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HARVEST/POWER IMAGE

A steady flow of positive reports from the primary grain areas in the USSR since early summer all indicate an excellent harvest of grain -- if not a record harvest -- will be reaped this year following the poor harvests of 1959-1960. As the grain crop is the most vital single component of the Soviet economy, this achievement will have political significance within/ex bloc and considerably enhance the reputation of Khrushchev as the "master of kolkhoz affairs" domestically.

In the nominal granaries of European Russia -- the Ukraine and North Caucasus -- near record yields are likely. By August 20 the Ukraine had delivered over 600 million poods of small grain to the State compared to 358 million poods in all of 1960.¹ With an expected 450 million poods maize yet to be gathered in the fall, the all-time record of 1956 when over 1 billion poods were sold to the State may well be surpassed. The Caucasus and Volga regions, likewise, report deliveries at the levels of the big harvest in 1958.² Only from the Kuban (Krasnodar) are definitive delivery reports in arrears.

The maize crop, which increasingly is contributing to the weighted average yields of all grains, is termed "promising", but its harvest as grain will not be known until October. Favorable weather, an early spring all contributed to uniformity in crop growth for maize and small grains alike.¹

In the strategic virgin lands of the East, a Pravda team summed up the Kazakhstan granary prospects as "despite a dry summer many farms have grown a good crop this year" (14 August 1961). The harvest in Siberia and the Altai is 1½ to 2 weeks earlier this year over the poor 1960 performance. Early season harvesting is crucial in these areas as rain and snow in September caused heavy losses of grain in the past.

For the past five years the early season crop estimates in these Background Information papers have correctly predicted the direction of the grain harvest in the Soviet Union. The June 6, 1961 paper tentatively set this year's harvest at 8-10 percent higher than the 1960 crop. The all-time record of 141,-200,000 tons grain (including equivalents) was set in 1958 when

¹ Selskaya zhizn, 16, 23 August 1961.

² Ibid., 24 August 1961.

all regions came up with bumper crops.

As the season progresses, and more data are harvested and threshed, restatements of this forecast will appear periodically. But the thrust of the output in the grain fields points directly to a super harvest, barring natural calamities. In fact, it is almost certain Khrushchev will dramatically announce at the XXII Party Congress in October that the all-time record harvest in Russia's history has been achieved.

Throughout the course of Russian history no ruler embarked on an offensive move without the aid and comfort of a good harvest in his wake. It should be recalled that the first Berlin pressure was applied following the record 1958 yield. This year's prospects, in some measure, played a part in the aggressiveness of Khrushchev on Berlin. And the indicated triumphant announcement before the Congress may well be the signal for sustained power plays in domestic policy as well as in foreign fields.

Weighing the contours of that economic power base -- the grain harvest -- as a measure of the direction of Khrushchev's power thrust will become a regular exercise as the season and data mature.

CZ

For the series on Harvest Outlook - 1961, see:

Background Information, 9 June 1961.
News Budget Item F-128, 12 July 1961.