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MEASURES TO FURTHER THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET AGRICULTURE

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SECURITY INFORMATION

Measures to Further the Development of Soviet Agriculture

Foreword

On September 7, 1953, the Central Committee of the CPSU made public a series of measures for raising the output of the agriculture of the USSR. On the surface it might appear that the Kremlin has changed its policy toward producers of agricultural commodities. But a careful reading indicates that there has been no material change in the fundamental policies of the government to control the economy of the USSR. Certain concessions have been made to obtain the temporary cooperation of the collective farm workers during the interim required to make the cadres of the government owned and operated Machine-Tractor Stations and not the collective farmers themselves, the decisive force in agricultural production.

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The keynote of the Decisions on Agriculture passed by the CPSU on September 7, 1953 is found in the following statement.

"When collective farms become BIG DIVERSIFIED ENTERPRISES" and when "the MACHINE-TRACTOR STATIONS become the DECISIVE FORCE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION" both must be strengthened with skilled personnel."

The collective farm system serviced by the Machine-Tractor Stations had failed to come up to the expectations of the Kremlin at the outbreak of World War II. The average standard of living throughout the Soviet Union was lower than that enjoyed under the Tzar's regime immediately preceding World War I. The position of the collective farm system as a source of food for the non-farm population and materials for industry worsened during the war. Although the United States supplied meat products equivalent to the ration of 15 million men under arms, fats and oils nearly equivalent to the quantity processed by the Food Industry of the USSR, and although we shipped to Russia 80 percent of our production of lump sugar, millions of town dwellers and factory workers were unable to obtain even sufficient bread to meet subsistence requirements. Thus, they were forced to cultivate private garden plots to get potatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, and other vegetables to eke out their inadequate food supply. The Soviets were unable to furnish sufficient seed for these gardens and the United States, under Lend Lease, shipped tons of seed to salvage the situation.

Throughout the period 1945 through 1949, the Kremlin made every effort to regain lost ground and to increase agricultural production to the level required to supply the needs of the increasing population. The problem was not only one of production but, more than that, one of procurement of breadgrain, potatoes, meat, fats and oils,

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and other products for distribution to non-producers, and to afford supplies with which to implement economic developments at home and political policies abroad.

The government succeeded more or less in the cases of cotton, sugar, tea, and citrus fruit. They actually did increase the acreages of wheat and rye by cutting down the acreages of barley, oats, and corn. They attempted to bolster up meat, milk, butter and egg supplies by forcing peasant households to sell their privately owned cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens to the collectivized farm economy leaving some 40 odd percent of the households without cattle. But at best, the production of animal products by the collectivized herds was not proportionate to the increase in numbers.

Potato production fell off sharply because the collective farm households were more interested in producing potatoes and vegetables on their own private garden plots for sale on the open market than to work intensively on the collectivized fields, which competed with them on these same markets.

Without going further into detail as to courses, the production and particularly the procurement situation was unsatisfactory for the consumption year 1 July 1949 through 30 June 1950. The controls set up during the war to regulate the collective farm system had got out of hand. The morale of the collective farm householders, who had had hopes that the whole system of collectivization was about to be abandoned, was low and incentive to work on the collectivized fields was feeble.

To facilitate the procurement of farm products and to strengthen its control over the collective farm households, the Kremlin in 1950 rescinded the charter guaranteeing to each collective farm that its boundaries were inviolate and took drastic steps toward consolidating 254,000 farms into a few big farming enterprises - 94,000 as of 1953. It went further than that and took steps toward concentrating

scattered village populations into big, so called, "agrogorods". This meant the

loss to the collective farm households of their ancestral private garden plots.

Unrest was created among the villagers who were already dissatisfied over the loss of their privately owned livestock. The plan of the agrogorod had temporarily to be abandoned.

The government, indeed, had its 94,000 big collective farm enterprises but these were poorly managed. Only 2,400 collective farm chairmen had higher agricultural education and 14,200 had intermediate special education. The discipline of collective farm workers was at low ebb. Even the operations of the government owned Machine-Tractor Stations were unsatisfactory. The overwhelming majority of directors, chief engineers, and chief agronomists of MTS had no higher education. MTS rented to the collectives its tractors, combines, and other machines which were operated inefficiently by the all too poorly trained collective farm workers themselves.

