Což jsem asi skutečně učinil ledabyt, neboť jinak bych si listů docela snadno dovedl vysvětlit, proč tak velkopáně teorie docílují už tak dlouhá léta úplně opačných výsledků. Početile jsem se světil zástupci agentury AFP, a pro naše podmínky tuhá často prerušovaných hájí by nejspíš odpovídal typ zemědělství dánského a holandského. Literaturnaja gazeta mi v odpovědi tvrdí, že jsem ke své hlouposti zmeškal v roce 1948 vlak do emigrace. Rád bych vysvětlil, že jsem se opravdu domníval, že poslední zemědělství je uživit národ a nikoliv jenom vyhovět doktríně. Přemýšlel jsem o těch věcech asi příliš prospěchdřsky. Ovšem i přes nervózní výtky moskevských přátel se zdráhám uvěřit, že by jeden model zemědělství byl ideální pro Ukrajinu, Himálaje i Blata. Je to proit duchu přírody, neboť ta je spíš rozmanitá a pestrá, než uniformní. Jinak bychom neměli šest set druhů ptactva a každého ptáka jiné barvy, ale veškerá zvířena by se víceméně podobala typizovanému koni. Připouštím, že bychom byli v po-

někud jiné a vhodnější situaci, kdy bychom měli doly na zlato a mohli kdykoliv doplnit špachary pšeničnými přebytky kapitalistů. Ale výnosné doly už také nemáme. Zdá se mi, že nám bohužel nezbyvá nic jiného, než usilovat o co nejvyšší úrodu z každého čtverečního centimetru rodné hroudy. Nemá to jenom samé nevýhody: sídlo, které je agrárně soběstačné je současně i mnohem nezdůvlejší. Literaturnaja gazeta mi dále vytká, že pomlouvám vlast turzením, že jsme v nedávné minulosti neměli žádnou zahraniční politiku. Tuto otázku nechť si posoudí každý čtenář sám. Chci se přiznat k tomu, že jsem skutečně žádal, aby naše nová zahraniční politika byla skromná. Odpovídající našim skutečným zájmům i možnostem. Nejsme na tom nejhrůzovější, měli bychom šelfit. Kromě zahraniční politiky bych věděl ještě o několika tučných položkách rozpočtu, na kterých bychom mohli hodně ušetřit. Světovému socialismu prospějeme mnohem více tím, budeme-li kvetoucí zemi. Pochopitelně nechci, jak je mi sovětskými soudruhy vytkáno, abychom se stali nevýznamnou provincií, ale stejně tak mě nejasňuje ani vidina, že bychom na věčné časy měli být jenom významnou provincií. Dovolím jsem si o těchto věcech mluvit tak otevřeně jenom proto, že jsem se v této zemi narodil, přede mnou se tu narodili i všichni moji předkové, chci zde žít a umřít a doufám, že tu i nadále budou žít mé děti a děti jejich dětí. Je mi líta, jak můj zájem o naši zemi a slovenský osud klasifikovan jako buržoazní nacionalismus. Ani to není úplně novinka. Vysvětluji si to jenom tím, že vzdálenost pět tisíc verst pravděpodobně neobyčejně zkresluje pohled na události, věci i lidi...

JAN PROCHÁZKA

Excerpts from: Soviet Economic Performance: 1966-87

Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, May 1968

UNITED STATES AND SOVIET UNION: AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

<u>Item</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>USSR</u>	<u>USSR as per-centage of US</u>
Population, July 1	1966	Millions	196.9	233.2	118
Civilian labor force (work experience)	1966	---do---	86.3	118.4	137
Annual average employment	1966	---do---	72.9	110.0	151
Annual average employment in agriculture	1966	---do---	5.2	39.8	765
Farm share of total employment (annual average)	1966	Percent	7.1	36.2	510
Sown cropland	1966	Millions of acres	298	511	171
Sown cropland per capita	1966	Acres	1.5	2.2	147
Tractors on farms, Jan. 1	1967	Thousands	4,815	1,660	34
Motor trucks on farms, Jan. 1	1967	---do---	3,100	1,017	33
Grain combines on farms, Jan. 1	1967	---do---	880	531	60
Agricultural consumption of electricity	1966	Billions of kilo watt-hours	29.1	23.2	80
Use of commercial fertilizer in terms of principal plant nutrients:					
Total	1966	1,000 short tons	12,445	7,707	62
Per acre of sown area	1966	Pounds	84	30	36

UNITED STATES AND SOVIET UNION: PRODUCTION OF LIVESTOCK COMMODITIES, 1966

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>USSR</u>	<u>USSR as % of US</u>
Beef and veal	Million pounds	20,604	8,245	40
Pork	---do---	11,328	7,440	66
Mutton, lamb, and goat	---do---	650	1,587	244
Poultry meat	---do---	7,596	1,764	23
Lard	---do---	1,932	1,880	93
Tallow and grease	---do---	5,026	530	11
Margarine and shortening	---do---	5,291	1,321	25
Milk (cows)	---do---	120,230	147,990	123
Butter	---do---	1,128	2,297	204
Eggs	Billion	66.4	31.7	48
Wool	Million pounds	250	818	327

UNITED STATES AND SOVIET UNION: YIELDS PER ACRE OF MAJOR GRAINS, 1961-1965 AVERAGE, 1966

<u>Item</u>	<u>1961-1965 average</u>			<u>1966</u>		
	<u>U.S. (bushels)</u>	<u>USSR (bushels)</u>	<u>USSR as % of U.S.</u>	<u>U.S. (bushels)</u>	<u>USSR (bushels)</u>	<u>USSR as % of U.S.</u>
Corn, grain	66.3	25.2	38	72.3	33.9	47
Oats	45.2	20.3	45	44.9	29.0	65
Barley	36.2	17.9	49	38.5	23.0	60
Sorghum grain and pulses	45.0	12.6	28	55.8	15.9	28
4 feed grains	2,881	882	31	3,222	1,111	34
Wheat	25.3	11.2	44	26.3	18.1	69
Rye	19.7	13.3	68	21.8	14.1	65
Buckwheat	19.5	7.1	36	(not available)	8.1	--



