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PLENUM ROUNDUP

The plenary session of the CC of the CPSU (in session 22-26 December) brought forth an abundant harvest of stacked statistics, exhortations, and grandiose plans which were in striking contrast to the output of Soviet fields.

Where the 7 Year Plan called for an overall growth in agricultural output by about 8 per cent for the year, the actual achievements - based on the eclectic data presented - indicate 10 per cent decline in aggregate farm yields. Against this background of regressive accomplishments, the resolutions of the Party governing body confidently exhorted farm workers to fulfill the 7 Year Plan not by 1965 but in 1963! This can almost be compared with Stalin's announcement of "Dizzy with Success" in 1930, when the countryside was a shambles following collectivization.

The strategic grain yields suffered a set-back after the record crop of last year. Especially in the virgin land regions of Kazakhstan and the Altai grain yields dropped 26 and 35 per cent respectively.<sup>1</sup> In the RSFSR and the Ukraine, the loss was approximately 13 per cent. The Ukraine's yield was even on a level with its 1940 harvest.<sup>2</sup> No firm figures were advanced by any of the principal speakers, but the total grain harvest appears on the order of 110 million tons, or 20 percent less than in 1958. Similar setbacks occurred with sugar beets, sunflowers, potatoes. Only in cotton culture, now concentrated in the irrigated areas of Asian republics was a 4 per cent rise over 1958 recorded.

Reflecting the record harvest of last year and its relatively improved feed supply, the livestock industry this year showed improvement but all meat and livestock population data were given in reference to collective and state farms only. As the private herds of collective farmers and employees account for fully one half the meat (including fowl) production of the country, and 56% of cow numbers, these selected indices are only half of a complete picture. Nowhere in the proceedings were the private farm holdings given any credits or recognition.

The accent of the plenum was on expanding grain production to at least 10 to 11 billion poods a year. This is to be accomplished by a further reclamation of 8-9 million hectares virgin land in the eastern areas, and by improved agronomic practices.

<sup>1</sup>Pravda, 23,26 December 1959.

<sup>2</sup>Narodny Khozyaistvo v 1958 gody p. 420, 26.3 mil. T. when corn accounted for only 1/10 of the crop acreage.

The instability of grain farming in the Soviet Union was admitted through a list of regions where excellent harvests occurred this year: Kurgan, Orenburg, Kuibyshev, Chelyabinsk, Omsk, Sverdlovsk. Only one oblast - Omsk - was a repeat from last year.<sup>3</sup>

The reduced supplies of feed grains of the present poor harvest will be reflected in a drop in livestock products for 1960, yet the resolution calls for fulfilling the 7 Year Plan of 16 million tons meat by 1963, and even suggests farmers to pledge an additional 4-5 million more tons by 1965 in order to catch up with the US! Such exhortations are pure flights into fancy beyond the barrier of credulity.

On the organizational structure of Soviet agriculture, no radical changes were forthcoming. Inter-kolkhoz production ties, as expected, are to continue and the creation of kolkhoz unions on a local (raion) basis are to be organized. These presumably will administer kolkhoz economic activities. Private plots will remain unmolested. The sovkhos-kolkhoz issue was not overtly debated, although Matskevich, Minister of Agriculture, placated the more zealous anti-sovkhos faction in the CC with a restraining plea for the mutual strengthening of both farm institutions. He gave the number of State farms as 6,500 and the collectives at 55,000. State farms would continue to dominate in the further expansion of the virgin lands, however.

A novel insight was given into the highly selective pricing system on farm products, when several speakers and the resolution admitted to collective farms getting higher prices from the State than the state farms for the same products. This price differentiation applied to wool, mutton, cotton, beef, and fruits. Not even Vinnichenko brought up this clearly contentious issue in his extended discussion of the kolkhoz-sovkhos problem. The issue has been resolved, however, when the Party resolution called for an end to the price differentiation.

The collective farms' indivisible funds reached 24 per cent of total cash income during 1958 and the resolution called for their continued growth as the means for capital accumulation in the transition of kolkhoz property toward the level of public property. Here too the new kolkhoz-unions will play an effective role in setting the rate of the levy on kolkhoz earnings earmarked for investment purposes.

With amalgamation of farms the density of party members has appreciably risen in the countryside. The plenum resolution now invests the Party primary units on state and collective farms with the authority to create - as in industry- "commissions for the control of economic activity." Thus in the framework of the kolkhoz unions, Party control commissions will form the link of control from Party to front-line production units. Vinnichenko was right when he dismissed as "rubbish" any suggestion that the kolkhoz unions would represent a loss of control for the

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<sup>3</sup> Izvestia, 5 November 1958.

<sup>4</sup> Izvestia, 23 December 1959.



state over farm output (see Background Information, "Cross Currents in the Kolkhoz Stream", 19 December 1959.

Without benefit of the text of Khrushchev's speech to the plenum, it can be concluded that no radical changes in the structure of Soviet agricultural institutions will be affected. The dominant stress of the meetings was all on processes not policies, on the logistics of production. Management, cadres, and Party leadership are still taken as the same old formulas to spark the farm upsurge. Khrushchev has shown unusual restraint in pushing toward the goal of communizing the countryside. Against the backdrop of a negative growth in overall farm output in the initial year of the 7 Year Plan, no doubt the delegates took the gathering for what it was - a periodic ceremony for exhorting the peasantry and rural population toward greater efforts for Party and State.

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