

**SOVIET FARM POLICIES
UNDER KHRUSHCHEV**

M.A. THESIS

By

**Anthony Larratt Smith
Department of History
McGill University**

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Anthony Larratt Smith
McGill University

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Agriculture in the Soviet Union was backward in comparison with agriculture in North America and Western Europe. Nearly half the Soviet population was still classified as rural, and yet agricultural production remained highly unsatisfactory.

Under Khrushchev, and for the first time since collectivization was instituted, Soviet policy-makers took stock of the country's agricultural resources, for the first time admitted their failures, and initiated a series of measures to rescue agriculture from the impasse in which Stalin had left it.

In his drive to remodel agriculture, Khrushchev moved on four levels: to increase Party control and specialist direction within collective farms; to change from a time accounting to a cost accounting basis in which the same controls and incentives used in industry would be extended to agriculture; to amalgamate the collective farms

into larger units which were virtually indistinguishable from State farms; and to cultivate the large virgin lands in the Soviet north-east and south-west.

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the main features of Soviet farm policies under Khrushchev, in an attempt to arrive at an explanation of the various problems involved, and to analyse and assess the effectiveness of Khrushchev's measures in their economic, social and political contexts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: KHRUSHCHEV'S FARM PROGRAM OF SEPTEMBER 1953	6
CHAPTER II: THE VIRGIN LANDS PROGRAM	38
CHAPTER III: DECENTRALIZATION: THE ELIMINATION OF THE MACHINE AND TRACTOR STATIONS AND THE ABOLITION OF PRICE 'QUOTAS'	59
CHAPTER IV: THE SEVEN-YEAR PLAN	85
CONCLUSION:	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY:	134

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in Russia is far more than a matter of farming technique. It is a way of life, for nearly half the population lives on farms. Notwithstanding her enormous crop acreage the Soviet Union has always suffered from the impact of agricultural underdevelopment, which has emerged at every critical juncture of Russian history.

Stalin's policy of building up socialism in one country through intensified industrialization drained an enormous amount of agricultural manpower from the land to be drafted into heavy industry. With an almost religious value attached to this principle, the Soviet Union has experienced the fastest economic growth known to history. But at the same time, material benefits in the form of consumer goods and food were sacrificed. Today agriculture continues to be the 'problem' sector of the Soviet national economy.

Russia's future depends very largely on her ability to solve her own food supply. For any progress in the direction of the Soviet Union attaining the highest standard of living in the world will be dependent upon the ability of her leaders to solve the country's basic farm problems, and increase the quality and diversity of food and clothing. Upon this also depends much of the Soviet political prestige in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Shortly before his death, Stalin admitted that, unless corrected, agricultural backwardness, will hamper the continued growth of the productive forces of our country more and more as time goes on."¹ Acutely conscious of this problem, Nikita Khrushchev devoted far more attention to improvements in agriculture than to any other objective. He considered it to be not only of internal but of international significance. After Stalin's death, it was Khrushchev who officially and publicly exposed the weaknesses in Soviet agriculture when, in 1953 he made agricultural policy the subject of many official decrees, lengthy reports and speeches of Soviet leaders and officials. As the main spokesman on agricultural affairs, Khrushchev used his farm policies to strengthen his own political authority and popularity. He thus seldom failed to elaborate on the country's agricultural problems in his numerous speeches, and in no other area did he reveal his leadership qualities so clearly.

At the same time, his opponents continuously probed these policies for signs of vulnerability, which made his farm program inextricably bound to his own political fortunes.

The source material used for the present study derives almost entirely from an examination of the speeches

1. J. Stalin, Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, Moscow, 1952, p. 76.

of Soviet leaders in the leading national papers of Soviet Russia, as translated in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press. This detailed study of the central press which adequately reveals the actual state of affairs on the farms as well as the policy proposals of the main government leaders, has been utilized in conjunction with production and management excerpts of western authorities on the subject, namely: Nancy Nimitz, Jerzy Karcz, Alex Nove, Lazar Volin, V.P. Timoshenko, Roy D. Laird and Naum Jasny, Herbert Ellisén, David Ingram, S. Kabysh, Arcadius Kahan, D.B. Shimkin, Howard R. Swearer, and Gregory Grossman.

A history or complete discertation of Khrushchev's farm programs from beginning to end has, as yet, not been undertaken. The experts in this field, many abovementioned, have instead produced concise and highly specialized accounts which usually investigate and analyse the singular aspects of agricultural administration under Khrushchev.

From the point of view of this thesis, Khrushchev's main agricultural policies cover the period of time from 1953 to 1964, and, for our purposes of study, are further broken down into two distinct, but at the same time inter-related periods: 1953-1958, and 1959 until the time of Khrushchev's fall in 1964.

His reforms during the first part of his administration were highly successful, because he recognized the

need to overcome some of the basic deficiencies which existed on the farms before any improvements in agricultural output could be expected.

Having successfully attained a high level of performance from the farms and farmers, Khrushchev then proceeded, in the second half of his administration, to ignore the needs of the farmers, particularly the need for continual investment ^{and} incentives, and now devoted almost all his attention to a series of 'crash' programs to catch up to and even overtake the United States in the production of most farm products. His attitude toward farm guidance turned suddenly from a carefully planned and thought-out farm program to one with rash ideas with little forthought or care, the long run effects of which were usually disastrous.

It is the main object of our present study to attempt to determine the main reasons that were in fact behind Khrushchev's sudden shift in attitude and to try to assess the effect that this change in basic outlook had had upon the country as a whole. In so doing, we can further our understanding of the Khrushchev period in its economic, political and social contexts. For farm

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policies, being the main preoccupation of Khrushchev's leadership, profoundly affected the main issues of resource allocation and decisions as to methods of government.

CHAPTER ONEKHRUSHCHEV'S FARM PROGRAM OF SEPTEMBER 1953.

With Stalin's death in March 1953, the Soviets had come to an impasse on agricultural policy. The sudden passing of a dictator who had exercised sole authority for over thirty years was bound to be followed by a period of uncertainty during which time his successors would appraise the policy they had suddenly inherited.

An unwritten code of factional government direction known as 'collective leadership' was put into practice with no member having any compelling reason to trust his colleagues. One section was committed to Stalin's traditional policy of coercing the agricultural work force, while another, fearing national disaffection, advocated concessions to the farmers. The significance of this is most aptly expressed by Sidney I. Ploss who wrote:

That Malenkov and Khrushchev still adhered to the opposing positions, respectively, offers additional reason to view the power struggles as battles of divergent outlook as well as personal advantage. At the same time, adversaries in the production-consumption dispute were wedded to rival theories about the style of government.²

The individual leaders staked their reputations on new policies advocated in their own names.³

2. Sidney I. Ploss, Conflict and Decision-Making in Soviet Russia, Princeton, 1965, p. 58.

3. R.W. Pethybridge, A History of Postwar Russia, London, 1966, p. 124.

Malenkov and Beria denied the existence of a serious food shortage. They were firm advocates of Stalin's policy of tight State control over all collective farm, kolkhoz, activities which meant stringent State procurement quotas and a deemphasis on the necessary State inputs of investment, machinery, and chemical fertilizers.