Rice	86.5	43.3	50	94.5	51.8	55
4 food grains	1,582	681	43	1,670	1,029	62
Total, 8 grains	2,438	744	31	2,662	1,107	42

SURVEY  
October 1967**FIFTY YEARS OF SOVIET  
AGRICULTURE***W. Klatt*

**T**HE Soviet Union enters the fiftieth year of its existence with the biggest grain harvest ever gathered in Russian history. Brezhnev and Kosygin have been most fortunate in having been able to announce, at the end of last year, a bumper crop. The official statement speaks of more than 170 million tons, but this figure has to be deflated a good deal so as to bring it down to the after-harvest weight at which crops are measured in the western world. However, even at 135 million tons the Soviet Union ought to be able, after having met all normal requirements at home and in eastern Europe, to put some 15 million tons into reserve. This surplus should go a long way towards meeting, in the next few years, such unforeseen crop failures as those which occurred in 1963 and 1965 and which, during the last three years, forced the Soviet authorities to spend altogether close on \$2,000 million of foreign exchange on grain imports. This year a similar amount is being paid out in domestic currency as a bonus to home producers. The burden on the exchequer is far from negligible, but the saving of foreign currency will be most welcome.

Throughout Russia the benefits of this fortunate crop result will be felt. Not only will the farming community have a substantial rise in earnings, but the consumer will enjoy the increased supplies of livestock produce that will result from feeding more grain to farm animals. Most important of all, foreign exchange, not needed for importing cereals, will be available for the purchase abroad of industrial equipment, spare parts and know-how. Thus the Russian grain harvest of 1966 will indirectly contribute to bringing work and income to industries not only in Russia, but also in the western world. What better way could there be to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution! At long last the Soviet grain problem seems to have been solved. Or has it?

Ever since the fateful autumn of 1917 the Soviet leaders have been preoccupied with grain. Starting with the Central Committee plenum of November 1929, on the eve of mass collectivisation, time and time again the grain problem has been said to have been solved. Yet in the 25 years that followed this statement more than one leading personality has lost his post, if not his head, over the question of the country's grain supplies. Considering that nowadays more than half the value of the annual farm output of Russia is derived from animal products, one might think that more attention should be devoted to this aspect of the farming industry, especially since the industrial consumer wants to reduce his intake of carbohydrates from cereals and to improve his diet by getting an increased supply of meat and dairy produce. But the situation has rarely been comfortable enough to allow the Soviet leaders to forget that all too often the fate of the nation has been determined by bread alone.

Approximately three-fifths of the country's arable acreage is still under grains, and half the food intake is consumed in the form of bread, flour, and cereals. Almost half the population lives in villages, and at least a third of the labour force is employed in agriculture. Out of the season there is still much idleness in the countryside, whilst at the peak of the season students have to be rushed to the land, no longer virgin, to harvest its often meagre grain crop. The rhythm of life in the country still dominates the capital. The patterns of food

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rather than those of the highly industrialised nations among which

Russian now ranks—at some distance—behind the United States.

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Russia that merits some moments of reflection at the end of the first five decades of post-revolutionary development, during which Russia has failed to become the truly equalitarian society of which its revolutionary leaders had dreamed. There is no way of telling how things might have developed had the mood of change spread to central and western Europe in the manner anticipated by the Bolshevik leadership. To conclude from the absence of this development that 'socialism in one country' and the 'socialist transformation of the villages', that is, the permanent revolution from above, had become historical necessities, with Stalin 'operating within the logical consequences of Leninism',<sup>1</sup> would be to fall victim to the concept of historical determinism.

Had Lenin survived the Kronstadt mutiny long enough, his pragmatic mind might have prevailed over his party's revolutionism, and his new economic policy, instead of serving as a temporary expedient, might have become the opening phase in a process of industrialisation—'at the pace of a tortoise'—as Bukharin had suggested. Moreover, had the revolution led to a genuine alliance of workers and peasants and thus to democratic rule instead of democratic centralism, there might have been western cooperation instead of hostility. In that case, Russia might for some time have been obliged to exchange the surplus product of its grain economy for western farm requisites and industrial equipment. In fact, she exported in desperation, at the height of the agrarian crisis in 1931, 'the five megatons of grain that were followed by five, or so, megadeaths in the next two years'.<sup>2</sup>

Leaving aside for the moment the sacrifices in human lives and happiness, the end-effect might not have been very different from what we now see: a mighty world power that has moved, within fifty years, from fifth to second place among the industrial nations of the world. Almost certainly its farming industry would be more closely integrated with the urban sectors of society than is in fact the case today. One final speculation: a steadily industrialising country, governed by majority rule rather than in the name of permanent revolution, might have deprived Hitler of the allies that he succeeded in gathering at home and abroad as the crusader against what he was able to present as a world-wide revolutionary menace.

It would be legitimate to interject here that speculation about the past seems idle, were it not for the possibility that a different course might be taken in similar circumstances at some time in the future. For the man of the future can have the benefit of hindsight and might thus be blessed with a choice of alternatives that seemed absent in the distant historical past. It is for this reason, and not for the sake of showing up the errors of the Bolshevik revolution, that its fiftieth anniversary calls for a critique of its agrarian policy.

