

Agriculture

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KHRUSHCHEV AND THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNE III
Mao Learns from Khrushchev

It is not yet mandatory for the writers of Soviet editorials to include an appropriate quotation from the speeches of N.S. Khrushchev in their daily exhortations for better performances in all fields of endeavour from growing corn to the extraction of coal and iron. Nevertheless, at least a single reference to one of Khrushchev's pronouncements has become a standard practice, particularly in those areas in which he has concentrated his efforts. Although most of these citations are entirely routine, their frequency and range, from Pravda and Izvestia to Voprossy Filosofii and Voprossy Ekonomiki, coupled with the nearly total absence of any other source except Lenin, represent one of the more exact measurements of Khrushchev's complete domination of the Soviet political scene.

A particularly interesting and rare example of drawing upon the wisdom of the "early" Khrushchev i.e., pre 1953 is furnished by an Izvestia editorial dealing with construction problems in the kolkhoz villages.¹ In an otherwise stereotyped appeal for improving the living conditions in the countryside the following paragraph appears:

"In 1951 speaking at a conference on construction and public services in the collective farms of Moscow oblast, Comrade N.S. Khrushchev said:

'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 kolkhozniki 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.'

From the year and the content of this excerpt, the exact identification of the source of this statement can be made. The missing words may be found in the text of the most significant political article written by N.S. Khrushchev after his appointment to the Secretariat of the Central Committee in December 1949 and prior to the XIX Party Congress in October 1952. The sentence omitted was the following:

"In place of small villages there will appear, large, well-furnished collective farm settlements with schools,

¹17 August 1958.

clubs, bathing facilities, houses of rural culture, kindergartens, and other cultural and communal facilities."²

This article, representing the high point of Khrushchev's identification as spokesman and driving force in the 1950/51 campaign for the forced amalgamation of the 252,000 collective farms, and formation of agrotowns, was practically a reprint of a speech made on 18 January.³ It was transformed within a day into a serious "defeat" by the publication of the following correction in Pravda:

"Through an oversight of the editorial staff, in printing in yesterday's Pravda, the article of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev 'On Construction and Public Services in the Kolkhozes' an editorial note was omitted in which it was stated that Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's article was published as material for discussion. The present statement corrects this error." ⁴

Since the three papers which had printed Khrushchev's article had all committed exactly the same error,⁵ there can be little doubt that the decision to distance the Party leadership from the agrotown scheme had been taken at the highest level. The command to put an end to the grandiose plans for rural reconstruction, however, did not stop the process of amalgamation which has continued down to the present. Of the 252,000 collective farms in existence in 1950 only 72,000 still remain.⁶

² N.S. Khrushchev: Concerning Construction and Public Services in the Kolkhozy, Pravda, 4 March 1958.

³ B. Nicolaevsky: Chruschtschew erlitt eine Niederlage, Ost Probleme, 1951, p. 646; also Harry Schwartz, New York Times, 11 March 1951. It is interesting to note that 7 years ago, as today, Khrushchev's speeches also appeared in print after considerable delay. Thus, his report to the Moscow Plenum on 20 December 1950 was not published in full text until February 8, 1951 and then only in Selskoye Khozyaistvo (Schwartz, *ibid*); Moskovskaya Pravda, 7 February 1951 reprinted excerpts a day earlier.

⁴ Pravda, 5 March 1951.

⁵ B. Nicolaevsky, *ibid.*, p. 647. After 5 March neither the central press, nor Moskovskaya Pravda, the organ of Khrushchev's Moscow Committee, dealt with the agrotowns. In contrast to the 10 public speeches listed by Khrushchev in January and February, the most of any Politburo member, the Moscow Secretary disappeared almost completely from public view in March and April, not even being listed at the Conference of the Moscow City Committee on 31 March.

⁶ Ekonomika Selskogo Khozyaistva, No. 3, 1958; see Background Information 30 July 1958; also Background Information, 17 October 1957.

The quotation from the article that marked Khrushchev's fall from grace provides the link between the idea abandoned then and now being revived by Stalin's successor. In 1951 Khrushchev cited Stalin's picture of the commune as the prototype of the highest form of agricultural artel of the future; in 1958 Khrushchev's native Kalinovka has met many of the prerequisites for this mixed industrial-agricultural economy (plan-processing)⁷.
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From the other extreme of the Soviet bloc, however, a challenge to Khrushchev's claim as the architect of the Communist commune has unexpectedly appeared. Although China is a quarter of a century behind the Soviet Union in the collectivization of its agriculture, the propagation of the commune has taken the following advanced form:

"Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said that we should, step by step, and in good order, organize 'industry, agriculture commerce (exchange), culture and education, the military forces (the militia, the armed forces of the whole people)' into big communes to form the basic units of our society. Now some places are beginning to merge cooperatives into bigger ones to meet the objective needs of the great leap forward. This merger follows the guiding ideas of Comrade Mao Tse-tung. Some agricultural cooperatives, since merging, have bought tractors, motor cars and new farm tools, and have sponsored factories, power stations, broadcasting centres, middle schools, hospitals, clubs and canteens. Specialized departments for industry, communications, water conservancy, technique, culture and public health have been added to the leading organs of some cooperatives. There has been an unprecedented upsurge of enthusiasm for socialist construction among the masses, particularly during the great leap forward in agriculture. Masses of activists, experts devoted to socialist construction have begun to form. They are not only the backbone in carrying out the Party's general line and in building up socialism, but also the main factor in leading forward the 500 m. peasants from pure physical labor to the higher stage of communism, in which physical and mental labor are combined. All these new people and these new events, emerging under the brilliance of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's ideas, represent the great aspirations of the 500 m. peasants to build socialism rapidly in the country and to march towards Communism."⁸

The contrast between this flaming tribute to Mao's talents for combining theory and practise in the future construction of Communism in China and the indirect reminder of Khrushchev's major contribution to the reorganization of Soviet agriculture in the past is one measure of the difference in prestige and

⁷ See Background Information, 11 November 1955, August 9, 1958.

⁸ Tan Chin-lin: "Lessons of the Bumper Harvest," Jen Min Jih Pao, 11 August 1958.

status enjoyed by the two men whose dual Party-State positions ensure them the same monopoly of power within their own countries. The theoretician in Peking, however, has paid the successful practitioner in Moscow the highest form of flattery - imitation, but in accordance with Chinese conditions and needs. The same principle in being followed by Mao, not only in agriculture, but in industrialization as well. This identity in economic practise and ideological views is also the basis of a coordinated foreign policy, taking into account the same Chinese needs, but determined primarily by Soviet actions.

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