After Beria was executed in June 1953, Malenkov's only rival was Khrushchev, whose influence in elite circles was rapidly becoming a dangerous threat to Malenkov's strong position in the government.

Malenkov, as Premier, announced the 'new course' in its application to industry and agriculture in his budget speech of 8 August, 1953.⁴ On the basis of the country's having attained a satisfactory expansion of heavy industry under the Five-year Plans, Malenkov proposed that the people's standard of living could now be raised by directing more capital toward increasing the supply of consumer goods.⁵ At the same time, he felt that this would greatly enhance his own popularity, as during Stalin's rule, nearly every section of the population had been affected by the chronic shortage of manufactured goods. He also proposed that the collective farms could receive more capital investment than previously. In this respect he suggested halving the tax on the peasants'

4. The Current Digest of The Soviet Press (hereafter referred to as C.D.), vol. v, no. 30 (1953), pp. 3 and 4.

5. Ibid., p.4.

individual garden plots, and paying higher procurement prices for vegetables and potatoes, wool, meat, and milk. The existing deficit in dairy products, he said, could be made up by importations.⁶

Malenkov felt, however, that any immediate attempts to increase farm output were only of secondary importance. He warned that to try to increase existing crop yields would entail unnecessarily exorbitant costs in the chemical fertilizer industry.⁷

In asserting that the „country is fully supplied with grain“⁸ he claimed that there was already plenty of grain stockpiled in government reserves, which could be released at any time to satisfy consumer needs.⁹

Khrushchev, on the other hand, was seriously worried as to the effect of a future stagnation in living standards upon the Soviet people and felt that agriculture should be made a publicly acknowledged problem of national concern. He was also concerned that such a condition would scarcely fit the image of the Soviet Union being the second ranking industrial power in the world, especially as far as

6. Ibid., pp. 6 and 7.

7. Ibid.

8. There are no available statistics as to the actual magnitude of the 1953 State grain reserves, although they are believed to have been very substantial after the 1952 crop. Jerzy F. Kracz, "Agriculture and Kremlinology", Problems of Communism, (May/June, 1965), p. 36.

9. C.D., vol. v. no. 30 (1953), p. 6.

some of the non-committed underdeveloped countries were concerned. He recognized that any continuation in the upward post-war trend in the standard of living would be primarily dependant upon increasing the output of different varieties of food from the farms.¹⁰

....the retardation of agriculture could no longer be overlooked....Soviet society had markedly changed in recent years, especially through the expansion of the intelligentsia. The government had to take into account the needs of the expanding stratum of functionaries. The quality and quantity of food, for example, which had sufficed for the predominantly illiterate masses of the largely agrarian economy would not satisfy the needs of the new elite and the 'apparatchike' of the factories and collective farms.¹¹

Khrushchev therefore recognized that any improvement in farm production depended first of all upon the creation of peasant incentives of material self-interest, and at the same time a drastic revision of farming methods.¹² He also saw that the politician who could bring plenty of good food to the Soviet consumer would soon become a popular man indeed.¹³ Beria's fall enabled Khrushchev and

10. Ibid., vol. v. no. 39 (1953), p. 12.

11. Georg von Rauch, A History of Soviet Russia, New York, 1965, p.432.

12. Arcadius Kahan, "The Peasant, the Party, and the System", Russia Under Khrushchev (ed. by Abraham Brumberg), London, 1962, pp.290 and 291.

13. Ploss, op. cit., pp.78 and 86.

his followers to claim that Beria had,,hindered in every way the solution of very important, urgent problems in the sphere of agriculture".¹⁴

Khrushchev seized upon the first opportunity to make an issue of changes in agricultural policy, and challenged Malenkov by calling a Central Committee plenary session on agriculture for September 1953.¹⁵ By responding to this challenge, Malenkov would put himself in a delicate position in which his usual confident outlook on agricultural matters could be questioned.

At the Central Committee Plenum which met on 3 September 1953, after decades in which all the Soviet leaders had systematically boasted about the country's enormous agricultural achievements, Khrushchev suddenly departed from the traditional Stalinist success report. In a bid for public attention he described all the recent agricultural failings in extensive detail. His speech was an open admission that Soviet agricultural policy had long been stagnant and that as western specialists had many times alleged, Soviet farm output statistics had been systematically inflated. The proposals which Khrushchev made to this plenum formed the basis of his future farm policies. It is

14. C.D., vol. v. no. 24 (1953), p.9.

15. Kommunist, no. 16, 1962, p.55, cited by Ploss, op. cit., p. 70.

therefore necessary for us to examine these initial policy proposals in detail in order to later understand the main foundations of his agricultural planning.

At the plenary session he claimed first of all that in the rush to industrialize, agriculture had become neglected to the point where it not only represented the least developed sector of the economy but also could become a serious impediment to the country's entire economic progress:

An obvious discrepancy exists between the growth rate of our large socialist industry, city population and the material well-being of the working masses on the one hand and the present level of agricultural production on the other....Our country has grown wealthier every year, the working people's material prosperity has increased and, in addition, demands on agriculture have become increasingly greater...The Soviet people's well-being, their purchasing power and their demands have risen still more rapidly, and the output of foodstuffs far from satisfies the growing needs of the working people. Therefore, the task of improving food supply for the population requires special importance...One must take on the task of attaining the level of food consumption established by scientific norms for nourishment necessary to the overall, harmonious development of a healthy person.¹⁶

Khrushchev asserted that the people's grain needs were generally satisfied, as far as the supply of bread was concerned. He claimed that not only were the State grain reserves adequate, but that the country was able to export wheat on a limited scale. With the growth of the working

16. C.D. vol. v. no. 39 (1953), p.12.

people's material well-being the population's demand was however moving more and more from bread to meat and dairy products, vegetables, and fruit.

....In this connection it is highly important to improve the structure of consumption by increasing the production mainly of animal husbandry products and vegetables.¹⁷

In his speech to the Plenum Khrushchev then described the major causes of agricultural deficiencies. He stressed primarily the need to increase the principle of material self-interest and material incentives in all branches of agriculture, particularly animal husbandry for

....present procurement and purchase prices for animal husbandry products are an inadequate incentive to the material self-interest of the collective farms and farmers in developing animal husbandry, and as they now stand do not give the collective farms and farmers due returns. The same can be said for vegetables and potatoes.¹⁸

Khrushchev alleged that violations of the peasant's right to an individual garden plot¹⁹ had discouraged them from breeding more cattle, sheep and pigs within these 'personal' holdings.