**T**HROUGHOUT Soviet history, the approach to the farming industry has been marked by a lack of rationality which has not affected other sectors of the Soviet economy to anything like the same degree. This lack of rationality may be explained to some extent by the very nature of agriculture, which the Marxist school and its followers have never handled very happily. It would be wrong to suggest that agriculture follows patterns of behaviour that are different from those observed in other spheres of human endeavour, but it has certain characteristics that are absent from the environment of other industries.

Farming, unlike industry, has to take into account space and weather as limiting factors. In normal conditions the cost of haulage is more decisive in determining farm sizes than certain economies of scale. In Soviet Russia the amalgamation of farms has been carried out without regard to the cost of transportation. As to the effect of weather and

<sup>1</sup> A. Nove-L. Labedz, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?' in H. G. Shaffer, ed., *The Soviet System in Theory and Practice* (New York, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> O. Hoefding, 'Soviet Collectivization and China's Great "Leap"', Conference on Soviet and Chinese Communism, Lake Tahoe, California, 1965.

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distance on labour, the farm-hand, who mostly works without a roof over his head and without a superior at close quarters, operates with a measure of freedom of decision that is most unusual in the case of the industrial worker of corresponding grade. The larger the farm, the greater the need to delegate decisions to the individual. In communist conditions the tendency is generally to do the opposite. Also, in agriculture—unlike industry—the producer, besides being a consumer of his own product, is mostly also a processor of finished products. He is therefore able to alter the pattern of production, utilisation, and marketing in many ways and thus to evade public controls far more effectively than the industrial producer, who is rarely a consumer of his product. Thus in agriculture, far more than in industry, a relationship of mutual trust is needed between the producer and the state. None of these characteristics of the farming industry has been taken properly into account during the fifty years of Soviet agricultural history. It seems doubtful whether they are fully understood in Russia even today. If they were, the conclusion would be inescapable that the existing system has to be dismantled rather than amended. The political consequences of such a recognition would be momentous indeed.

In the final analysis, the misunderstandings about the role of agriculture in modern industrial society and the resulting failures of agricultural policy throughout the five decades of Soviet history can be traced to a doctrinal concept that was based on a methodological error. The Marxist school and its followers have always insisted that small-scale farming, as they defined it, was economically backward, and that the peasant cultivator was therefore bound to be tied to politically reactionary forces hostile to the industrial working class. Had they measured farm performance in the same way as production in industry, they might have discovered that farms that are small in terms of acreage can be large, modern, and progressive enterprises when considered in terms of capital input and in output per man. In other words, it is the degree of intensity that matters and not the acreage—and any economies of scale have to be seen within this context.

The interrelationship between the size of the farms, according to acreage, and the intensity of farming, in terms of input and output, has never really been understood by any of the Soviet leaders. As a result of this methodological error, throughout their history they have found themselves in the position of making enemies of the owners of large farms whilst at the same time antagonising the small men in the villages. The Marxist school have never differentiated between the various forms of farm performance and have therefore never gained an understanding of the role of the intensively farming owner-occupier or tenant in a modern industrial setting. Whereas in industry the Marxist school has supported developments which are not altogether different from those in capitalist society, their agrarian concept flies in the face of all historical precedent. It is not surprising that this has created very special problems. The lack of understanding of the agrarian question emerges from one of those frequently quoted statements by Lenin on the subject: 'The peasant as a toiler gravitates towards socialism and prefers the dictatorship of the workers to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The peasant as a seller of grain gravitates towards the bourgeoisie, to free trade, i.e. back to the "habitual" old or "primordial" capitalism of former days.'<sup>3</sup> In fact, the peasant cultivator does nothing of the sort. Lenin's concept of the peasant's role in Russian society was little more accurate than the romantic picture of the 'naïvely socialist' villager that the narodniki had.

The Russian intellectuals, whether social-revolutionaries or bolsheviks, were strangely ignorant of the lives and views of four-fifths of their fellow-countrymen. But whilst the social-revolutionaries had the utopian vision of a socialist society created on the basis of rural communes, Lenin was primarily concerned with the revolution itself.

which after 1905 he saw in two stages. At the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution he saw the peasantry tied to the industrial proletariat. Thereafter he expected the peasants to renounce the revolution and desert the industrial proletariat. At that stage Lenin saw the bolsheviks dividing the farming community against itself, using the poor villagers against the rich peasants. This dual task of the proletariat was regarded by Lenin as the essence of the bolshevik programme. He never considered the possibility of a gradual continuation of the process that had set in with the Stolypin reforms. Consequently, he never believed in a genuine, lasting alliance of interests between the producers and the consumers of the daily necessities of the nation. Thus the conflict of interests between the minority of industrial workers and the majority of villagers stood godmother to the bolshevik revolution of 1917. This was very nearly strangled by its own contradictions.

LENIN had never thought of the immense tasks which a successful revolutionary party would have to face in the years following the revolution. But as the strategist of the revolution he adjusted his party's programme to changing circumstances. After a lifelong controversy with the social-revolutionaries, he adopted their programme in the decree of 26 October [8 November] 1917, which authorised the seizure of the land by those on whose support the success of the October revolution depended. This decision sealed the fate of the Provisional Government and of the social-revolutionaries who had gained 21 million votes—against the bolsheviks' 9 million—in the elections to the constituent assembly, but who had been unwilling to give their consent to the transfer of land without compensation.

