

MUNICH, 6 March 1962 (Research and Evaluation - cz)

After eight years of Khrushchevian agrarian reforms, the First Secretary and Chairman of the Council of Ministers spelled out at the March 5 plenum, at near encyclopedical length, the massive shortcomings in Soviet agriculture. This was delivered within the context of an ominous warning:

"Why are the Party and Soviet people seriously alarmed at the state of affairs in agriculture?"

"The demands on agriculture have changed...we are not talking of increasing output by several percent. Now we are talking about doubling or trebling output of important agricultural products within a short period of time. We have been striving for 40 years to attain the present level of production. Now, we must do twice or three times as much, not in 40 years, but in several years. This is demanded by the building of communism. This is life. If we fail to fulfill this task, our country will face great difficulties and serious harm will be inflicted on the cause of building communism."

Last year in 17 formal speeches on agricultural problems, Khrushchev outlined in great and repetitious detail his proposals for the improvement of the agricultural economy: the fallow-grasslands issue, incentives for farm workers, technological innovations, cadre management, and a host of others. These familiar furrows were again followed on March 5, but the climax of Khrushchev's five-hour harangue concerned a wholly new innovation: the establishment of another party-administrated agency that would control all farm production on the collective and state farms of the Soviet Union. This has turned out to be the great issue of the session in keeping with the title of Khrushchev's speech: "...The Party's Tasks in Improving the Management of Agriculture." On top of the existing pyramid of party and state agencies at local levels (which in some raions number 15 operating agencies) a Farm Production Administration will be set up. Unlike all previous administrative organs in agriculture, it will work directly in management of collective and state farms.

"We have many people working in the directing bodies, but nobody directly supervises collective and state farms and the organization of production in them."

In those areas where collective farms are dominant the agency would be called the "Kolkhoz Farm Production Administration"; where state farms are in the majority it would be known as the "Sovkhoz Farm Production Administration."

The main task of these agencies, Khrushchev ruled, would be the planning, accounting, and effecting the organization of production on each collective and state farm. To finalize the issue, he added: "It is impossible to manage agriculture without this." Cadre selection and training, and the introduction of people with advanced experience on farms would be another direct responsibility.¹

The foregoing proposals are in violation of the March 1955 CC decree for decentralization of farm planning, whereby the sole responsibility in planning was to be lodged in the kolkhoz members and their managing boards. To circumvent this contradiction, Khrushchev proposes a "democratic basis" for the new agency by way of a governing board with a chairman of the council of Production Administration,

"which will include the most experienced leaders of collective farms, directors of state farms, and specialists, and probably the secretary of the district party committee and chairman of the district executive committee"²

and two or three instructors who would help the party organization "to mobilize the masses in fulfilling production plans." This automatically places the key personnel in the "nomenklatura" of the republic or obkom levels -- which indicates the leading role the new organization will play in party ranks and ratings.

To tie up the organization more closely with the operative center, Khrushchev proposes to set up committees to direct agriculture, in the country as a whole, in the republics, and in the

¹ In the complete monitoring report, additional tasks of the new agency include: responsibility for procurements of farm products; plan and management of all farm production processes. (Moscow Home Service, 6 March 1962)

² In the second speech of the plenum (note the order of precedence), Presidium member and agriculture specialist G. I. Voronov suggested that each Farm Production Administration would cover 5 to 10 raions, depending on local conditions, and that the RSFSR would organize 382, or about 1 agency for 5½ raions. (Moscow Home Service, 6 March 1962)

regions. In a union republic, for instance, the committee should be headed by the first secretary of the CC of the CP of the republic.

"Then they will not be able to explain failures in some sector of agriculture in a republic or region by saying that the secretary in charge of agriculture somehow missed the matter, while the CC or the regional committee did overlook it."

The Agricultural Management Committee for the Soviet Union as a whole is to be headed by a vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers (Voronov?). Its task will be to organize day-by-day verification of fulfillment of the decisions of the party. It will have the right to settle such important questions as orders to industry, plans for the production of farm machinery, tractors, and requirements of agriculture. Even the agricultural department of the CC of the CPSU is to be reorganized so as "to exercise the functions of party control over the work of the newly established bodies."

Perhaps the most plausible part of the administrative-reorganizational proposal was Khrushchev's caveat that the policy

"may fail to yield desirable results, if the party does not concentrate its attention on the questions of material and technical assistance to agriculture, if the material interest of the collective and state farms in increasing the output of grain, meat, and milk and other products is undermined."

This means more capital investment in agriculture.

There is a sleeper clause in the proposals establishing the authority of the Farm Production Administrations for overall production processes in agriculture in that "the final decision should be made by the leaders of collective and state farms. If this rests with an inspector, we shall undermine the responsibility of farm personnel and disorganize agricultural production," Khrushchev concluded.

On balance, there may be some outward resemblance of the kolkhoz (or sovkhoz) Farm Production Administration to the old Kolkhoz-Unions. The Kolkhoz Union issue appeared during the 1959-60 plenums on agriculture, but were abruptly scuttled as they presented a threat to the party's rule over agriculture. Rather