This subsidiary holding is necessary as long as the communal sector is still inadequately developed and cannot fully satisfy

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Khrushchev was obviously referring to Stalin's curtailment of the size of these holdings during his administration. For Stalin's agricultural policy in this respect see N. Jasny, Socialized Agriculture in the USSR, Stanford, 1949.

the communal needs of the collective farm as well as the personal needs of the collective farmers...and if his personal interests in his private subsidiary holding are also infringed upon, then the collective farmer easily finds another opening for his labor - he goes away to the city and into industry. This is the reason for the reduction in the collective farmers' personal economy and the flow of the rural population from the lagging collective farms.²⁰

Khrushchev spoke very critically of the poor use made of farm machinery which the State had supplied. He said that manual labour still predominated in many branches of farm work.²¹

He told the plenum that agricultural production had also been hampered by

The unsatisfactory leadership of collective and state farms and MTS²² by Party and agricultural agencies, especially in selection, placing and training personnel in agriculture and conducting Party-political work in the countryside...Labor discipline is still very low in many collectives, and not all of the collective farmers take full part in farm production. The work of the collective farmers is not well organized everywhere, and there are still numerous instances of carelessness and negligence towards communal property. ²³

20. C.D., vol. v. no. 39 (1953), p.12

21. Ibid.

22. The State owned and operated Machine and Tractor Stations, which independently performed basic farm functions mainly in return for a part of the crop.

23. C.D., vol. v. no. 39 (1953), p.12.

Khrushchev then announced that to help rectify these deficiencies the government would spend more than 15 billion roubles in 1953 and more than 35 billion roubles in 1954 to implement the urgent measures for further developing agriculture.²⁴ The major portion of these funds would be used as additional capital investment in farming to further the development of animal husbandry and to raise potato and vegetable yields.²⁵ Procurement and purchase prices were to be increased, thus raising the collective farms and farmers income by more than 13 billion roubles in 1953, and by more than 20 billion roubles in 1954.²⁶ Norms for obligatory deliveries to the State, particularly of animal husbandry products, potatoes, and vegetables, should be reduced.²⁷ This would enable the collective farms and farmers to acquire more surplus produce which they could sell at the higher purchase prices or sell on the collective farmers' free markets.²⁸ In this connection, Khrushchev continued, the purchasing procedure should be changed to one of contracts. This would permit the State to plan beforehand how much produce would remain after obligatory deliveries

24. Ibid., p.24.

25. Ibid., pp.24 and 25.

26. Ibid., p.25.

27. Ibid., p.24.

28. Ibid.

and guarantee the collective farms and farmers sale of their surplus produce, also allowing them to receive cash advances as well as the opportunity of obtaining manufactured goods in the form of „reciprocal sales.“²⁹ However, he added that at the same time, through increased labour productivity and a higher gross and marketed agricultural output, collective farm expenditures must be reduced.³⁰

Throughout his speech, Khrushchev directed most of his attention to animal husbandry, which, in contrast with other branches of agriculture he considered to be in „an unsatisfactory economic state.“³¹

Our most pressing tasks lie in the field of animal husbandry, since lagging there has become chronic....Our animal husbandry was lagging even before the war. Much has been accomplished since the war to restore and further develop animal husbandry. During the period from July, 1945, to July, 1953, cattle in the U.S.S.R. increased 11,300,000 head, sheep and goats 53,900,000 and pigs 25,100,000...At first glance it seems that these figures for growth, and they are really considerable, present no cause for alarm. This is not actually so... I cite data on the number of livestock in the U.S.S.R. (in millions, over comparable areas, for the beginning of each year):

	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Sheep & Goats	Horses
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
1916	58.4	28.8	23.0	96.3	38.2
1928	66.8	33.2	27.7	114.6	36.1
1941	54.5	27.8	27.5	91.6	21.0
1953	56.6	24.3	28.5	109.9	15.3

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p.25 .

31. Ibid., p.12 .

....These data show that the number of cows at the beginning of 1953 was 3,500,000 less than at the beginning of 1941 and 8,900,000 less than at the beginning of 1928.³²

Khrushchev then outlined his proposals for overcoming the most serious obstacles to the effective development of animal husbandry.

He suggested that in future, animal husbandry procurement quotas follow a per-hectare principle as set down by the government, in place of the former system of allotting quotas according to the size of herds. At the moment,

Advanced collective farms, districts and provinces with highly developed animal husbandry receive increased quotas for animal husbandry products every year, while smaller and, in effect, preferential norms are established for the collective farms not greatly concerned with developing communal animal husbandry...Procurement officials attempt to justify it by differences in the level of economic development of collective farms, districts and provinces. In their view the more developed economy should yield more. if you have kept more young animals this year and obtained more milk, you receive a larger quota as well. A collective farm has only to exceed its neighbour, and the procurement officials prune it down...This practice undermines the collective farms' and farmers' personal interest in increasing communal livestock and raising its productivity.³³

32. Ibid., p.25.

33. Ibid., pp.25 and 26.

Therefore, he added, only when the quality of land varies, should there be any deviation from the average district norm.³⁴

Khrushchev proposed that the government should provide for writing off the collective farms' arrears in deliveries of animal husbandry products for the past few years, in order to help them build up their supply of livestock more rapidly.³⁵

According to the 1954 plan the number of cows is to be increased to 29,200,000 head, or 4,900,000 head more than at the beginning of 1953, of which 11,500,000 head, or 3,000,000 more, are to be on the collective farms.³⁶

Khrushchev emphasized that animal husbandry cannot be advanced if Party, Soviet and agricultural agencies do not actively engage in setting up a stable feed base.³⁷ In this regard he stressed the need to ensure a more rapid growth in feed grain yields. He said that achievement in the sphere of grain production had been more considerable than in the other branches of agriculture in that it had now exceeded its pre-war production level by more than 8 million hectares. A significant number of collective and State farms, however, still obtain low yields of grain such

34. Ibid., p.26.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

as wheat, rye, barley, oats, and other grain crops, particularly in districts of the non-black earth belt. With little land sown to groats, buckwheat and millet procurements have been low, because

....bonus payments for grain crops is actually not used on many collective farms and this is a serious shortcoming. Crop-yield indexes for which bonus payment should be made have been raised, but on many collective farms the collective farmers do not receive this payment. There is urgent need to revise the system for distributing bonus payment.³⁸

Khrushchev complained that the introduction of crop rotation and its development on many collective and State farms had been badly organized.³⁹ A chief cause for this he said was the farmers' neglect of raising grass seed. He emphasized that the fulfillment of plan goals for sown grasses for cattle grazing must not only be increased but the necessary reserve stocks established. Steps must be taken to enable every collective and State farm to provide its own perennial and annual grass seeds.

In this regard the failure to realize the value of potatoes as feed must be remedied. The utilization and improvement of natural hayfields and pasture must also be improved. He called attention to the importance of mowing and stacking hay in less time to avoid losses in the quality

38. Ibid., p.31.

39. Ibid., p.32.

of hay. Mechanization in hay-making is necessary to raise both the quality and quantity of feed units per hectare.⁴⁰ He also explained that an overall expansion in the yields of succulent fodder, in proper relation to soil and regional climatic conditions, is essential before a marked increase in milk output could be obtained.

