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COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR: Agriculture
27 October 1967

OCTOBER HARVEST

Following the customary pattern of reporting only plan fulfillment of grain deliveries by regions, the Soviet press has remained silent on the outcome of the grain harvest in areas where harvesting has been completed but with disappointing yields. That an excellent grain harvest was in the making was already clear in mid-summer,¹ so the issue was reduced to determining which sections were lagging.

The Soviet Union has three primary granaries which account for 90% of the marketable grain: the Ukraine, South-east European Russia, and the Virgin Lands of Kazakhstan and west Siberia. Whenever all three regions come through with good harvests, as in 1966, record yields result; when all three produce less than average yields, as occurred in 1963 and 1965, a crisis develops which necessitates massive imports of grain. The usual pattern, however, has been that two of the three regions field good harvests and the third comes through with a disappointing performance. Such a sequence happened this year.

The first definitive reports from Kazakhstan reveal that only 6.2 million tons were delivered to the state compared to 17 million tons last year² or the third lowest volume during the past decade. Harvesting continued to an extremely late date this year, until the first week of October, but it may be assumed that 90% of the grain has now been delivered. Press reports complain of excessive moisture and weed infestation in the grain.³ In appraising the performance of the virgin lands in the long run it is significant that only five excellent

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- 1) RFE Research reports "Grain Harvest Outlook, Parts IV and V, 4 and 21 August 1967.
 - 2) Radio Moscow, 16 October 1967.
 - 3) Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 1 September 1967, 12 Sept. 1967.

crops have been harvested in the 14 years they have been extensively farmed since 1954.

Western Siberia and the Altai, neighbors to Kazakhstan, where nominally 8 to 9 million tons are procured by the state are at present delivering only 60 percent of that level.⁴

Thus the expansive, eastern grain regions failed to produce a good harvest for the Jubilee year. In spite of the increased flow of fertilizers and other inputs to the area relative stagnation in the form of mediocre yields resulted.

The reliable Ukraine, after a bad start, came through with an excellent harvest and by mid-October delivered 12.3 million tons of grain compared to its previous record of 12.9 million tons set in 1961. All but five oblasts of the twenty five improved on their last year's performance, which indicates a uniform crop response as well as a determined effort on the part of local Party organizations, by patriotic appeals to the peasants, to maximize deliveries for the Jubilee year celebrations.

The vast area of Southeastern European Russia and the lower Urals did not produce the uniformly good harvest that the Ukraine did. The Southeastern regions, as the primary granary of the RSFSR and the republic which yielded 43.4 million tons last year in procurements (or 60 percent of the total marketable grain), enjoyed a good but not excellent harvest. The lower Volga and south Urals had excellent yields but the result in the north Caucasus was spotty. As yet, only fragmentary reports have appeared from the main oblasts in the north Caucasus and a shortfall of 15 to 20 percent from last year is indicated.⁵

No final figures on the total harvest can be documented, nor will the keynote speaker at the November Jubilee year celebrations proclaim any other but a good harvest having been reaped. Given the political drama of the Jubilee year it can safely be assumed that the Soviets will officially announce the second best harvest on record -- above the 152 million tons reached in 1964 but below the 1966 record of 170.8 tons. Analysis indicates a harvest of 154 million tons in official Soviet terms but in terms of normal dry, cleaned grain (a standard the U.S. Department of Agriculture uses as a true measure of the volume) about 125 million tons is

4) Radio Moscow, 6 October 1967.

5) Pravda, 8 October 1967.

indicated. This is a good performance, particularly following the record output in 1966, and one which will meet domestic needs, allow moderate export and trade within Comecon, and add to the grain reserves.⁶

The big political issue of the 1970s -- apart from peace and progress -- will be to ensure surpluses of grain for shipment to the developing countries as gifts or in trade. That capability has become as politically important to the first rank powers as space and armament achievements. The USSR is on the way to solving its domestic food grain problem, but there still remains the task of supplying a feed grain base for the urgent expansion of the livestock industry. And for the good will of the developing countries, as well as for prestige, a stable reserve of cereal grains to help feed the world's hungry millions is an inescapable requirement for a great power. The task is clearly staked out for the Kremlin.

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6) Even during 1966, the Soviets imported 7,746,000 tons of grain as against 3,556,700 tons exported. Vneshnaya Torgovlya, No. 8, 1967, page 54.