Lenin alone understood the mood of the revolting soldiers and peasants. The creation of large farm units, as anticipated in his party's programme, could await the completion of the revolution and the consolidation of the bolshevik regime throughout the land. Once more his political pragmatism was to prevail over party dogma. After the years of war communism, during which the towns had declared war on the countryside and had seized the stocks of grain instead of encouraging its production, the sailors of Kronstadt mutinied in March 1921. Being mostly country lads, they demanded, inter alia, the right of the peasants—their fathers, brothers and cousins—to keep their own livestock and to farm their own private plots. In the face of the rebellion Lenin saw the force of the sailors' claim and he gave way. Once again he postponed the amalgamation of individual farms and, as a temporary expedient, allowed the uncontrolled exchange of goods in the name of the new economic policy. Nobody can say with any degree of certainty how Lenin might have handled the emergence of a new agricultural bourgeoisie, the lack of a regular exchange of foodstuffs against industrial consumer goods, and the ensuing 'scissor crisis' had he retained his mental and physical capacities beyond the end of 1922 when he suffered a severe stroke. Thirteen months later, following his death on 21 January 1924, the internecine war between the leaders who took over from Lenin broke into the open.

The controversy over the agrarian question provided one of the central issues of the conflict. In the debate between those in favour of rapid industrialisation, such as Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, and Bukharin, who spoke of the peasants as an active force in the revolution, Stalin—for a time—remained uncommitted, keeping to a middle course between the extreme factions. But it was Stalin who destroyed the peasantry as a coherent social force. Lenin's support for voluntary association was thrown to the winds. In the process of primitive socialist accumulation Stalin sacrificed the peasants in the interest of the most determined effort of industrialisation the world had yet seen.

The year 1967 is not only the fiftieth anniversary of the bolshevik revolution. It is also the fortieth anniversary of the adoption by the

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fifteenth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of the resolution that set in motion the collectivisation of Russia's peasant farms and the liquidation of the kulaks. This is described in the official party history as equivalent in its consequences to the revolution of October. In its course the villagers were classified in a manner as crude as the statistics on which it was based. The confusion and demoralisation caused reached stupendous dimensions. By 1932 the procurement of grain was more than twice as large as in 1927, though the harvest was a good deal smaller. By 1933, half the country's livestock had disappeared. The most moving, yet most authentic, record of this operation and the hunger and purges and deportations it brought in its wake has been preserved in the files of the headquarters of the Communist Party at Smolensk, which were captured by the invading German army and later taken to the United States.<sup>4</sup> It is not to be wondered at that Stalin, when questioned by Churchill about this phase of Soviet history, described it as a struggle more difficult and dangerous than that against nazi Germany.

The consequences of this operation have been recounted before.<sup>5</sup> On the eve of the second world war hardly any land remained in private hands. The opposition of the peasants had been broken, large-scale deportations had taken place, and irreparable damage had been done to the farming industry. Even within the framework of the collectives the peasants continued to be treated as enemies of the state rather than as vital members of a new industrial society. They had every reason to feel outcasts. Twenty-five years later, at the time of Stalin's death, farming was where it had been in the days of the Tsars. Admittedly, horses had been replaced by tractor power, thus freeing a large acreage formerly under fodder crops for the production of food. Even these modest results had been achieved only at great cost in men and animals. The results were particularly disappointing in livestock farming. The number of productive livestock was one-tenth smaller than before collectivisation was introduced. In the meantime the human population had grown by almost one-fifth. Milk yields and carcass weights, like grain yields, had remained unchanged. As a result, the nation's diet was smaller in volume and poorer in composition at the time of Stalin's death than it had been a quarter of a century earlier. The farming community was much worse off than it had been before collectivisation began. Whereas industrial production had recovered from the devastation caused by the German invasion, the supply of farm products continued to lag behind. The cleavage created when forced industrialisation and collectivisation had driven the two sections of Soviet society apart in the early thirties had widened rather than narrowed.

THE ten years of Khrushchev's rule were largely taken up by attempts to remedy this situation. During his time of office he made close on two hundred speeches exclusively concerned with agriculture. Every year the leader of the second largest industrial nation in the world spent a month touring the countryside, criticising shortcomings and suggesting remedies. Nearly every plenary session of the Central Committee had farming on its open or secret agenda. Yet when Khrushchev was removed from power, his successors had nothing good to say about his agricultural policy. Posterity is likely to be more impartial and to balance his failures against his achievements. There were many of both. In the technical sphere, Khrushchev started three major campaigns: the reclamation of the virgin lands in Central Asia; the introduction of maize as a feed grain and a green fodder; and the abolition of ley farming, that is, putting grassland under the plough. At the same time, major changes were made in the administrative sphere. These included the abolition of the machine tractor stations—in Stalin's days considered an essential ingredient of collectivised agriculture—and the transfer of

their equipment to the collectives. He further eliminated the agricul-  
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their responsibilities to research and advisory services. Finally, he  
divided the party along 'lines of production', agriculture being assigned  
to a special department with the object of involving the party directly  
in the affairs of the countryside, whilst giving its first secretary direct  
access to regional and local cadres. Much of this was done in a highly  
unorthodox manner, and some of it was undone when it proved  
impracticable.

In the economic sphere there were also major innovations. The  
farming industry, which for a quarter of a century had been the chief,  
if not the only, source of capital accumulation for investment in industry,  
was granted a growing portion of the exchequer's funds. Moreover,  
increases in farm prices and agricultural wages and reductions in taxes  
and delivery obligations resulted in an increase of 50 per cent in the  
disposable income of the farming community. As one quarter of the  
collective farmer's cash income had to be reinvested, rural living  
standards at the end of Khrushchev's reign, though improved by compar-  
ison with the dismal level attained in 1953, were still substantially  
below those of the industrial workers, who in turn had a considerably  
more modest standard of living than their counterparts in western  
industrialised societies.

