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Background Information USSR

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NOVEMBER HARVEST

Keynote speakers at the ceremonies of the October revolution anniversary generally provide a clue as to the overall dimensions of the Soviet harvest, although the generalized vagueness of the agricultural achievements are in sharp contrast to the absolute data of the industrial output. This year's honors were done by Presidium member and secretary of the Central Committee, Frol R. Kozlov, who did not depart from the usual pattern.

Kozlov declared that despite dust-storms and winter-killing of grain seedings in the southern regions of the USSR, and the delayed, cold, wet season in Kazakhstan and Siberia, "grain deliveries will be no less than last year."¹ The RSFSR delivered into state granaries 1,801 million poods, of which 1,125 million poods were wheat, 64 million poods maize, the latter 3.2 times more than last year.² The RSFSR normally accounts for 50 to 65 percent of the grain resources; this year it enjoyed a better harvest than Kazakhstan and the Ukraine.

Kozlov's stress on the share of wheat and corn are the vital indication at this juncture of appraisal before the final results are released at the December plenary session on agriculture. He delineates the harvest into bread grains and feed grains. Thus wheat -- a bread grain -- accounted for 62½ percent of the RSFSR's total grain deliveries this year, compared to 51% in 1958 and 60% in the poor harvest of 1957.³ A high share of procurement is associated with national shortages in the supply of a commodity -- wheat.

As ten million or more hectares of winter wheat seedings were killed by dust storms and frost during the early spring of 1960 in the Ukraine and north Caucasus -- the richest wheat area in the country -- they were resown to maize, a feed grain. Thus the three territories in north Caucasus reported a third of their deliveries were in maize,⁴ rather than a nominal 5-8

¹ Radio Moscow, 6 November 1960.

² Report of Bureau CC, RSFSR, in Pravda, 5 November 1960.

³ Narodnoe khozyaistvo RSFSR v 1958 godu, p. 209.

⁴ Selskaya Zhizn, 22, 26, 27 October 1960. The Kuban, Stavropol, and Rostov regions each grossed 100 million poods all grains. Their wheat crops, however, were about half normal.

percent. Thus it is fairly certain that had there been no maize crop to reseed the lost areas, there would have been a real grain crisis in the Soviet Union this year. Yet corn is a feed crop and the drive to make Ukrainians and Cossacks eat maize has failed.

On balance, the Soviet wheat reserves will be in short supply. With the RSFSR reporting 18.4 million tons wheat delivered, and projecting the ratios of past years, Kazakhstan can at best turn in 7 million tons, and the over-populated Ukraine 2 million tons, or a total of 28 million tons. In the past four years (1959-56) wheat deliveries in the USSR were respectively 34, 42, 26, 37 million tons.⁵ Thus Soviet wheat exports will be at a minimum, and the satellite countries, whose bread grain supplies already are tight, will be rationed accordingly. Nor will Western grain markets experience Soviet selling pressure. Nor can the under-developed countries expect more than token wheat handouts.

The above figures assume dry, undamaged, kernel wheat. Soviet press accounts have made much of wet, damaged grain being accepted at state storage centers, and warned that it is non-usable in commercial trade.

Kozlov conveniently failed to remind his audience of the official target for all grain production this year: 151 million tons⁶. With the delivery level indicated by Kozlov as a yardstick, this total grain yield in the second year of the seven-year plan will be at best on the order of 120 million tons, a 20 percent shortfall of the target.

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⁵ Selskoye khozyaistvo SSSR, 1960 handbook, p. 197.

⁶ Speech of Kosygin before Supreme Soviet, Izvestia, 28 October 1959.