There was little improvement in the general situation during 1951 and 1952. Although favorable weather conditions somewhat increased the production of certain of the field crops, the animal industry situation was bad with the prospect of becoming worse. Against this background the decisions affecting agriculture that were passed by the CPSU on September 7, 1953 were made.

The 94,000 "big diversified enterprises" under the temporary guise of "collective farms" have been pronounced to be the Soviet base for the production of foodstuffs for the population and raw materials for industry. The operation of these big farming enterprises is to be under the control of the Machine-Tractor Stations under the following mandates from CPSU:

- a) Increase yields of crops;
- b) To secure an increase in the commonly owned herds of livestock with a simultaneous rise in productivity;

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- c) Must complete mechanization of field crop production;
- d) To augment the total output and the output for market of farm and livestock products in the collective farms they serve;
- e) To extend the mechanization of labor consuming processes in animal husbandry as well as in the production of potatoes and vegetables;
- f) To introduce into collective farm production the achievements of science and foremost practices;
- g) To insure the further organizational and economic consolidation of collective farms;
- h) To improve the material well being of the collective farmers.

There were 8,950 Machine-Tractor Stations in 1953 or one station to about 10 of the big farming enterprises which with its present setup is spreading the control too thinly to do an effective job. If MTS are to be the decisive force in agricultural production, their numbers and staffs must be increased.

During 1954 and 1955 some 6,500 engineers are to be sent to MTS from industry and technical institutions to become directors and other higher personnel. By the spring of 1954, 100,000 agronomists and zootechnicians are to be attached to the staff of the Machine-Tractor Stations. Tractor drivers, heads of tractor teams and their assistants, as well as combine and excavator operators and their assistants, record keepers and mechanics are to be employed as permanent cadres to perform the actual work of making MTS the decisive force in the agricultural production of the USSR. In addition to the permanent cadres, assistant combine operators and attendants of power drawn agricultural and ditch digging machines are to be employed on a seasonal basis. The Kremlin itself foresees that under this plan it will take from six months to a year or even longer to teach a man to operate power machinery. After being taught the mechanics, it requires two or more years of practical experience in the field to become proficient in the art of farming with power machinery.

The present plan of MTS becoming the vital force in Soviet agriculture can have

little or no effect on the production of 1954 and probably will have little effect on that of 1955 and possibly even of 1956.

As presently organized "the Machine-Tractor Stations are big State Enterprises which do about three-fourths of all agricultural work in the collective farms". Between 1954 through May 1, 1957, not less than 500,000 general purpose tractors - in terms of 15 HP - and 250,000 tractor cultivators as well as the necessary quantity of agricultural machines, motor vehicles, mobile repair shops, containers for oil products and other equipment are to be sent to MTS. The government can, in all probability, supply MTS with this additional equipment. All of this added power will not materially affect the production of grain which at present is more than 90 percent mechanized. The tractor cultivators are designed to take over the cultivation of row crops which at present are largely hand hoed or worked with horse drawn implements. Potatoes on collective farms are to be mechanized 40 to 65 percent in 1957 and 80 to 90 percent in 1955. Between row cultivation of vegetables is to be mechanized 70 percent in 1954 and 80 to 90 percent in 1955. Mechanization will not necessarily increase yields but will greatly reduce the dependence of the State on the collective farm households to perform this work. Hay cutting, now done largely with scythes or horse drawn mowers, is to be 80 percent mechanized by 1955; silaging, 75 percent; lifting root fodder, 90 percent; while gathering and stacking straw is to be mechanized 70 percent by 1955. It is probable that the government can put enough tractors etc. into the field to effect these increases in mechanization but the quality of the work will leave much to be desired. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this extension of mechanization in farm operations will make the State increasingly independent of the collective farm households.

It is interesting that with the exception of the rather optimistic resolution of

CPSU to expand potato acreage by 4,128,500 hectares and vegetables by 1,300,400 hectares in 1954, little is said about acreages. It appears that in increasing production, great reliance is to be placed on increasing yields through better breeds, better and mechanized techniques, and the use of more mineral fertilizer.