The technological changes also yielded limited results only. The  
extension of the acreage in Central Asia resulted in a substantial, though  
precarious, addition to the supply of grain. When the reserves of the  
soil in Kazakhstan were exhausted, the effects were most damaging.  
The maize campaign provided supplementary fodder for the dairy  
herd, but the maize silage failed to provide the plant protein badly  
needed in the production of animal protein. The ploughing-up of grass-  
land was designed to remedy this shortcoming, but it was denied its  
full success because of the lack of fertilisers. Khrushchev's farm policy  
falls into two clearly distinct periods. During the first five years, up to  
1958, he was remarkably successful, mobilising the untapped, but readily  
available, resources of the country. During the second half of his reign  
his short-term remedies failed. The crop disaster of 1963 which made  
necessary a cut in pig numbers by 30 million, or over 40 per cent,  
and an import of over 10 million tons of grain—an all-time record—was  
nature's revenge for the mistakes committed in the past. It showed how  
vulnerable Soviet agriculture remained in spite of all the improvements  
made during a decade in which the farming industry received more  
public recognition than at any other time since the October revolution.

Whenever technical or economic measures proved to be insufficient,  
Khrushchev turned to organisational remedies and relied on the lead  
which the party cadres were supposed to provide throughout the  
countryside. He never recognised the fundamental errors underlying  
the party doctrine; or if he did recognise them, he was unable or  
unwilling to draw the necessary conclusions. He probably committed  
his most serious error when—from a doctrinal posture—he began to  
interfere with the private plot, the only sector of the farm economy that  
could legitimately claim satisfactory results. Whilst it may never be  
possible to establish, with any degree of certainty, the reasons for the  
removal of Khrushchev in October 1964 from his position of leadership  
in both the party and government, there can hardly be any doubt that  
the failure of his farm policy played a role in the party's decision to  
depose him.

In the event, the ten years of agricultural policy under Khrushchev  
yielded an increased, though precarious, supply of food and fodder,  
without getting anywhere near the ambitious targets set for 1965. The  
diet, still overburdened with carbohydrates and short of animal proteins,  
continued to lag behind that of the United States which for ten years  
provided the yardstick of things supposedly within reach in the Soviet

Union. The distance between the two countries was as great in the level of output as in that of consumption. At the end of Khrushchev's reign the farming industry of the United States produced, with one-fifth of the Soviet farm labour force on an area equal to two-thirds of the Soviet sown acreage, a volume of farm products approximately three-fifths larger than that of the Soviet Union. Yields of all major crops, as well as milk yields and carcass weights, were at best half as much in the Soviet Union as those attained in the United States. Productive livestock per head of the Soviet population was only four-fifths of the corresponding figure in the United States. The gap was particularly striking as regards the labour requirements in agriculture. In Khrushchev's own assessment, five to seven times as much labour as in the United States was needed in arable farming in the Soviet Union, and up to sixteen times as much in livestock farming. At the time of his fall the pattern both of farm productivity and of food production was that of a backward country. Yet in the industrial and military sphere Russia could legitimately claim to be the second most powerful nation in the world. There is no reason to think that this discrepancy will disappear as a result of the policy of consolidation, following a temporary retrenchment, on which Khrushchev's successors have embarked since 1964.

THE first measure of any consequence taken by the new leaders was the restoration to its previous size of the private plot belonging to members of the collectives and rural and urban workers, which had been reduced—on Khrushchev's insistence—in 1956. Other concessions followed. Many of the new measures amounted to a continuation of Khrushchev's policies—by different means. Others were of an altogether different nature. The 'urgent measures for the further development of Soviet agriculture', introduced by Brezhnev at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee held in March 1965, have not been without effect. The announcement of fixed grain delivery quotas for a period of six years, the payment of a bonus of 50 per cent for above-quota deliveries, the increase in purchase prices for livestock and animal products, the increase in farm investment, and the introduction of a modest pension for retired members of collectives are likely to have created an atmosphere in the countryside more favourable than has existed since collectivisation was introduced forty years ago.

The gradual introduction of a guaranteed monthly pay for members of collectives, at rates corresponding to those in force on state farms, which was announced at the twenty-third party congress in the spring of 1966, was the most important innovation of the new leadership. If this promise is in fact kept, it should remove one of the chief grievances of the collective farmers. For forty years they have not been granted financial rewards for taking the kind of risks for which farmers in the western world feel entitled to claim a return; nor have they been eligible for a minimum wage, as it applies in the case of workers on state farms and in industry. They have thus had the worst of both worlds. At long last this is to be put right—fifty years after the revolution.

One major promise has yet to be fulfilled. The third kolkhoz congress, which is to adopt a new farm charter in place of the outdated one of 1935, has still not taken place. It was first scheduled to take place early in 1959, but it was repeatedly—and even recently—postponed for reasons not stated. As the commission charged with drafting the new agricultural model charter has not yet released its findings, the results of this conference cannot be anticipated with any degree of certainty. If the liberal critics of present farm policies were to gain ground, substantial improvements in the structure and performance of agriculture could result. If the traditionalists hold their ground—and this seems more probable in present conditions—no startling changes are likely. Although realism and caution are seemingly taking the place of the idealism and ambitions of the past, there remains a



economy and the place of the farmer in modern society. Brezhnev and Kosygin remain captives of their own and their party's political past. Basically the erroneous views adhered to during the first five decades of Soviet rule persist, and the peasants continue to be regarded as politically expendable, even if—as a matter of expediency—they are temporarily treated with more concern than in the past.

In the meantime the air is full of proposals from various sources as to the ways and means of improving the performance of the farm industry, of increasing the standard of living of the rural community, and of integrating it with the rest of Soviet society. So far agriculture has been largely excluded from the structural changes that have been introduced, experimentally and on a limited scale, in the industrial sphere. Brezhnev and Kosygin, like their predecessors, have so far shown no sign of wishing to interfere with the structure of the farm industry or the pattern of farm operations. This unwillingness to introduce basic changes has not prevented various authors from putting forward more or less drastic proposals, but nobody has yet succeeded in challenging effectively the basic concepts that underlie Soviet farm policy.

