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SOVKHOZ RIPPLE

The announcement that another 300 State farms had been established in the Soviet Union during 1959, released on the eve of the Central Committee's special plenary session on agricultural policy problems, is indicative of the regime's pluralistic approach toward an organizational solution of the backward and weak collective farms which have been a chronic feature of Soviet agriculture.<sup>1</sup> It in no wise portends, however, any shift toward "sovkhozization" of collective farms in the determined goal to build communism in the countryside by "lifting cooperative-kolkhoz property to the level of national property."

The problem of backward collectives was institutionally attacked by massive amalgamations within the kolkhoz system from 1950-52, with state farms during 1955-57, and again with other collectives in the past few years. The sale of MTS machinery to the collectives has now become the persuasive rationale for the recent amalgamations as many farms were "too small to operate their acquired machinery efficiently."<sup>2</sup> The average kolkhoz now has about 2700 hectares arable land, compared to 8.400 hectares for the state farms.

Are there any political implications in the sudden spurt in the number of sovkhozy? Is it a regional phenomenon? The Tass communiqué, following the secretive pattern of the press on amalgamations, did not locate the areas of activity. Some revealing clues, however, come from several of the less important republics. In a speech before the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian republic, the finance minister admitted that 82 state farms had been created out of collectives during 1959.<sup>3</sup> In Byelorussia, 90 new sovkhozy were recently set up and 79 were further augmented, according to Gurov, first secretary of the CC,<sup>4</sup> who indicated the program could be pushed still further. No other reports are at hand - perhaps the December plenum may provide more clues. It appears obvious, however, that if the tiny Lithuanian republic provided 27 percent of all the new sovkhozy during 1959, and along with an estimated Byelorussian share of 55, these comparatively backward republics furnished almost half of the new sovkhozy (45%)! The Planovoye Khozyaistvo article lists the north and northwestern

<sup>1</sup>Tass, 9 December 1959.

<sup>2</sup>Planovoye Khozyaistvo, No. 10, 1959, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Tiesa, 28 November 1959.

<sup>4</sup>Radio Minsk, 15 January 1959.

regions of the country, where because of low fertility and fragmentation of land holdings, as the most logical and urgent areas for amalgamations. In the low income regions the private plot is the dominant source of livelihood for the collective farm families. By "sovkhozing" such collectives, the personal holdings would be sharply cut back so the peasants could then devote more time to communal work. This is one of the cores of Khrushchev's policy. Resettlement to the eastern lands would also be hastened.

On balance, it seems apparent the sudden rise in the number of state farms this year is largely localized in the northwestern areas poorly endowed in resources and where the resistance to collectivization has been most sustained. The overall output of these collective farms, when their private plots are included in the aggregate, was considerably higher and more efficient than in the state farms. These areas are not adapted to routinized farm operations (as grain growing in Kazakhstan,) and "sovkhozization" is not the remedy for the backwardness.

CZ

NUMBER OF STATE FARMS

End of	1950	4988
	1952	4742
	1953	4857
	1954	4874
	1955	5134
	1956	5099
	1957	5905
	1958	6000
	1959	6300

Sources: SSSR v tsifrakh, 1958  
Narodnoye Khozyaistvo v 1957  
Tass, 9 December 1959 (1959)  
Sovkhoznoe Proizvodstvo, 2, 1959 (1958)