In the central regions, for example, this means potatoes, feed and sugar beets, carrots, egg-plants, pumpkins and turnips and in the southern regions fodder melons, pumpkins, eggplants and beets.⁴¹

He added that more attention must also be paid to raising wheat, sunflowers, kale, and silage crops.⁴² Definite steps must be taken to increase corn yields and expand the areas sown to corn for silage. At the same time silos must be built on every collective and State farm to ensure ensiling of five to six tons of high-grade fodder per cow.⁴³

Khrushchev said that it was exceptionally important to provide all livestock with shelter.⁴⁴ The „stall-and-pasture" system of sheltering cattle with the green conveyer method of feeding livestock (involving grazing livestock on natural and artificial pasture, as well as planting crops to

40. Ibid., p. 26.

41. Ibid., p. 27.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

supply green feed in seasons when grass is scarce) ought to be encouraged as a method of increasing the milk yield per cow.⁴⁵

He proposed that the economic year in animal husbandry should begin on October 1 instead of January 1 as previously.⁴⁶ He said that in the past, experience has shown that kolkhozes have been compelled to keep a large number of non-productive livestock alive until January 1, at which time, as the yearly census indicates, a considerable number of cattle are done away with. Many also died from inadequate and poor feeding during the long winter season.⁴⁷

Khrushchev cited many more examples of extremely unsatisfactory guidance in developing animal husbandry.⁴⁸ He described, as a major shortcoming, the barrenness in female livestock and the high incidence of disease, particularly among young livestock. Among many further examples of unsatisfactory guidance, he also cited the poor wool clip per sheep as being a major drawback to the country's production of wool.⁴⁹

Khrushchev assured his listeners that the time would come when the system of communal animal husbandry would become efficient enough to completely satisfy the farmer's

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., pp.26 and 27.

47. Ibid., p.27

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p.28 .

personal needs for such products to the point that it would be disadvantageous for him to possess livestock as personal property.⁵⁰ This was part of Khrushchev's plan to continue Stalin's drive toward the complete socialization of all industry and agriculture. He added, however, that

....until we reach this situation,...the presence of livestock as the personal property of a collective farm household is not a hindrance but a help to communal animal husbandry and is consequently advantageous both to the collective farmers and to the collective farms and the state.⁵¹

Khrushchev then confronted the plenum with the next urgent question to be solved: that of increasing production of potatoes and vegetables in order to meet the growing demand. He explained that

In recent years yields and gross harvests of these crops, far from increasing, have decreased. The area sown to vegetables is 250,000 hectares less than in 1941. The area sown to potatoes has increased in the country as a whole, but in certain provinces it is by no means near prewar level.⁵²

He cited the major reasons for this deficiency as being inadequate procurement prices, unfair delivery norms and the resultant weak material interest which the farmers had in growing these crops. For, although there was

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

a whole system of incentives for other crops such as cotton, sugar beets, tea and citrus fruits, there was still none for potatoes, eggplants, peppers, marrows, tomatoes, or green peas, and many other vegetables. Khrushchev suggested that State make deliveries of grain to farms growing mainly potatoes and vegetables.⁵³

But Khrushchev went on to contradict himself on raising procurement prices for potatoes and vegetables.

A further rise in procurement prices for potatoes and vegetables is impossible. It goes without saying that the Party and the government cannot and will not do this.⁵⁴

He argued that to extend the policy of increased procurement prices for these crops would necessarily entail raising their retail prices, which would make trade in them unprofitable.⁵⁵

Khrushchev said that for the present year, the State would have to encroach upon reserves, to make up the existing deficiency in potatoes and vegetables.⁵⁶ He suggested that

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., p.29.

55. Ibid. It appears as though Khrushchev admitted that procurement prices for potatoes and vegetables were inadequate in order to appease the farmers. In his following statement he announced that the State could not afford any immediate increase, and tried to absolve the government of any blame by adding „but here it must be stated that we have done as much as possible to raise procurement prices."

56. C.D., vol. v. no. 39 (1953), p.29.

the future source of raising farmers' income from potatoes and vegetables lay in expanded yields through a further mechanization of sowing, planting, cultivating and harvesting.⁵⁷

Khrushchev emphasized that the question of successfully mechanizing the cultivation of potatoes and vegetables could be solved by adopting more progressive planting methods, "enabling us to mechanize row cultivation fully". Next year, "the square-cluster" method must be used.

Potatoes planted by the square-cluster method with a cultivator or plow, as is well known, must be planted by hand. This permits introducing manure into the seed holes along with the seed potatoes, which is important in increasing yields...Fertilizers are utilized more rationally when introduced into seed holes.⁵⁸

He urged that in the spring of 1954, cabbages, tomatoes, eggplants, cucumbers, marrows, pumpkins, and water-melons also be planted by the square-cluster method with the maximum utilization of manure, peat and local fertilizers.⁵⁹

He criticized the collective farms for failing to meet the full sowing norm, and also for using small and poor quality seeds.

....frozen and damp potatoes are often stored for seed. When the storage bins are opened in the spring half the potatoes

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p.30.

are rotten. If every collective and state farm stores its seed potatoes in September,...taking care that the seeds come from the sections with the highest yields, that the potatoes are dry and will store well,...then by spring we will have enough good seed potatoes. 60

Khrushchev complained that the agricultural agencies had been planning the sowing of vegetable crops incorrectly, in that the planting of cabbages, cucumbers, tomatoes and other vegetables had been evenly distributed among all the collective farms in a given district without consideration as to particular soils or growing conditions. He pointed out that the most correct solution must be sought in concentrating vegetable crops in regions where the land is most suited to their cultivation.⁶¹

Khrushchev said that in the further interest of providing the population with every foodstuff, there must be an overall increase in the output of bean crops - peas, string beans, lentils and soybeans.⁶² Rice growing could be increased in Transcaucasia, Central Asia, South Kazakhstan and the Far East. The country's need for vegetable oil could be satisfied by also changing to the square-cluster method for sowing sunflower seed. In addition, the planting

60. Ibid., p.30.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p.31 .

of other oil bearing crops such as curly flax, castor oil, peanuts, mustard, and chanterelle could be effectively increased. New high grade varieties of Italian millet must be discovered and tried out at experimental stations, under collective and State farm conditions.⁶³

Khrushchev reported that although irrigated land sown to cotton exceeds the pre-war area by 317,000 hectares, cotton production must be further expanded in order to satisfy its increasing demand for industrial use.⁶⁴

The area sown to sugar-beets exceeds that of 1941 by 28 per cent. However, the population's need for sugar, now exceeds its output. This could be overcome only by expanding sown areas in the main sugar-beet regions and extending the crop to new areas.⁶⁵

Khrushchev said that such important technical crops as flax and hemp demand attention. In the last three years the areas sown to these crops have declined considerably, one of the chief hinderances being poor mechanization of primary cultivating and harvesting work.⁶⁶

He added that it is also important for farms to further expand the output of tobacco, makhorka (a grain

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p.32.

66. Ibid.

substitute for tobacco) tea, grapes, citrus, and other fruits.⁶⁷

Khrushchev urged that there be a considerable increase in the output of mineral fertilizers. He asked that serious attention be given to the matter of accumulating, storing correctly, and applying manure to the soil.⁶⁸ Steps must also be taken, he said, to mechanize labour-consuming operations such as loading, unloading and spreading manure on the fields, to organize the manufacture of manure spreaders and loaders and to introduce this equipment on collective and State farms.⁶⁹

Khrushchev then turned to the problem of improving the work of the MTS, without which high rates of development and large-scale production would not be possible.⁷⁰ A main shortcoming in the MTS work was the completely unsatisfactory utilization of equipment, a major reason for which was the failure to provide the MTS with permanent and qualified machine equipment operators.