**T**HIS is not to say that no attempts are being made to improve the performance of the farm industry. On the contrary, the latest efforts are directed at turning the state farms at long last into profitable enterprises. But things move slowly. Two years ago Brezhnev urged that state farms should move to full economic accounting (*khozraschet*), but many of them still continue to receive public assistance for their capital investment programme and yet end up with substantial losses on current account. Any improvements in technical, economic, and administrative matters are bound to help in reaching the targets set for 1970, the end of the current plan. Although these goals are more modest than those originally set by Khrushchev, they will be far from easy to reach. Certain setbacks cannot be ruled out, since the input of farm requisites is not yet large and varied enough to counterbalance the fluctuations in yield which are still a mark of Soviet farming. In fact, an increase in five years of 25 per cent over and above the current level of farm production would be no mean feat. On the consumption side strict limits are set by the fact that even the cost of the present, somewhat monotonous, diet, absorbs half the working-class family's income. Unless industrial wages are raised more than in recent years or retail prices are lowered substantially—and there is little likelihood of either—the intake of food will not increase or improve dramatically.\*

With regard to the fundamental issue of the structure of farming, changes on both state farms and collectives remain subjects of unofficial debate rather than official action. The most controversial issue is that of the role of the individual and his family in agriculture as against that of the state and its agencies. Here the discussion on the significance of the 'link' (*zveno*), which has flared up in the past whenever there was an opportunity of challenging the authority of central and local party organs, has been revived. In its most extreme form it represents a rejection of the concept of collective operations under party direction; but extreme views are rarely uttered. For the time being fairly moderate experiments are advocated. Limited areas of cropland are being allocated for a certain period of time to a team of farm workers or members of collectives, in order to counter the indifference which is the most prominent feature of the 'Farming Anonymous Inc.' that rules the Soviet countryside.

The need to arouse the interest of the operating farmhands became urgent when more and more of them abandoned their place of work

\* W. Klatt, 'Soviet Farm Output and Food Supply in 1970', *St. Antony's Papers*, No. 19 (Oxford, 1966).

in the unattractive conditions of Central Asia. It was thus not surprising that Zhulin, the most vocal advocate of the link system, originally recommended small operational units for the farms in the virgin lands. It is not without significance that the traditional areas of peasant farming, where the family zveno was the normal unit of operation, have so far not been found suitable for this kind of innovation. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the party organ whose task it is to cater for the young in town and country, has provided a platform for these proposals, whilst the official organs of the party and the Ministry of Agriculture have shown little enthusiasm for experiments which are bound to interfere with the pattern of things that is to the liking of the bureaucrats.

Whereas Soviet industry is beginning to accept innovations such as measuring success in terms of sales and profits, no Nemchinov or Liberman has yet risen from the ashes to which Stalin burned the countryside some forty years ago. Venzher, who courageously stuck out his neck when it was still dangerous to do so, is once again among those in the forefront of the campaign in favour of liberalising the farming industry. He wishes to see prices and market forces take the place of central planning and state procurement, but so far he has not met with the response from official quarters which in industry is taken more or less for granted nowadays. The sinews of the agrarian fabric remain fully stretched; they leave little room for slack. That is why Brezhnev and Kosygin, not unlike Khrushchev before them, prefer to limit their reforms to the area of technical and administrative detail and to leave more fundamental changes in the structure of Soviet farming to an unspecified date in the future.

Russia is entering a period charged with emotion, and an over-generous gesture could damage beyond repair the sluices of carefully controlled public opinion and private sentiment. It is not only heroic achievements that are being remembered in October 1967. Among the demonstrating young men and women there are all too many unable to find the graves of their fathers on which to place flowers, while the flags flutter over the platforms from which the achievements of five decades are celebrated. The present leadership hope to avoid answering for the hecatombs which were the price of these achievements, but they will not be able to defer indefinitely the moment of reckoning. On the day when a full account is given, Soviet agriculture will no longer be what it is today; the mammoth state farms and collectives as we know them now will have become a matter of the past.

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### Student Disorders in Ethiopia

At the end of March, Communist-inspired student riots broke out in Addis Ababa; they lasted several days and led to a month of student unrest. Triggered by a protest against what they termed a "corrupting" and "obscene" fashion show (see attachment 2), the riots led to attacks on United States Embassy buildings and to a lesser degree on the Ethiopian Ministry of Information, and forced the closing of the Haile Selassie Imperial University and all schools in the city. The university students who led the disorders were joined by secondary school students and groups of street boys and hoodlums. These demonstrations were not the first of this type, but, unlike previous disorders, in this instance the university students were supported in their demands, if not in their methods, by students outside the capital and by many non-students, such as university faculty members, businessmen and government officials. While the demands for reforms and for the dismissal of allegedly corrupt officials were not new, direct and open expression of them was new.

### Marxist Origin of Student Groups

Marxist elements emerged on the campus of the university in late 1966 when, with the support of the student body, they established the University Students' Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA). Since then, student declarations and protests, backed by the USUAA and the leftist National Union of Ethiopian University Students (NUEUS), have become increasingly vocal and hostile and clearly pro-Communist in tone. The chief targets of these outbursts have been the Government of Ethiopia and the United States.

The number of confirmed Marxists among the university students has been estimated at less than 100 in a student body of 3,000, with the majority of students basically conservative in outlook and generally skeptical of the ideas and tactics of the radical leadership. The latter have apparently succeeded in becoming the acknowledged representatives of the students for two reasons: (a) They have successfully exploited the average student's feeling of frustration and his urge to promote national reforms; (b) There has been neither an effective organized effort among the students to rally support for alternative, pro-democratic views, nor have they been encouraged by either the university administration or the government to make such an effort -- or, for that matter, to place any limitations on Marxist political activity on the campus.

