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HARVEST/POWER IMAGE

While it is still too early to estimate with any precision the volume of the Soviet grain crop this year, progress reports from two principal granaries in the winter wheat regions of the Soviet Union provide bench-marks on the likely order of magnitude of the most vital single component of the Soviet economy.

By July 31, the Ukraine was reported to have delivered to State procurement centers 412 million poods of small grain (360.3 of which was wheat).¹ By comparison, in last year's record harvest the Ukraine turned in 414 million poods by October (351 wheat)². Neither of these figures includes maize. Thus the current harvest is apparently on a par with last year's. Although the Ukraine marketed only 10.7 percent of its gross grain production,³ compared to Kazakhstan's 72 percent, it is still the third ranking grain republic and the source of most of the quality hard wheat and corn. This low percentage ratio of delivery to total output is caused by the needs of 40 million people as well as the livestock feed requirements. The Ukrainian minister of agriculture, M. Spivak, predicted that final procurements would reach 450 million poods (including corn) at year's end.⁴ This is 102 million poods less than last year, when 552 million poods were sold to the State.⁵ Whether this reflects a corresponding drop in the total output of grain or indicates greater allocations for livestock feeding is not as yet discernible. The big plans for livestock development may well have prompted a policy of allowing the farms to keep more grain in storage for livestock feeding.

In the north Caucasus winter wheat area, the rich Krasnodar reported 80.6 million poods delivered by July 25⁶ compared with 120 million by October 1 last year.⁷ The comparative weights of corn in the totals may balance the gap, but it is

1 Izvestia, 4 August 1959.

2 Pravda, 8 August 1958.

3 Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 15 January 1959.

4 Selskoye Khozyaistvo, 4 August 1959.

5 Ibid., 5 November 1958.

6 Ibid., 26 July 1959.

7 Ibid., 2 October 1958.

likely the massive yields of last year will not be again equalled in the Kuban. The Orenburg steppe and the lower Volga, areas, where crop estimates were rather unfavorable, are reporting deliveries at approximately half of last year's record rates.⁸

In the strategic virgin lands in Kazakhstan and Siberia, areas of Spring wheat which supply two-thirds the nation's marketable grain, harvesting is just about to get under way. Press reports are uniformly favorable for the grain standing in the fields. The hazards of harvesting are more pronounced in the new lands as the operation becomes a race against the bad weather of early autumn.⁹

With the backing of an indicated good harvest in the fields, Khrushchev, like all Russian rulers of the past, is doubly secure in his power and confident of further success in domestic and foreign policy implementation. It will stand him in good stead on the American voyage. Estimating the contours of that economic power base -- the grain harvest -- as a measure of Khrushchev's policy/power will become a regular exercise as the season and data mature.

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⁸ Pravda, 10 August 1959.

⁹ For an analysis of harvest losses and statistical bias in Soviet reporting, see Background Information, 15 July 1959.