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The pre-plenum discussions in the press are designed to prepare the seed-bed for the crop of proposals and decisions of the CC, CPSU, on the overt theme of the session "to improve the management of agriculture." Although Khrushchev called for a "radical reorganization of our agriculture" at the post-Congress regional agricultural meetings during the winter, there have been no extreme measures presented apart from his own inspired anti-grasslands campaign. With this exception, if fully implemented, there is not much likelihood that any radical change will be instituted in the overall structural and functional model of Soviet agriculture. The last series of revolutionary innovations were introduced four years ago: the 1958 MTS take-over by the collective farms, the introduction of a unified higher price schedule for farm products, and the abolition of compulsory deliveries in favor of a direct purchase system of products of the farms. Since then the Kremlin has adopted a^{more} cautious and conciliatory policy toward its peasantry.

One record harvest does not solve the recurrent farm problem in Russia, Khrushchev has learned. Following the third consecutive year of failure to meet the ambitious production plans of the seven-year plan, an 8 percent planned rise each year compared with the average of 1.4 percent actual growth in annual output, a "Time of Troubles" has descended on the already chronically plagued under-productive agricultural economy whose solution, in Khrushchev's words, requires a revolutionary reorganization.

What harvest, other than a hortatory and propagandistic one, can be anticipated from the March 5 plenary session of the Central Committee, with the largest membership in Soviet history of 175 full members and 155 candidate members? The emphasis, most likely will be on processes rather than policy: on changes in the cropping structure, efforts to create multi-level incomes by way of supplementary payments to farm workers, on granting greater responsibility to local farm managements

in the planning and administration of production problems. In the area of institutional changes, however, no vital reorganization seems forthcoming. The Procurements Committee, perhaps the most hated of Soviet rural authorities, will undoubtedly be changed, perhaps eliminated, on the state farms. With the kolkhozy, on the other hand, there can be no lifting of procurements control; perhaps the apparatus may be merged into existing inter-kolkhoz associations which now extend virtually into all collectives. On the crucial private plots front, there will be no punitive action -- such pressure comes only after record harvests.

The main thrust will be on two fronts: grasslands and incentives. Given to the spectacular when faced with persevering problems, Khrushchev resorts to dramatic innovations whenever possible. He has ordered the plowing up of large areas formerly planted to grass, oats, rotational fallowland, for seeding now to row crops: corn, peas, fodder, beans, and sugar beets. The object is to expand the area planted to grains and fodder crops -- mainly to provide more feed for the lagging livestock program. Just how many of the 64 million hectares will be seeded down to row crops this year is an object of the meeting. For 10 million additional hectares to be plowed, prepared and seeded down is a massive undertaking that calls for heavier demands for machines, mechanizers, seed, fuel, fertilizer. Row crops are the most costly of the cultivated plants in agriculture, and unlike grasslands, have exact fertility requirements to ensure normal growth. While the fertilizer shortage remains acute and the time is short, Khrushchev will drive home the need to mobilize the party and state organs to supervise and carry out the expanded cropping area. Just a 10 percent expansion in the seeded grain area will require, in many areas, a 15 percent marginal input of men, machines, and seed. (There are slightly more than one million tractors operating in Soviet agriculture). Clearly the grasslands plow-up represents a big operation in logistics and organizational procedures and Khrushchev is mobilizing party resources to command the offensive.

The crisis in incentives among farm workers will again be formally faced, but as with previous plenums no solid solution can be forthcoming. Kolkhoz incomes have remained static since 1958, and with the diminution of income resulting from pressure on the private plots, net farm income has actually decreased since 1958. First Secretary Podgorny of the Ukraine reported good results last year with a modified share cropping system, whereby workers were paid in farm produce for their share of a crop which met the planned output. Kazakhstan also instituted this policy last year, but the harvest failure precluded any sharing of the crop. A recent Kommunist (No. 2, 1962) account supports the trend that peasants ought not to have "to buy their own products from the farms" as happens under the all-cash wage schedule for advanced kolkhozy.

The prolonged struggle of the Soviet regime against its peasantry indicates that reorganizations and applied technology are not enough to bring about abundant yields in farm output to meet the demands of the growing Soviet consumers. Vast capital and human inputs are necessary to improve peasant incomes and boost output. Of the former there is a chronic scarcity, on which the latter depends. In the final analysis, Khrushchev just doesn't have the resources to lift his agriculture out of the doldrums. No amount of oratory, decisions, cajoling can take the place of sound economic and social theory and practice.

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