### Foreign Meddling in Student Action?

During the riots, in a search of the offices of the two student organizations and of the official USUAA newspaper, Struggle, the police found considerable amounts of pro-Communist, anti-American material in the form of posters, pamphlets and handbills, many from the International Union of Students, and also films of Soviet and Czech origin, reportedly dealing with "revolution," "espionage" and general educational matters. During police questioning, the arrested student leaders revealed they had been in contact with the Counsellor of the Czech Embassy. There were also unsubstantiated

reports that some of the students were paid to demonstrate, with the money coming from the Soviet Embassy, and that the students were being called upon to support efforts to establish a Communist party in Ethiopia. The government publicized the findings of the police search and at one point during the disorders it broadcast a statement labelling the student leaders of the violence as "tools of foreigners" and as having been "bought by foreign enemies."

About thirty students were arrested after the initial outbreak and subsequently released for lack of evidence. Several of the student organization leaders were later picked up by the police and held for trial. Among those jailed were the President and International Affairs Chairman of the USUAA, the former Secretary General of the NUEUS and the Editor of Struggle. This led to a student boycott of the university which lasted until they were released on bail. Their trial has been postponed until an investigation is completed and they have in the meantime been readmitted on probation to the university.

#### Student Attitudes

Since the disturbances of early April, there has been sharp criticism of the government by the young Ethiopian elite, including the students. Their views and reactions are typical of student attitudes in other developing countries, and they are deeply suspicious of and often hostile toward the developed nations. The student leaders of Ethiopia have emphasized their suspicion of foreigners with some pride, having called it one of their outstanding virtues in an article which appeared in Struggle just before the first riots broke out. In addition, the Ethiopian students claim there is corruption in the government and that progressive reform is moving too slowly, both of which are sources of further aggravation and frustration. Also, the extremists harbor a particular animosity toward the United States because it is the chief supporter of the government and Americans make up approximately one-fifth of the university administration and faculty (see attachment 1).

The recent wave of student protests occurred when there were increasing rumors of divisions within the top levels of the government. The reportedly inconsistent and obviously ineffective action of the security forces during the student crisis may have reflected these rumored divisions, but there is believed to be general agreement within the government that the student demonstrations and their extremist leadership represent a political threat which must be contained. For, whatever the differences in outlook and motivation of the university students, they comprise the principal center of opposition to the government. As an educated, action-oriented group, they are a significant political factor. The Communists have obviously recognized this and have acted accordingly. It is expected they will continue to seek opportunities to act as long as the internal situation in Ethiopia remains unchanged and there continue to be strains between the young elite and the establishment.

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 WASHINGTON POST  
 1 May 1968

# Student Unrest Adds Factor in Ethiopia

First of two articles.

By Anthony Astrachan  
 Washington Post Foreign Service

ADDIS ABABA, April 30—Addis Ababa's students went back to class this week, a month after they started violent demonstrations that closed this capital's schools and put new shapes of radical dissent in the bewildering mosaic of Ethiopia's politics.

Elementary and high schools and Halle Selassie I University were calm. Emperor Haile Selassie himself thought things quiet enough to leave for a month's tour of the Far East.

But many Ethiopian officials, foreign observers, and student leaders agree that student protest in Ethiopia must be taken more seriously than ever before, especially as a force that could mobilize other opposition groups.

"There won't be a revolution this year," one observer said, but most doubt that the government is looking hard enough for answers that might avert a revolution some day.

## Serious Agitation

Student agitation here is certainly the most serious in Africa since students helped overthrow the military government of the Sudan in 1964.

The chief victims of this month's violence here were American. Rock-throwers did \$5000 worth of damage to the U.S. Information Service building and an American instructor at the university lost an eye from a stone thrown in the market area.

The students say they were protesting American domination of the university and what they consider disproportionate American influence on the government. The regime was also a major target—what one student leader called, "the reactionary government's political, economic and social oppression."

Some students even blame the Americans for unpopular

1000-year-old practices. And many students share a belief common in the developing world: That three out of every five Americans abroad work for the CIA, and that they manipulate foreign governments like puppets.

## U.S. Contributions

The protests must be seen against these facts:

- The U.S. government has contributed \$24.8 million to Halle Selassie University. The Ford Foundation has given about \$400,000 more.

- Of the 518 members of the university staff, 118 are Americans. Nine of the top 15 university administrators are Americans. James C. N. Pal, a law professor from the University of Pennsylvania, is academic vice president and was the chief decision maker and spokesman during the student disturbances. The Americans have reputations as hard markers, which the students admit is one reason they dislike them.

- U.S. economic aid to Ethiopia totals \$209.8 million since 1952, not including the Peace Corps. Military aid totals more than \$100 million; not including the American communications base at Asmara.

- Ethiopia has several pockets of modernity like the university, the army, the airline and the new buildings going up in Addis Ababa. But it remains the society of an often corrupt government, a rich land-owning elite and a mass of poor peasants, with an 85 to 90 per cent illiteracy rate, and influenced by an obscurantist church.

- Its 22 million people have a per capita gross national product of \$54 a year. Central government revenues, not counting foreign aid, are \$7.20 per capita per year, one of the lowest rates in Africa. Both its domestic and its export economies are predominantly agricultural, but Ethiopia grows

only one-fifth as much as it could on its fertile lands, because of its outworn methods.

- An increasing proportion of the growing number of students come from poor backgrounds. They are less impressed by the transformation of Ethiopian society since liberation from the Italians in 1941, than by what remains to be done to bring it into the modern world.

Some of the authorities question how close the radical students can be to the conservative rural masses. The students say they are closer than the authorities think.

Peace Corps volunteers, teaching in the provinces since 1962, may have helped bridge the gap between student and peasant.

In any case, peasant demonstrations in the provinces against new taxes appear to have been triggered by the student demonstrations in Addis Ababa.

