

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

## COMMUNIST AREA

- USSR: Agriculture  
27 October 1965

### THE UKRAINIAN GRAIN BONANZA

#### A Study in Stagnation

Of the three major granaries in the Soviet Union -- the Ukraine, southeastern European Russia, and the eastern Virgin Lands -- only the Ukraine has come through with a fairly good harvest this year. Particularly at a time when the Kremlin was forced to turn to the western world for the second time in three years to import over 9 million tons of wheat for the 1965/66 trade year, this is no mean achievement and redounds to the credit of the Ukrainian party apparatus. "Nothing succeeds like a good harvest" has long been a common slogan among ambitious apparatchiki.

Accordingly, the First secretary of the Ukrainian C.P., Pyotr Shelest, was awarded the distinction of a two page feature spread in Pravda (15 October) under the lead "Communists of the Ukraine in the struggle for the upsurge in agriculture." He made effective use of this pride of place reserved for performing party bosses.

Shelest reported that the majority of state and collective farms in the Ukraine had a good grain harvest this year which permitted prefulfillment of the delivery plan. By October 10, 10,077,000 tons of grain had been sold to the state compared to 9,450,000 tons as planned. Of this figure, wheat accounted for 6,821,000 tons, or about fifty percent more than last year. The sales of the cereal crops, buckwheat and millet, reached 356,000 tons.

One crucial fact that Shelest failed to mention partially made this harvest possible: the Ukrainian Statistical Administration reported in its half-year economic report that the area seeded to both winter and spring wheat reached 7,8 million hectares, or 25 percent greater than the previous

year.<sup>1</sup> Thus the wheat hectarage was sharply increased at the expense of other crops, corn in particular.

An unusual admission at this time of the year was Shelest's estimate of the total Ukrainian harvest for all grains for this year at a maximum of 1.8 billion poods, or 29.5 million tons.

By contrast, the 7 Year Plan called for a total production of 36.1 million tons of grain by 1965 with sales to the state at 11.4 million tons.<sup>2</sup> This represents a 19 percent shortfall of the production plan.

Using the Shelest output data, it is now possible to project this year's average yields for 1964-65 and arrive at a comparison with other years to assess the 1965 harvest. In the final analysis, it is the yield per hectare times the area that is the determining equation in grain farming. Yields, however, determine efficiency and profitability.

Grain Yields, Ukraine  
(Quintals per hectare  
in official, not adjusted, terms)

1965	15.9
1964	16.1
1963	12.9
1962	17.9
1961	19.2
1960	15.9
1959-63 average	16.5

Narkhoz 1963, pp 214-5; SSSR 1964, p 74.

Thus, the 1965 harvest was no record performance. In fact it was a little less than the 5 year average of 1959-63 and constituted just about an average harvest for the Ukraine. The 7 Year plan had called for a yield of 19 to 20 quintals on 18 million hectares of grainland by 1965.<sup>3</sup> So the additional outlays for fertilizer, machinery, and other factor inputs, along with the organizational changes in the structure of Ukrainian agriculture since 1958, have failed to provide the conditions for the fulfillment of the agricultural goals. These average grain yield dynamics are the decisive indicators of progress in agriculture--not deliveries to the state. They show in reality stagnation in Ukrainian agriculture.

1) Pravda Ukrainy, 28 July 1965.

2) Podgorny's speech at Central Committee's farm plenum, 16 December 1958. The plan envisaged reduced deliveries for the Ukraine, because of its ambitious livestock program, whereas the Virgin Lands and the RSFSR were to supply the major share of marketable grain.

3) Podgorny at Farm Plenum, 23 December 1959.

Shelst could have used the dialectic approach in his article. It ought have been headed "Communists of the Ukraine in the struggle against stagnating yields." But then again, an average good harvest is far better than the poor harvests posted this year in the two other granaries of the USSR, the RSFSR and the Virgin Lands. If one region fails the country can manage, if two regions fail -- as happened this year -- heavy imports of grain are in order.

CZ