

MAIN DIFFERENCES

MUNICH, 1 December 1969 (Communist Area Analysis Dept.: cz)

On 27 November the delegates to the Third All-Union Kolkhoz Congress approved the model charter for collective farms at the end of the three-day session. On the following day a joint decree of the CC, CPSU, and the USSR Council of Ministers ratified the document that regulates the activities of the 35,600 agricultural collectives in the Soviet Union, comprising 15.1 million kolkhoz households with 22% of the total population, as reported in the 30 November 1969 issue of Pravda.

The final approved document is called "The Model Charter of a Collective Farm," differing from the 1935 law in that the term "agricultural artel" is dropped.

This preliminary comparison between the approved charter and the draft model of 23 April 1969 is based on an analysis of the 12 chapters and 61 articles that comprise both the draft session and the final law. In the period of public discussion that followed the appearance of the draft model charter, officially given as scores of thousands of meetings, one could look forward to considerable changes and amendments. Alas, there are not many changes, again indicating the rigidity of the procedure which a Soviet commission follows in drawing up a document. But changes there are -- a few -- and of decided importance.

Perhaps the biggest break the final charter made with the draft is one with political overtones. It dealt with the whole new concept of the "Master of the Land" issue. There was a strong feeling for the mechanized team system in which the same group of mechanizers/workers farmed a stipulated area of kolkhoz land attached to their mechanized labor unit for a period of years, in order to maximize output and incentives. The draft charter clearly stated these stipulations with the choice of a brigade, link, team or other subdivision left to the choice of the kolkhoz. But the right to operate a designated area of cropland over a period of years was explicit in the draft form.

(pto)

The final form omits the right of a labor unit to operate an assigned hectareage for a designated time period. This change is clearly a victory for the hard-liners in the Ministry of Agriculture and the 149-man Charter Committee who used to argue that a long tenure might inculcate property feelings in the teams, "a private plot approach." This change seriously impairs the value of the "Master of the Land" approach, in that team members will not take extra care of the soil operations to insure long, stable yields on fields they themselves are responsible for (Article 26).

On the practice of kolkhoz democracy, the new charter fails to spell out whether secret balloting will be the means of settling issues or voting for farm officials, but simply states that "simple majorities" will determine decisions of the "final authority" of kolkhoz power -- the general meeting -- which is now to be convened at least four times a year. The issue of presenting a slate of candidates to the electorate is also ignored in the new law.

An improvement registered in the final document is the creation of a central fund for social security benefits to collective farmers assessed on the farms so as to have a uniform system of payments. Thus poor farms can distribute the same welfare payments as well-to-do farms.

On the right to private plots there were no significant changes, although the Commission avoided the kolkhoz family/household controversy. They managed to combine them. It now reads "the kolkhoz family (household) may have possession of a house, building, productive livestock, etc." The precise wording follows:

Private Plots

1935 Charter

"may vary from 1/4 hectare to 1/2 hectare (exclusive of the size of the house) and, in some cases, up to one hectare according to local conditions."

New Charter

"may be had for uses as a garden, orchard, or both purposes up to 0.50 hectares, including land occupied by buildings, and on irrigated farms up to 0.20 hectares."

[emphasis supplied]

(more)



MAIN DIFFERENCES

The final authority on the precise size of the plots will lie with the general assembly of the farm. The number of family/household members engaged in work in the public sector will determine the size. The livestock comparisons shape up as follows for each family/household:

<u>1935 Charter</u>	<u>New Charter</u>
General farm regions	1 cow w/calf to 1 year and 1 head to 2 years
1 cow w/2 calves and 1 sow w/suckling pigs	
OR	
2 sows w/suckling pigs 10 sheep or goats	1 sow w/suckling pigs to 3 months or 2 pigs on fattening 10 sheep or goats, and poultry, rabbits, hives
any amount of poultry, rabbits, hives	

There is no improvement registered after 34 years in livestock. In fact, there is a distinct regression: the number of breeding females is reduced and since they are the source of reproductive accumulation it follows there will be fewer offspring. Only the respective Union republic Council of Ministers has the authority to decide which classes of livestock may be substituted with another. The kolkhoz assembly, however, has the right to determine the size of the livestock herd based on the number of family members working in the public sector of the farm. This is a new feature.

One final original addition is the right of the general assembly to discharge any elected official who has lost the confidence of the members.

A more complete analysis of the new charter will be forthcoming.