The rich and complex machinery of the MTS needs skilled workers, but it is in the hands of seasonal workers assigned from the collective farms for the field work period...If a tractor driver likes, he goes to work...Today he drives a tractor, tomorrow he returns to the collective

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p.33.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

farm or departs for industry. This to a considerable degree explains the low work discipline and the large personnel turnover.⁷¹

He explained that 30-35 per cent of the tractor drivers leave the tractor brigades annually but -

When our crop yields rise, animal husbandry productivity increases, potato and vegetable growing expands and, thanks to this, collective farm income and pay for workday units rises, the wages of the tractor drivers and other tractor brigade operators will also rise considerably. This will undoubtedly stabilize the personnel situation.⁷²

At the same time he added that the system of training tractor and combine operators must also be changed.⁷³

The present system of training personnel in brief courses does not guarantee them the necessary technical background.

Here it must be noted that our educational institutions train personnel with higher and secondary skills without consideration of the need for them in agriculture.⁷⁴

Khrushchev recommended that not only must the periods of training be increased, but the existing schools reorganized into institutes for farm mechanization, with systems similar to those used in industrial trade schools.⁷⁵

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., p.34.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

He called attention to the "completely inadmissible situation" wherein the posts of directors, chief engineers, and shop foremen were filled by people without any specialized training. MTS chief engineers must be made subordinate to regional agricultural administrations instead of to MTS directors.⁷⁶

Khrushchev complained that farm equipment was frequently put out of commission prematurely because there were too few repair shops, garages, and machine sheds. In fact many MTS had no housing facilities for engineers and mechanics nor even dormitories for tractor drivers or other buildings. He stressed the importance of properly supplying the MTS with tools, metals and other material and, in particular, spare parts.⁷⁷

Electrification of farming must be stepped up by a more complete utilization of electricity from the existing rural power plants, by the construction of new plants; and also by joining the MTS and collective and State farms to the State power systems.⁷⁸

Khrushchev explained why the existing system of making payments in kind for MTS work must be revised.

We must end the incorrect practice of calculating the yields of grain and

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., p.35.

78. Ibid.

other farm produce according to the estimated yields of the unharvested crops instead of according to the actual harvests. The present system of determining crop yields does not induce MTS directors to carry work through to the end or to be concerned not only for raising the crops but for gathering them without losses. Therefore, we must base calculations on the harvest actually in the barns and make bonus payments for yields actually gathered, so that MTS workers will be directly interested in the actual harvests of grain and other farm produce.⁷⁹

In this plea to decentralize agricultural management, Khrushchev noted that the Ministry of Agriculture and Procurements and its local agencies did not conform to the demands for an efficient solution of the problems of the collective farms and MTS.

The apparatus is very unwieldy; it includes numerous administrations and departments which duplicate one another's work and are frequently idle. It is not surprising that the ministry does not show efficiency and accuracy in guiding local agencies, that it permits bureaucracy and red tape in settling pressing problems. The U.S.S.R. Ministry of Agriculture and Procurements is but feebly linked with practice, is isolated from the collective farms and the MTS. With no knowledge of the true state of affairs locally, the ministry nevertheless attempts to regulate from the center all phases of the work of local agricultural agencies, collective farms and MTS, issuing instructions which are often locally undesirable...The Ministry and its local

79. Ibid.

agencies have until now adopted an indifferent, passive attitude toward all that is new in agriculture; indeed, they have not noticed it...the ministry officials continue to guide in the old way, proceeding on the false assumption that only they know all and can do all.⁸⁰

He added, however, that his criticism did not mean that the role of the Ministry of Agriculture and Procurements has been diminished. On the contrary, the ministry must play an increasingly greater role. The ministry apparatus must be revised to conform to changed conditions and its staffs considerably decreased.⁸¹ It must now concentrate on planning for the various branches of agriculture, instead of just compiling voluminous summaries, lists, and reports. It must concern itself with the material and technical supplying and the financing of agriculture, on farm improvements, on selecting, placing and training personnel, on problems of propaganda, on applying advanced experience and scientific research and achievements and on problems of collective farm organization as well. Local agricultural agencies must be strengthened with personnel who, at the same time, must be brought closer to production.⁸² In this regard he recommended that

80. Ibid., pp.35 and 36.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

agronomical and zootechnical aid to the collective farms
be greatly strengthened:

Only 18,500 agricultural specialists, trained in higher or secondary schools, or merely 5% of the total, are working on the collective farms. There is only one specialist to five collective farms! On the MTS there are 50,000, or 14% of the specialists working: 75,000, or 21% are employed in the agricultural agency apparatus and are by no means adequately linked with collective farming.⁸³

In this regard he suggested that no less than 100,000 agronomists and zootechnicians be sent to work on the MTS, in order that each farm be served by one or two of these specialists.⁸⁴ The establishment of model farms would encourage the collective farm chairmen, board members, brigade leaders, and team leaders on lagging farms to make a thorough, on-the-spot study of the proper techniques and methods of their work. District and provincial agricultural exhibits must become important in propagandizing scientific achievements and advanced experience and in bringing about competition to apply them widely.⁸⁵

Khrushchev devoted the entire final section of his speech to what he considered to be at the root of all the aforementioned problems: the poor work of Party organizations in the countryside. He said that it was necessary to end

83. Ibid., p.36.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., p.37.

decisively the superficial approach to the guidance of agriculture. In this regard district Party committees must manifest greater concern for strengthening primary Party units on collective farms.⁸⁶ He further pointed out that although rural Party forces were not small, often the Party political work had been carried on in isolation from economic tasks.⁸⁷ He proposed that henceforth Party personnel be encouraged to assume personal responsibility for conditions on the collective farms and MTS and for political work among the farmers. Secretaries of the district, raion, Party committees and their deputies should conduct all their work in the MTS from where they can direct the „concrete guidance“ of the kolkhozes, and their work should be expanded to replace that presently done by the MTS deputy directors for political affairs. According to Khrushchev's proposal, the district Party committees should be empowered to manage the entire economic and cultural life of their respective districts, under the direct guidance of the First Secretary.⁸⁸

By virtue of Khrushchev's proposal to transform the post of assistant director of the MTS for political affairs, the lowest 'rung' in the Ministry of Agriculture,

86. Ibid., p.38.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., p.40.

into that of a district Party secretary, located within the MTS,,the position of the Communist Party in the countryside would undoubtedly be strengthened" and "the Party would utilize the MTS as a means of direct control over the peasantry."⁸⁹ Such an entirely new concept of a technically functional Party, active at the local level, indicated a major decentralization as compared with Stalin's inflexible policy of centering all control in the hands of the State bureaucrats, the Council of Ministers in Moscow, which had deprived the lower administrative levels of the necessary responsibility and initiative.

