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A PRELIMINARY APPRAISAL OF THE NEW KOLKHOZ CHARTER

(See end for Summary)

After three years of study a 149-man blue ribbon committee under the chairmanship of L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CC, CPSU, has released the draft of a new decree on The Model Statute of the Collective Farm (agricultural artel).(*) The draft was approved by the Central Committee of the CPSU for general discussion before being submitted for approval in November of this year to the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers.

This paper will examine the new draft's main features, particularly as seen in context with the original Model Statute approved in February 1935. A more complete analysis will follow.

The new draft updates the obsolescent rules of procedure for the Soviet Union's 36,200 collective farms. 15.3 million families consisting of about 55 million people live on these amalgamated cooperative farms, known as kolkhoz households. These households, along with the farmer's private plots, account for 65 percent of the USSR's agricultural output.

A bird's-eye view of the new charter's preamble shows a striking difference compared with the original 1935 document. Gone are the appeals for the class struggle against the kulaks, exploiters, and class enemies. The new Statute's appeal is directed to the collective peasantry to work with the Communist Party for the general improvement of Soviet society. Only once is the CP mentioned and then only in the preamble. It is significant that the term "collective peasantry" is frequently used in the document, following Brezhnev's custom. It had been thought likely that hereafter this rather pejorative term

* Pravda, 24 April 1969.

would be deleted from State documents and the expression "collective farmers" (kolkhozniki) would be prescribed. Khrushchev in his later years followed this pattern. Maynard, the English social scientist, was greatly impressed with the substitution of the old term with the new. But Brezhnev's committee held to the old term and the new generation of mechanically-minded farmers may consider this an anachronism.

The opening sentence of the preamble dispels any thought of the gradual takeover of the collectives by the state farms. The document states that "Collective farming is an inalienable part of Soviet socialist society" and constitutes the means for the gradual transition to communism. It would appear that this precludes the concept that the collective farms were beginning to approach the state farms in structure.

The essential issues in agricultural production are not explicitly spelled out. Such questions as what to produce, how much, for whom, and the distribution of income are barely mentioned. The latter two are partially enunciated: output is marketed by contract with either state procurement or cooperative agencies at prices centrally determined, but above-plan production can be sold at local markets; income distribution is based on the work contribution of the member, who is assured a minimum guaranteed wage along with payments in kind, both values of which are to be determined by the farm's management.

However, the role of the private plot is clearly defined and should settle the tendentious controversy in the West. The precise formulation in the old and new Charters on the right to private plots is compared:

Private Plots

<u>Old</u>	<u>New</u>
"may vary from 1/4 hectare to 1/2 hectare (<u>exclusive</u> of the size of the house) and, in some cases, to one hectare according to local conditions."	"may be had for use as a garden, orchard, or other purposes <u>up to</u> 0.5 hectares, <u>including</u> land occupied by buildings, and on irrigated farms up to 0.2 hectares."

[emphasis supplied]

It will be seen from these quotations that there is no decisive break with the past. One could realistically say that the difference of 34 years produced an equilibrium in the right to private plots.

The comparison between the two Charters follows on collective farmers' ownership of private livestock flocks:

Old	New
<u>General Farm Region</u>	(No designation by regions)
1 cow w/ 2 calves	1 cow w/ calf to 1 year
1 sow w/suckling pigs	and 1 head to 2 years
or	
2 sows w/suckling pigs	1 sow w/suckling pigs to 3 months or
10 sheep or goats	2 pigs on feed
any amount of poultry, rabbits, hives	10 sheep, goats, chickens and hives
<u>Livestock Region</u>	
2-3 cows and calves	
2-3 sows and suckling pigs	
20-25 sheep or goats	
any number of poultry, rabbits, and hives	

In retrospect, there is no improvement registered after 35 years; in fact a regression seems to have been created. The number of breeding females is clearly limited in the new draft and, since they are the source of accumulation in livestock development, it follows that there will be fewer offspring. Unless the feed supplies improve markedly it seems certain that there will also be no improvement registered in the private livestock area.

The new Charter, like the old, vests the right of democratic decision-making with the management of the kolkhoz, and the supreme authority remains with the farm's general assembly. The members at this gathering make all policy other than that spelled out at republic or national levels. This is a semblance of democratic decision-making, but the Statute also states that the role of the Gosbank, state agencies, as well as Party organs is to work cooperatively together.

Based on nearly 35 years' experience with collective farming, the new draft statute reflects only the minimum changes needed :

for a gradual transition to a mechanized, technologically-oriented agriculture. Compared to the revolutionary upsurge in agro-technology and food production achieved in the West during that period, the Brezhnev committee's draft for a modern charter is a conservative document. If this could be regarded as an indicator of a context between the hard-line forces under Brezhnev and the moderates under Polyansky, the race could be considered in a dead heat. To the literary writers and the liberal economists, however, the Charter falls far short of their proposals.

Summary: After a decade of speculation and three years' work by a top level committee consisting of all leading Soviet luminaries, a draft of the new kolkhoz charter has finally appeared for discussion and eventual adoption at the Kolkhoz Congress this fall. This preliminary analysis concludes that the new Charter is a conservative document that reconciles the interests of the hard-liners with those of the moderates in the assignment of resources to the consumer-agricultural market.

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