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H HUNGARIAN COLLECTIVE FARM SITUATION

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News Background

MUNICH, June 13 (LEASON)...The number of effective Hungarian collective farms fell in January, this year to 1,467 from a pre-revolution total of about five thousand. The number is now back up to 3,490 as of the first of May, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mihaly KERESZTES claims.

But while the ratio in number of collectives is about at the two-thirds mark, the arable area farmed by the collectives is still only about one half of what it was before October. The minister said collectives now over 11.8 per cent of Hungary's arable land, whereas this figure was 22.4 before the October revolution. This would seem to indicate that the larger -- and probably better -- collectives broken up during the revolution have still not been re-formed.

Besides citing a number of statistics, the main point of KERESZTES' press interview, carried yesterday by the Hungarian news agency MTI, seemed to be that the situation in the remaining collectives must be stabilized.

Thus, he said, "unhealthy aspirations" which cause "unduly extensive husbandry" to the detriment of "development of the collective farm" must be removed. That is, people are spending too much time on their private plots.

By November 1, "at the latest", "household livestock must be taken into the co-operatives. Assets taken away from the collective farms must be returned or paid for as soon as possible."

KERESZTES was presumably referring to the fact that during October and November, peasants appropriated machinery or livestock which was under collective control and now call it their own.

Despite the deputy agriculture minister's efforts to juggle figures, it appears that only some 1,200 -- if that -- of Hungary's collective farms are operating at any sort of efficiency:

At the time of the January low-point, 742 of the 1,467 functioning collectives had been able "politically, economically and organizationally" to resist the "counter-revolution" and these "at the moment" are in a "rather favorable position". The other 725, however, suffered "severe losses".