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SOVIET GRAIN HARVEST (III)

The Soviet grain harvest this year will be considerably below the all-time record yield of 1958.¹ This is the projection of Khrushchev's remarks on the subject made in a speech at a provincial station, Veschenskaya, Rostov oblast, in the north Caucasus, August 30th.² His presence at the way station was occasioned by a visit to the writer Sholokhov.

Khrushchev admitted that in such strategic grain areas as Stavropol, Stalingrad, Saratov, Rostov oblasts prolonged drought had cut grain yields "considerably" and that procurements would be similarly affected. In the Ukraine also, the first Secretary reported that drought in some areas had reduced yields and procurements. This substantiated the documented account of the drop in procurement made in Background Information, 11 August 1959, "Harvest/Power Image", or specifically a 26% reduction in this year's deliveries over 1958.

The indicated output on the virgin lands would equal last year's good harvest, Khrushchev indicated. This squares with field accounts in Kazakhstan and western Siberia, but not in the Altai or Krasnoyarsk oblast where average yields are apparently below normal.

The estimates apply to small grains: wheat, barley, rye, oats. Corn was not specified, but its performance will have a crucial bearing on the aggregate harvest exactly as it had in 1958 because of its weighted influence on the total. But the really significant deduction from the drought reports is that they are localized in winter wheat areas, which are also natural corn regions. Thus if the winter wheat regions were badly hit by drought it follows that the corn crop was also harmed, as the dry weather occurred during the spring and summer growing season. (Corn is planted late in May and June).

Once again the near black-out on crop conditions during the growing season is strikingly evident. Only scattered references to unfavorable weather in localized areas appeared in the Soviet press; the fine type of the weather reports in Selskoye Khozyaistvo carried negative accounts but one had to conduct an audit to arrive at any meaningful conclusion.

The decision this summer to abolish the ownership of private livestock in the cities in an effort to save grain resources, particularly in the southern areas, now appears

¹ The official claim was 139 million tons harvested in 1958, of which 57 million were delivered to the State.

² Radio Moscow, 31 August 1959.

³ 552 million poods grain were turned over to the State in 1958, while this year the total deliveries would amount to 450 million poods.

logical in sequence and substance.

It is still too early to estimate with any precision the volume of the grain crop. This will be a regular exercise as the season and data mature. The pre-season forecast of 115 million tons dry grain made in Background Information, 23 May 1959, "Soviet Grain Crop Forecast 1959" appears, to date, as in line. One issue is certain, however, no forward progress will be made toward Khrushchev's goal of 164-180 million tons grain by 1965.

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