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30 Mar
III/332 E.G.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

TRADE

Foreign

Legal

Russia and Satellites

Consumer Goods

Treaties

40,000 Tons Of Potatoes From CSR.

SOURCE BERLIN: Confidential source

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 10 March 1954

EVAL. COMMENT: An article in "Rude pravo" of 7 March 1954, page 3, dealing with the CSR-DDR trade agreement signed on 6 March 1954 did not speak of the export of potatoes to DDR for the obvious reason that there is a shortage of potatoes in CSR. However, RFE Item Nos. 07153 and 07817/53 referred to the export of CSR foodstuffs to DDR. These reports dealt with the situation before this new agreement was signed, but it is believed that the volume of the new agreement is almost identical with the previous one, only the amount of the goods to be exchanged between the two countries may have been increased for 1954. Attention "East Germany" desk.

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Under the terms of a special trade agreement, the CSR has agreed to export 40,000 tons of potatoes to the DDR during the first half of 1954. The East German Ministry of Agriculture has made provisions in the meantime to channel these potatoes to farm collectives which, like private and state farms, already began suffering from a shortage of seed and other potatoes.

The East German Academy of Agricultural Science recently stated in an internal publication that the shortage of potatoes in the DDR exceeds 635,000 tons.

Late in February, the Ministry of Agriculture recommended that factory kitchens be directed to assort seed potatoes from those on stock for feeding employees. The assorted potatoes are to be turned over to the BHG (Bauerliche Handelsgenossenschaft - Farmers' Trade Cooperations.) An official of the East German Ministry said today that this recommendation was made too late since a number of factory kitchens ran out of potatoes as early as in January. Since that time kitchens have been using noodles, beans, peas and other foods as substitutes for potatoes.

Over

Reports flocking into the Ministry of Agriculture indicate that large quantities of potatoes were badly affected by the severe cold during January and February, when the ground froze up to 80 centimeters below level. Moreover, last fall Communist weather prophets forecasted a rather mild winter. This forecast plus a general shortage of straw is now considered responsible for the fact that farmers did not bother or were in no position to store their potatoes under a thick cover of straw and earth during last winter.

On the other hand, a number of farmers filed complaints at the Ministry of Agriculture because controlling SED functionaries had forced them to open their potato stacks for inspection during the period of severe cold.

Records of the Ministry of Agriculture show that the DDR has only 60 percent of the oil seeds and only 70 percent of the seed potatoes needed to meet plans for spring planting. The quantities of seeds available for summer planting are also insufficient.

End.