To attain success, Khrushchev added, greater attention must also be directed toward strengthening the MTS, and collective and State farms with qualified officials and administrative personnel.⁹⁰ He stated that on most collective farms the chairmen had no more than elementary education. Unsatisfactory selection of chairmen has resulted in frequent changes. Almost one-third of all chairmen had held their posts for less than one year, many having been dismissed as incapable or for misdemeanors. There were also cases where district Party committees had transferred inefficient or dishonest administrative personnel from one collective farm to another, thus imposing them upon the farmers. He urged

89. Roy D. Laird, D.E. Sharp and R. Sturtevant, The Rise and Fall of the MTS as an Instrument of Soviet Rule, Lawrence, Kansas, 1960, p. 72.

90. C.D., vol. v, no. 39 (1953), p.38.

the drafting of 50,000 urban management personnel as new collective farm chairmen.⁹¹ In this regard it is important to note that most of the urban management personnel were already members of the Communist Party.⁹² It is therefore clear that Khrushchev's proposal to improve the qualifications and reliability of farm officials implied not only that they receive more agricultural training, but that they be Communists as well.

Almost all Khrushchev's proposals were adopted by The Central Committee Resolution on Agriculture, on 7 September, 1953.⁹³ Ten days later he was appointed First Secretary and emerged as the main policy-maker in the field of agriculture.

His initial reforms produced an immediate and substantial impact. The farmers gained materially from the new higher prices, fairer procurement procedures and tax concessions.

91. Ibid., p.39.

92. David Granick, The Red Executive, Harvard, 1951, p.22 .

93. C.D., vol. v. no. 37 (1953), pp.3-15; and vol. v. no. 39 (1953), pp. 3-10. His recommendations to draft 50,000 urban personnel as farm chairmen and to subordinate MTS chief engineers to regional agricultural administrations instead of to MTS directors were not accepted. Also, in addition to the functions which Khrushchev proposed for the Ministry of Agriculture, the Plenary Decree established that the Ministry would henceforth supervise fulfillment of the State plan, leadership of the MTS, and observance of kolkhoz statutes.

The result was that within a year the share of agricultural products in the total volume of state purchases increased by 20% for grains and eggs, 30% for milk, meat and potatoes, and over 40% for vegetables. The government procurement price index increased by 107 per cent between 1952 and 1954.⁹⁴

This was accomplished mainly because Khrushchev recognized that the problem facing the Soviet farms could not be solved simply by the application of investment followed by further extractive measures of the State before many of the basic inefficiencies on the farms were first dealt with, and at the same time, the bureaucracy's traditional attitude toward technological conservatism changed.

Khrushchev was the first government leader to show the long over-due realization of the importance of the human element in the success or failure of any Soviet economic program or policy. Thus he was able to perceive the critical situation which was confronting the government. Whereas Stalin, Malenkov and Beria were concerned far less with problems of economic incentive and farm efficiency than with those of maintaining strict social discipline under central authority, Khrushchev was able to appreciate the urgency of modifying and gradually replacing the State's traditionally

94. Jerzy F. Karcz and V.P. Timoshenko, "Soviet Agricultural Policy, 1953-1962", FRI Food Research Institute Studies, vol. iv. no. 2. (1964), p.135.

inflexible central control over the kolkhozes, with measures of economic incentive and material self-interest for the farmers, factors virtually ignored since the early industrialization period. He saw that this was necessary before the peasants would care to assume any responsibility for increasing collective farm efficiency and lowering production costs, rather than spend most of their time working on their own garden plots.⁹⁵

However, as Nancy Nimitz correctly points out:

Success [ful farm policy after Stalin's death] was easy to attain in the sense that difficulties were obvious and opportunities to solve or bypass them less limited. One urgent problem was low farm income. Peasant incentives were poor and investment inadequate on almost all farms. Given the universality of these conditions, no great discrimination was needed to do good....When procurement prices paid by the government were far below costs, any price increase which swelled the income of the average farm was an improvement....The problem was not how to structure wages....so as to encourage concern for improving qualifications or reducing farm costs, but simply to pay farmers enough so they would work at all.⁹⁶

95. The writer disagrees with Herbert J. Ellison's "Commentary on Current Characteristics and Problems of the Soviet Rural Population", Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs (ed. by Roy D. Laird), Lawrence, Kansas, 1964, pp. 129 and 130. Mr. Ellison claims that the reforms were „aimed mainly to encourage a rapid increase of peasant production from private plots and from private livestock holdings". He made no mention of Khrushchev's primary purpose which was to increase overall farm output, particularly that from the socialist sector.

96. Nancy Nimitz, "Russia's Lean Years", Problems of Communism, May-June, 1965, p. 11.

Khrushchev therefore took advantage of the chance to improve the extremely poor economic situation on the farms knowing that his own popularity would be greatly enhanced and future opportunities opened for him to advance further farm policies. The Plenum's acceptance of Khrushchev's proposals in September, 1953, which was followed by Khrushchev's formal appointment as First Party Secretary, resulted in the immediate upgrading of the Party apparatus in agricultural management.⁹⁷ One of the major weaknesses of the Party throughout its history has been its comparatively small membership in the rural areas. Now, by contrast, with Khrushchev's moving the Party's influence closer to the farms, the farmers became effectively integrated into the Party machinery of Planning, administration, and control, which at least they found far more palatable than Stalin's coercive system of centralized State authority and absolute power.

97. Howard R. Swearer, "Agricultural Administration Under Khrushchev", Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs, (ed. by Roy D. Laird), op. cit., pp. 23 and 24.

CHAPTER IITHE VIRGIN LANDS PROGRAM

After having succeeded in persuading the Central Committee to adopt almost all his farm policies on 7 September, 1953, Khrushchev found it ideal timing to table his most spectacular policy proposal, the virgin lands program, at the Committee's next full session which met at the end of February 1954.

In his report to the Plenum's September meeting, Khrushchev was concerned principally with measures which would improve the poor state of livestock and resultant low output of animal products and particularly the Party's superficial approach to the guidance of agriculture at the local level. But at the same time he declared that the country's grain position, as far as the population's supply of bread was concerned, was satisfactory. At the February Plenum, however, Khrushchev announced that

Particular mention must be made of the tasks of increasing production of grain and utilizing virgin and idle lands. The Party considers grain farming to be the basis of all agriculture. The more grain there is, the more farm products the country will receive - bread, meat, fats, milk and butter. This is why we consider the increased output of grain to be a highly important and primary task....The Party Central Committee and Soviet government have recognized that to

fulfil this task it is necessary, along with raising the yield on all acreage, to put into cultivation 13,000,000 hectares of virgin and idle land, mainly in the Eastern provinces of the country.¹

That the situation came to a head when it did may be attributed to three main causes. At the time of the earlier Plenum, Khrushchev, although fully aware of the grain situation, had not yet acquired sufficient authority or prestige to launch such a massive program as the virgin lands. The second consideration was that Beria's arrest in July 1953 had had the effect of considerably downgrading the infamous Security Police.² With the weakening of this force, it might have been very awkward for the Party to maintain discipline on newly opened virgin territories. Khrushchev also said that it would have been a mistake to launch such a vast program before the cadres of farm machine operators and agricultural specialists had increased and agriculture was equipped with first-class machinery.