The Soviet chemical industry is to provide by the end of 1959, plants with a capacity of 16.5 to 17.5 million metric tons of fertilizers annually. By the end of 1964 this capacity is to be increased to between 28 to 30 million tons. It is the opinion of the Chemicals Branch of Materials Division that some expansion in fertilizer facilities will take place, but that it is highly unlikely that it will approach the magnitude of the expansion envisioned by CPSU. In 1952, M/C estimated the fertilizer production of the USSR at 4,070,000 metric tons of which about 30 percent was applied to cotton; 25 percent to sugarbeets; 11 percent to flax; 4 percent to potatoes and vegetables; and 30 percent to a variety of industrial crops or specialized cultures. No significant quantity of commercial fertilizer was applied to grain. It is possible in the future, if a considerable expansion in the production of commercial fertilizers takes place, that grain may be fertilized. There is at present, however, no basis for appraising the extent to which the USSR can realize its expectations in the production of fertilizer or the direction its utilization will take.

Under Stalin the collective farm household with its private garden plot and its privately owned livestock was at variance with a government controlled economy. The use of pressure to weaken the position of the household economy had not produced the desired results of forcing the peasants to work harder in the collectivized economy. The government requires time to build up its own productive force and cannot disregard the present work potential of the households.

Until the time comes when collective farms are, in fact, BIG DIVERSIFIED

ENTERPRISES on which the Machine-Tractor Stations are the DECISIVE FORCE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, the State will need the productive labor force of the collective farm household not only on the socialized fields and with the flocks and herds of the collective economy, but also on his private garden plot and with his own privately owned livestock.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, therefore, reiterates the right of the collective farm household to retain "its small personal plot to satisfy its consumer needs which cannot be satisfied completely by the communal economy". They forbade "the practice of infringing the interests of collective farmers with regard to livestock in their private possession". They reduced the norms of required deliveries by both the collective farm economy and the collective farm households. In some instances, deliveries of livestock products were relinquished and arrears written off. They increased prices paid for required deliveries and surpluses. They offer bonuses, make advance payments, and have reduced taxes. They have increased the availability of consumer goods.

All these measures are designed as incentives to stimulate the collective farm household to perform more and better work to create an upsurge in production, not only on the socialized fields of the communal economy, but on the private household garden plot as well. They further offer assistance in the organization of markets to facilitate the profitable disposal of any surpluses that the collective farm economy and the collective farm households may produce.

The collective farm worker will probably be stimulated. He responded to the stimulation applied to induce him to grow cotton, sugar beets, tea, and citrus fruit. The degree to which he responds to stimulation cannot be predicted at this time.

It is probable, however, that whatever increase in production may take place during the next year or two, will be due more to the activities of the collective farm household than to the vitalization of the permanent cadres of the MTS. But in the end, under government pressure, the permanent cadres will become more and more of a decisive force in agriculture, leaving to the collective farm household the less important tasks in field crop production and animal industry.

This apparently sudden concern of the Kremlin over lagging agricultural production is not an indication of weakness within the present ruling circles of the Soviet Union. The agricultural problem has become serious since 1928 and has recently become worse. There could be no better time to inaugurate what appear to be "new measures" than at the beginning of the new administration. The leading personalities in the new administration are much the same as those who formulated the policies in the old administration and we believe there has been no fundamental change in these policies. If the various measures outlined above are carried out, they will greatly strengthen the basic Communist policy that has been in existence for the past 35 years and result in the CPSU achieving complete control of the USSR economy.

The government will gradually through MTS take over control of peasant markets and eliminate them as a source of income. Household economy will be weakened and the peasants themselves will become more and more dependent upon the collectivized economy which will sooner or later pay wages in cash. The collective farms themselves will become, in fact, BIG AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES wholly operated by the State. The agrogrod inhabited by a rural proletariat will become a reality. The achievement of this goal will unincumber the Kremlin from the uncertainties of the present existence of a rural capitalistic class and leave the Soviet rulers free to more vigorously than ever to prosecute their struggle with the non-Communist world.

The question as to whether the prosecution of these policies can sufficiently increase production to meet the requirements of the increasing population cannot be answered at this time. Some of the measures are, we believe, realistic and steps in the right direction. Their effectiveness, however, will depend to a large extent upon the ability of the local party units and others in control to understand the multitude of problems that continuously arise. Heretofore, party organizations, as well as MTS, have through lack of understanding, frequently interfered with the efforts of agronomists, veterinarians, and engineers to solve agricultural problems.

The solution of the food and raw material production problems of the Soviet Union would increase its war potential and offer a real danger for the Free World.