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SITUATION REPORT

* Agricultural Problems

Agricultural Problems

Two recent press articles seem to suggest that Polish agricultural planners have given up any idea of collectivizing the Polish countryside in the foreseeable future. Instead, they suggest some other form of socialization of agriculture, one not yet clearly specified but one which they expect to emerge from further development of the agricultural circles and ancillary branches of production and services.

Under the conditions resulting from such development, "ownership of land and individual management of the farm will change and/or lose its economic content." Furthermore, under these conditions, "a specialized producer will find nothing absurd in the transfer, in one form or another, of part of his farm to the enterprises actually servicing it, while he himself would find employment in one of these enterprises."

This hypothetical definition of the future form of socialized agriculture was given by Boguslaw Galeski, sociologist and agricultural expert, in the January issue of the Party theoretical monthly Nowe Drogi. The article, entitled "Perspectives of the Peasant Economy in Our Country," can also be interpreted as an ideological and economic defense of the present form of Polish agriculture against possible criticism on the part of Poland's more orthodox Communist neighbors, whose agricultural economies are almost totally collectivized (English translation of the article will appear shortly in Polish Press Survey.)

Another sign of the regime's intention not to attempt collectivization of Polish agriculture, was an article by Prof. Ryszard Manteuffel, another agricultural expert, in Zycie Warszawy (January 13). Writing about atomization of Polish farms, Manteuffel declared that "at present, the problem of land consolidation is being taken care of, in a concrete way, by the Ministry of Agriculture."

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If true, this is important news. As explained in RFE Background Paper, "New Voices in Support of Private Farm Strip Consolidation" (December 12), "even since 1956, in the belief that the land might still be collectivized eventually, the Gomulka regime has shown its indifference -- if not open hostility -- to the task of land consolidation." But recently (cf. SR December 12), the first real sign of the regime's interest in solving the problem was supplied by no lesser an authority than Wladyslaw Gomulka.

If "concrete" interest has been displayed by the Ministry of Agriculture in solving the problem, this means a reversal of the past attitude to land consolidation, and it also means that the present form of private ownership is going to stay, at least in the next decade or so.

Two more recent events in the agricultural sphere deserve mention. First, the Tenth Congress of the Agricultural Workers' Trade Union took place in Warsaw on January 13 and 14. The 230 delegates represented the nearly half a million members of the Union, workers of state farms, state machine centers, and a number of enterprises connected with agricultural production. As reported by Trybuna Ludu (January 15), the discussion centered around the present economic situation of agricultural enterprises and "social conditions of work crews." Politburo deputy member and Agricultural Minister Mieczyslaw Jagielski stressed in his speech that state farms are expected to raise their production in the period of the present five-year-plan (1966-1970) by 40 per cent, i.e., three times more than Polish agriculture as a whole.

Second, a plenary session of the Supreme Committee of the United Peasant Party took place in Warsaw on January 17 and 18. It was devoted to the development and streamlining of production services for peasant farms and to the resulting tasks of UPP circles in the countryside. It was stressed during the Plenum that services lag behind the development of agriculture, which is "acutely" evident in the system of procurement and transport.

The problems raised at the two meetings were closely connected with the regime's plans for "socialist transformation" of the Polish countryside. As outlined by Galeski in his Nowe Drogi article, a well organized net of ancillary semi-agricultural and semi-industrial enterprises will -- it is held -- bring about social changes in the village, making its population heterogeneous and thus more inclined to "socialist" thinking.

Regarding state farms, the intended boost in their output is clearly designed to meet Poland's current grain deficit. It may also be designed to create future grain reserves which would allow more radical "socialist transformation" of the countryside than that foreseen at present.

Correction to Polish Situation Report, 12 January 1967, page 1, 2nd paragraph, line 18:

"according to the principles" not "of".