This, Comrades, is a huge task. To accomplish it was beyond our powers in the past. Now that the cadres of farm machine operators and agricultural specialists have increased and agriculture is equipped with first-class machinery, we have every opportunity to put new areas into cultivation on these tremendous scales and in this short period of time. This year 120,000 tractors (in 15-h.p. units), as well as many other machines,

1. C.D., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p.4.

2. Pethybridge, op. cit., p.126.

are being sent to MTS and state farms to work the new lands.³

The virgin lands program was an 'emergency' program for growing wheat in vast areas of virgin and fallow soil in the semi-arid and sparsely populated areas of the country. According to Khrushchev, this would alleviate the "immediate" urban shortage of higher-grade bread and flour, and at the same time, make available more adequate livestock feed supply on the farms, all at a relatively low cost.⁴

Expanding the area sown to grain by developing virgin and idle lands in regions of Kazakhstan, Siberia, the Urals, the Volga region and some areas of the north Caucasus is an important and completely feasible means of increasing grain production in a short time. These regions have tremendous stretches of undeveloped fertile black earth and chestnut soils, from which high yields can be obtained without major additional capital investments.⁵

The virgin lands of northern Kazakhstan and southern Siberia were characterized by several attractive features. Firstly, since these regions had no large urban centres to feed, it would not be hard for them to deliver almost half of their grain output to the State, in order to relieve the

3. C.D., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p.4.

4. Ibid., vol. v. no. 50 (1953), pp. 37 and 38.

5. Ibid., vol. vi. no. 13 (1954), p.11.

country's severe grain shortages. Secondly, since wheat would be the main crop to be planted on the virgin lands, Khrushchev foresaw the possibility of diverting a portion of the wheat acreages in the older farming areas to the production of some industrial and other crops.⁶

In early 1954, the struggle between Khrushchev and Malenkov in the press reached a climax, in view of the fact that Khrushchev's virgin lands scheme met with much more serious opposition than had the agricultural reforms which he introduced at the September 1953 Plenum.

In the first place Malenkov's policy in the past had been to increase crop yields per acre in areas already under cultivation rather than to sow new ground. Khrushchev's new scheme went completely counter to this system. It is probable that Malenkov was averse to the idea simply because it was put forward by the member of the collective leadership who was rapidly becoming his most serious rival in the power struggle; but he had other reasons as well. Since the new project entailed a reversal of the policy of increased yields per acre embodied in the fifth Five-Year Plan, the organizational work of the economic and state planners would be disrupted. More important still, tight party control would be established in the new areas....⁷

But Khrushchev's opponents in the Party curbed his proposals by constantly suppressing his addresses, by

6. Ibid., vol. vi no. 1 (1954), pp. 19 and 20; and Ibid., vol. vi. no. 12, (1954), pp. 3 and 6.

7. Pethybridge, op. cit., p.132.

invoking a law which had been promulgated after Stalin's death. According to this law,

....not one important measure could be undertaken, nor any speech published by a member of the Presidium or a Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee without preliminary group discussion.⁸

But in early 1954, despite the opposition of Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovitch, Khrushchev's Virgin lands program did manage to win over a majority in the Party Presidium which was convinced that the plan was economically practical in view of the prevailing shortage of grain.⁹ On March 6, 1954, the Central Committee of the Communist Party disclosed that the 1953 total grain acreage (other than wheat and rye) was still 8,900,000 hectares below the 1940 level,¹⁰ and this, together with the highly disappointing harvest, caused the grain problem to become a point of public issue.

In this connection the Party Central Committee plenary session notes that the present grain production level, both for gross harvest as well as for its marketable portion, does not meet the growing needs of the economy. A disparity has arisen between the quantity of grain supplied the state and the increase in its expenditure. The quantity of grain remaining on the collective farms after the fulfillment of their obligations to the state does not cover all the needs of the collective farms communal economy;

8. M.L. Karelina, D.I. Nadtocheyev, and I.G. Ryabtsev, (eds.) Lektsii po Istorii KPSS (Moscow, 1963), p. 349, cited by Ploss, op. cit., p. 84.

9. C.D., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p.19.

10. Ibid., vol. vi, no. 9 (1954), p.4.

on many collective farms the grain issue to the collective farmers for workday units is low; particularly little feed grain, without which a sharp advance in animal husbandry is impossible, remains.¹¹

Khrushchev's findings were incorporated in the Plenum's decree which ordered the immediate growing of over 30,000,000 acres of hard wheat in Kazakhstan and western Siberia, and territories east of the lower Volga as well as in the southern Urals.¹²

Although the initial scope of the plan was very modest for the 1954-1955 period, by August 1954, only five months after the program was first put into effect, Khrushchev extended the plan to include approximately 69-74 million acres by the end of 1956.¹³ His subsequent extensions brought the total to roughly 104 million acres which resulted in an overall increase in soviet crop expansion of roughly 29 per cent.¹⁴

From the outset, Khrushchev decided to grant the virgin lands first priority on the supply of equipment and other materials servicing agriculture.

The joint resolution of the Party and State, published on 28 March, 1954, decreed that the greater part

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p.19.

13. Ibid., vol. vi. no. 33 (1954), p.5.

14. Ibid., vol. xiv. no. 8 (1962), p.6.

of agricultural machinery be placed at the disposal of the virgin lands program. In 1954 this was to include 120,000 15-h.p. tractors, 10,000 combines and "the appropriate number" of tractor-drawn plows, seeders, heavy disk harrows, cultivators and other farm machinery.¹⁵

Again, at the Central Committee Plenum in January 1955, he stressed the necessity of increasing production of agricultural machinery by making better use of existing facilities and by constructing new plants, and quoted Lenin to the effect that

....the only material base for socialism
can be large-scale machine industry
capable of re-organizing agriculture
also.¹⁶

At the same time, Khrushchev was concerned quite as much with establishing firm local Party control over a newly settled areas, particularly through the new regional authorities which were set up as part of his plan to strengthen the Party's grip on the countryside.¹⁷ In this regard the Central Committee decreed that

Party organizations must see that every
toiler of the countryside - man and woman
collective farmer, state farm and MTS
worker and agricultural specialist - under-
stands profoundly the tasks for further

15. Ibid., vol. vi. no. 13 (1954), p.13.

16. Ibid., vol. vii. no. 6 (1955), p.3.

17. J.M., "The Agricultural Planning Order", Soviet Studies, vol. vii, no. 1 (1955), p. 94.

developing agriculture and that everyone works selflessly on his sector to carry out these tasks. It is necessary to recruit more extensively our rural intelligentsia - teachers, doctors, agronomists, zootechnicians and engineers - for conducting political and mass cultural work in the countryside. They are a tremendous force upon which Party organizations can and must rely....The press, the radio, motion pictures and other propaganda and agitation tools must be used in explanatory work....the Party Central Committee plenary session requires Party, trade union and Young Communist League organizations to develop explanatory work among rural equipment operators, specialists and agricultural administrative personnel in order to recruit volunteers for permanent work to develop new lands.¹⁸

In other words the Party had to be prepared to intervene as the major instrument of political discipline as the State's Secret Police had done for Stalin.¹⁹

Khrushchev felt that Party supervision over the farms would be most easily facilitated through the State farm system.

