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Background Information USSR

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KOLKHOZY AT MID-SEASON, 1960

In a departure from previous policy, the mid-year economic report of the Central Statistical Administration omitted any quantitative reference as to the number of collective farms in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> The decline in kolkhozy through the dual processes of amalgamation and conversion into state farms remains one of the crucial issues of controversy between Party and peasantry throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet countryside. As the massive reorganization of the primary institution of Soviet agriculture has been a continuous, although cyclical, process since 1950, the omission of the kolkhoz data indicates some change in emphasis of official agrarian policy.

The report's sole reference to the sovkhos-kolkhoz issue was singularly original: the number of workers on state farms and auxiliary farm enterprises increased by 1,700,000 through the transformation of some collective farms into state farms. The action was based "on the decisions of the collective farmers at their kolkhoz general meetings," the customary formula used by the press to sugar-coat the "voluntary" actions.

This suggests that since July 1959, 1.7 million collective farmers joined the industrial labor force following the transfer of kolkhozy into sovkhosy.<sup>2</sup> How many collective farms were abolished during the same interim was not revealed; nevertheless, a reliable estimate can be reached. The CSA claimed 59,600 collective farms in operation at mid-year 1959;<sup>3</sup> by January 1, 1960 there were 54,800, or a decline of 4,800 kolkhozy in 6 months' time. As the majority of amalgamations in the past were carried out after harvest-time they appeared in the second half of the annual report. No doubt some farms were included where the amalgamation was still on paper by year-end. Thus it seems likely that more than 5,000 collective

<sup>1</sup> Pravda, 13 July 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Workers on state farms and other auxiliary farms operated by State enterprises are classed as industrial workers in Soviet labor nomenclature.

<sup>3</sup> Pravda, 14 July 1959.

farms "disappeared" in the 12-month period since July 1959, compared to 9,600 farms the previous period.<sup>4</sup> This suggests a slowing up of the process during 1960, and lends credence to the view that the transfer of the 1.7 million kolkhoz workers was largely achieved in the latter half of 1959. Also from among the several hundred thousand mechanizers/skilled farmers sent to the virgin lands this winter many were ex-kolkhozniki who attained industrial worker status by joining the sovkhos staffs. The emphasis on moving mechanizers, not ordinary farm workers, to the new lands was apparent this winter in the press.

The process of selective sovkhosization of existing collective farms has been concentrated around the industrial centers of the USSR in the form of specialized vegetable-potato farms to feed the urban masses. It has also included the backward collective farm areas in the north and northwestern regions. These are densely populated, and underemployed rural regions. Background Information, 7 May 1960 documents the conversion of kolkhozy into sovkhosy as largely a geographical undertaking covering these two phenomena. It appears unlikely that the recent pressure on reorganization of the collective farms will be sustained during 1960. The main effort Khrushchev applied during 1958-59 following his victory over the anti-Party group. This is made clear from the table below.

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<sup>4</sup> Background Information, 15 July 1959.

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Collective Farms in the Post-Stalin Era</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
1940	235.5	
1953	91.2	3.6
1954	87.1	4.1
1955	85.6	1.5
1956	83.0	2.6
1957	76.5	6.5
1958	67.7	8.8
1959	54.8	12.9

- Narodnoye Khozyaistvo v 1958, p. 349.