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KHRUSHCHEV AND THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNE (V)

Continued Amalgamation of Collective Farms

One of the most meaningful statistical indices providing a measure of the rate of social change in the Soviet countryside is the steadily decreasing number of kolkhozy. The process of amalgamation, generally associated with the person of N.S. Khrushchev, has, as the following table shows, actually been a consistent feature of Soviet agricultural policy since 1950/51; in the post-Stalin period when this policy has been directed exclusively by the First Secretary the rate of consolidation has reached a new high immediately after the dissolution of the MTS.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Collectives of all types including fishery and craft</u>	<u>Agricultural Collectives</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
1953	93.3	91.2	- 1.1
1954	89.0	87.1	- 4.1
1955	87.5	85.7	- 1.4
1956	84.8	83.0	- 2.7
1957	84.8*	78.9**	- 4.1
1958 (May)		72.0†	- 6.9
1958 (September)		69.2††	- 2.8

(figures in thousands)

22.0 = 24%

Narodnoye Khozyaistvo SSR, 1956 Godu, Moscow, 1957, p. 106.

* Selskoye Khozyaistvo, 15 September 1957.

** Pravda, 13 October 1957.

+ Ekonomika Selskovo Khozyaistva, #3, 1958. p. 15

†† Radio Moscow, 13 September 1958.

Less than a month ago Izvestia (17 August 1958) resurrected the following quotation from one of Khrushchev's major speeches in the 1950/51 drive to create agrogoroda, demonstrating again the unchanged objectives of the uninterrupted amalgamation:

"Construction in the kolkhozy has a great political and economic significance. The creation of new settlements and commercial centers of the artels will make it possible to raise further agricultural production, to bring the daily life of the kolhozники closer to the conditions of city life ... All this corresponds to the wishes of the broad masses of the men and women collective farmers. It is a matter of improving their cultural and living conditions."¹

¹ See Background Information, 26 August 1958.

A most authoritative interpretation of this same socio-economic task has recently been presented by P. Fedoseyev, currently one of the leading ideological defenders of Khrushchev's views on the question of collective-cooperative vs State property. In his portrayal of a future Communist society the long promised "elimination of differences" between urban-industrial life and rural-agricultural society will be achieved more rapidly by the process which continues to be reflected in the decline in numbers and increase in size of the collective farms:

"The further building of enterprises and urban settlements must take the form of creating in the agricultural regions new industrial centers (ochagi), destined to change their rural appearance...The future of the socialist village lies in the steady approach of agricultural work to industrial work and cultural and living conditions of the rural population to the living conditions in towns... For the purpose of bringing together the living conditions of the agricultural and non-agricultural population ... it is possible systematically and in a large scale to enroll urban workers and employees in agriculture, and kolkhozniks -- in industrial work. In future the periodic change of the kind of employment will be one of the forms of educating all-round developed people. The most important consequence of developing the socialist way of production in the period of transition to Communism will be the change in the family life (domashniy byt), the attainment of the full factual equality of women, their liberation from the burden of the small-scale housekeeping. The necessary conditions for this will be created by way of expanding the network of public canteens, laundries, crèches and kindergartens, establishments for everyday repairs and other services."²

The similarity between these ultimate aims and those now being proclaimed in China with more militant propaganda³ and ideological fervor is unmistakable. Starting from an entirely different economic base Mao has developed the ideological premises of the people's communes as the "basic unit of the future communist society"; representing a far more advanced stage of economic development, the amalgamated kolkhozy in the Soviet Union, for Khrushchev as well as for Stalin, have been considered a transitional organizational form on the road to the agricultural communes. As already indicated in the literary press⁴ the amalgamation of the collective farms may soon be followed by the creation of "voluntary unions of collective farms"-kolkhozsoyuzy- as the agricultural complement to Khrushchev's industrial reorganization. The goal of this new type "voluntary association" is the same as that sought through terror for more than a quarter of a century: tightened state control of agriculture within the framework of a completely planned economy. It could hardly be stated more clearly than in the words of the writer who forecast the MTS reform last November:

"It is precisely the creation of a single kolkhoz-cooperative system which will make the task of state control of the kolkhozes easier, would create far more favorable conditions for production unification between city and village...We have now

² P. Fedoseyev: The Development of Relations of Production in the Period of Transition to Communism, Kommunist, #9, (June), 1958, pp. 22-23.

³ See Background Information, 6 September 1958.

⁴ Oktyabr, #6, 1958; see also Background Information, 30 July 1958.

organized councils of national economy, but so far they direct industry only. Why not create unions of kolkhozes on the scale of economic regions and, linking their work in with that of the economic councils, thus create a single system for directing the entire national economy of the nation?"⁵

In China 500 million peasant "blue ants" are scurrying frantically into the peoples' communes "organized along military lines" on command of Mao Tse-tung; in the Soviet Union slightly more than 80 million kolkhozniki are trudging much more slowly towards another variation of a mixed agricultural-industrial society according to the blueprint of the architect of the agrogorod-agricultural commune, Nikita Khrushchev. For the former muzhiki and present coolies the road to communism, as seen from Moscow or Peking, may have different grades and varying numbers of curves; its ultimate direction and their destination are the same.

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⁵ Ibid. p. 138