Month of Student Unrest Followed

# Fateful Ethiopia Fashion Show

Second of Two Articles

By Anthony Astrachan  
Washington Post Foreign Service

ADDIS ABABA, May 1.—The month-long student unrest which has altered the Ethiopian political equation began over a fashion show sponsored by the University Women's Club on March 30.

The club, composed mostly of faculty wives and with many American members, planned the show for the benefit of students. It was to be held in Ras Makonnen Hall.

Two student groups—the National Union of Ethiopian Students and the University Students' Union Addis Ababa—initiated a protest when they were denied use of the hall on the day of the fashion show for a session of political poetry reading.

Plot Charged

The students claimed that the show was a plot by "Western exploiting monopolistic merchants" to dump foreign-made clothes on the Ethiopian market as "an effective means of invading and corrupting our national culture." The words are from the student newspaper, *Struggle*, which charged beforehand that the show would be full of miniskirts, which "sow the seeds of obscenity—obscenity of the worst kind."

About 200 students started demonstrating at the hall before the arrival of about 500 women. After half an hour, eggs and rocks began to fly at the visitors. The students roughed up some. And some fought back. Police used tear gas and fire hoses to disperse the students and the show went on.

About 30 students were arrested at the scene. Police picked up seven student leaders elsewhere during the afternoon.

2500 Students

Authorities decreed the closing of the university the following day, stating that it could not operate "in an at-

mosphere of tension or violence."

This put 2500 students off campus and on the streets. The university students summoned high school and even elementary students into the streets. Minor incidents in the next two days built up to an assault on the United States Information Service building on April 3.

Eyewitnesses report that many of the demonstrators at USIS were not students but jobless youths from the market area, school dropouts and "just plain kids."

Addis Ababa police had to scurry back and forth all day and could not concentrate in enough strength to break up the USIS attack until evening, after three hours of assault.

The U.S. Embassy and the Ethiopian Ministry of Information were also stoned. Hundreds of cars were indiscriminately damaged in what seemed to be carefree attacks on the haves by the have-nots.

The university officially reopened April 5, but only a handful of students attended. The rest boycotted classes, presumably in protest against the arrest of the student leaders and the banning of the two groups which began the demonstrations. The membership of the two is small, but many Ethiopians feel they have the support of the majority of the students.

Emperor's Reprimand

The Emperor went on the air April 8 to reprimand the students. But the boycotting university students kept calling the younger ones out, and the city's primary and secondary schools were shut down April 10.

Classes have started up once again, and the arrested students have been released, the 30 because there was no evidence against them. The seven leaders were released on bail, but few observers expect them to be tried. They have all been admitted to the university on probation.

Government authorities appear to have been more lenient than they would have been six years ago, when the university was established. New concepts of legality and a new attitude for public opinion have filtered into the Ethiopian system.

There is still neither legal nor loyal opposition here, but some of the authorities seem to recognize that the students are fulfilling some of the opposition's functions.

Others see nothing new. A conservative cabinet minister, asked why the government was so lenient, laughed and said he was not worried by the demonstrations because "I was radical too when I was a student."

Differences Noted

But several observers note a number of differences since he was a student.

One is that demonstrations and violence are increasing.

A second is the reputed role of Eastern European embassies in advising and financing the students. Some Ethiopian officials mention the Soviets, the Bulgarians and the Czechs. Others say this is only "strong rumor" and add that the rumor mentions Americans, too.

Another difference from the old days is the way the students attracted the jobless and the dropouts, Ethiopia's embryonic proletariat. There was apparently no advance planning, but it is something new here when such forces merely converge.

There are other potential opposition forces, probably more important than the students but still affected by them. Many young civil servants with radical pasts of their own gave the students money and advice. One of the big unanswered questions is whether young army officers who might have Nasserist or West African coup leanings are in anything closer than sympathy with the students.

Another force  
Yet another force for change

is Ethiopian separatism, which combines tribalism, religion and historical differences. It has broken surface only in Eritrea, where the Eritrean Liberation Front has been fighting a serious but off-and-on guerrilla war for years. The Eritrean students are reported to be the most radical of the lot, and the only separatist ones. Students from the dominant Amhara people want to keep Ethiopia one and indeed centralize it further while overturning the system.

They don't necessarily want to overturn the emperor. (They stopped throwing rocks and applauded when he toured the riot areas.) They say he is just one individual and it's the system that must be changed. But they will tell a visitor little about how it should be changed or to what.

Some of them say their silence is strategic. Their voices and faces are unconvincing. Others offer a variety of aims from progressive constitutional government under the crown prince to army rule to a worker's democracy. The cleverest say they must not offend the elders "or they will alienate us from society," and indeed the elders of Addis Ababa intervened with the emperor, asking clemency for the students.

But student demands and perhaps student violence have clearly emerged as one of the factors that will determine the future of Ethiopia—if not soon, then at that unmentionable time when Haile Selassie is no longer on the scene. One student leader, asked when he expected his revolution, smiled and said, "not in the emperor's lifetime."

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Moscow Radio Peace and Progress  
13 June 1968

**CIA PLANNED REPRESSION OF ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS**

Ethiopian students learned with anger and indignation that the recent police reprisals against the leaders and active members of the largest student union in Ethiopia were organized by the American CIA. It will be recalled that arrests followed outbursts of hooliganism by several scores of stool pigeons who prevented the holding of a fashion show in the Addis Ababa Haile Selassie I University by Ethiopian, African, and international exhibitors. The stool pigeons were directed by the vice chancellor of the Addis Ababa Haile Selassie I University, James Paul; who is an American and an agent of the CIA.

Using the excuse of restoring order, he called the police out to the university, demanding the arrest of the leaders of the National Union of Addis Ababa University students whom he named as having started the disturbances.