The area sown to grain crops on State farms is to be increased 2,300,000 hectares through the development of virgin, idle and other lands on present state farms and 2,000,000 hectares from lands in the State Land Reserve.²⁰

The farm labourers would be paid as employees of the government and therefore neither share the profits in cash or in kind.

18. C.D., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p.21.

19. Swearer, op. cit., p.9.

20. C.D., vol. vi. no. 13 (1954), p. 11.

The prevalence of large State farms would also facilitate the task of Government collections. Thus, before the war the Sovkhozy comprised only 9 per cent of the total 'sown area' in the U.S.S.R.: by 1959 the proportion had risen as high as 30 per cent as a result of opening up the 'virgin lands'.²¹

Khrushchev had long hoped to build agrogorods, modern agricultural towns consisting mainly of apartment buildings, in the new lands. This plan, however, never did materialize.²²

Youth volunteers sent from European Russia to provide labour, however, found very inadequate accommodation when they arrived, as well as mismanagement of all kinds. As Khrushchev himself said,

The storming of the new lands cannot wait until the basic necessities are installed for the settlers since that might take up to three years and the public now required more nourishing and appetizing foods. For what is that very same communist society without sausage? Really, comrades, in the communist society you will not tell people to go and eat a potato without butter. The communist society presupposes the creation of such conditions for our nation whereby people will be assured according to their need. Surely a man who lives in the communist society will not ask for turnips

21. For further statistical data and discussions on the establishment of new State farms on the virgin land territories, see for example: Kahan, op cit., p. 292; Ellison, op. cit., p. 131; and Swearer, op. cit., p. 20.

22. C.D., vol. xii, no. 50 (1960), pp. 8 and 9.

in the grocery shop, but will demand better foodstuffs. But better foodstuffs cannot be created without an abundance of grain.²³

The lack of amenities however drove away a good deal of the permanent labour force.²⁴ Khrushchev provided no special incentives for the new peasants who had been living in these remote areas over the years. Besides, he failed to take into account that in these distant areas he would be dealing with a peasantry which was somewhat old-fashioned, opinionated, and without the same morale or incentive as those settled in more heavily populated and civilized central areas.²⁵

Khrushchev's decision to develop the virgin lands resulted initially in success, as evidenced by substantial increases in the country's general grain yield. A steady increase in the country's wheat production was maintained but for no other reason than by consistently maintaining an enormous grain acreage. For the extensions of acreage in southern Siberia and Kazakhstan provided a kind of insurance against mediocre crops in other regions of the country.²⁶

But the increases in acreage did not yield proportionate increases in output, as the new land had cultivated

23. From Khrushchev's speech in Moscow, 15 February, 1954, unpublished, as cited by Ploss, op cit., pp. 84 and 85.

24. A. Nove, "Soviet Agriculture Marks Time", Foreign Affairs, (July 1962), p. 579.

25. D.B. Shimkin, "Current Characteristics and Problems of the Soviet Rural Population", Soviet Agriculture and Peasant Affairs, (ed. by Roy D. Laird), op cit., p. 101.

26. M. Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, Harvard, 1964, pp. 546 and 547.

lower yields than the old.

....the existence of a fabulous reserve of cultivable land is a Soviet myth, probably originating with Lenin....Later in 1929, Stalin confirmed the thesis „The question of cultivating unused and virgin lands is of tremendous importance for our agriculture.“²⁷

In fact, on purely scientific grounds, development of much of the thinly soiled areas of virgin land for agricultural purposes was clearly an error from the very beginning.

For, from the outset

....Khrushchev's agronomy, which boils down to a most primitive and most unscientific subdivision of the crops into low- and high-yielding, is based on output of feed units per hectare, with no (or in any case, highly insufficient) consideration of other properties of the various crops and of rotations, as well as with no regard for differences in the outputs of labour, fertilizer, and the like....It requires that every piece of land return a yield in a given year. This necessarily leads to a negative attitude toward fallowing in all areas of the U.S.S.R. almost without exception....in the selection of crops no attention (or, in any case, insufficient attention) is given to the differences in soil and climate. In general, one crop, one practice is good, and the other crop, the other practice is bad for all conditions of soil and climate. Any qualifications made [by Khrushchev] are grossly inadequate.²⁸

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27. W.A.D. Jackson, "The Soviet Approach to the Good Earth: Myth and Reality" Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs, (ed. by Roy D. Laird), op. cit., p. 173.
28. Naum Jasny, "Low- and High-Yielding Crops in the USSR", Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs, (ed. by Roy D. Laird), op. cit., pp. 215 and 219.

Khrushchev was in too much of a hurry to think of having the actual depth of the soil measured, incredible as this might seem.

Khrushchev's political behaviour was, in fact, embodied in a series of crash programs often ill-considered and inadequately prepared - the Virgin Lands in agriculture.²⁹

Most of the new acreage which Khrushchev opened for expansion was located in areas with unfavourable climatic conditions. They were characterized by very long and severe winters and resultant short growing seasons. In summer many areas were particularly vulnerable to dust storms and drought, which was usually followed by a cold and rainy harvest season. They were therefore zones of hazardous agriculture, characterized by sharply fluctuating yields and suited only to the growing of certain spring crops. Grain farming in these areas proved unreliable and costly, in both lost soil fertility and resources employed.³⁰

These natural disadvantages were compounded by serious errors of mismanagement which Khrushchev himself often criticized in public.³¹ Not only had the land been misused, but no acceptable system of cultivation or crop

29. R. conquest, Russia After Khrushchev, London, 1965, p.110.

30. Fainsod, op. cit., pp.546 and 547.

31. C.D., vol. xi. no. 28(1959), pp. 6 and 7.

rotation had been agreed upon. The continuous ploughing up of soil had reduced fertility and increased erosion and weed infestation. Many of the critical crop failures could have been partially avoided by the annual rotation of part of the acreage as summer fallow. At the same time, additional new land could have been brought under cultivation to replace acreage which was very badly worn, thereby maintaining the original amount and quality of acreage sown.³²

On the other hand, the low general yield cannot entirely be blamed on organization, nor on climate or soil. Insufficient fertilizers and the poor quality of seeds caused by poor storage facilities were also responsible.³³ In addition, as Khrushchev said in his speech on automation on June 29, 1959, fall plowing had been hampered in the virgin lands regions because of tractor and spare parts shortages which delayed the fieldwork during the short spring season, adversely affecting crop yields.³⁴

The Virgin Lands program proved to be far more costly than originally anticipated, particularly in terms of equipment and machinery required by the new project, and the large-scale construction of new facilities that had become necessary.³⁵ The program was frequently attacked by

32. Nove, op. cit., p.579.

33. F.A. Durgin, Jr., "The Virgin Lands Programme, 1954-1960", Soviet Studies, vol. viii. no. 3 (1962), p.273.

34. C.D., vol. xi. no. 28 (1959), p.4.

35. Durgin, op. cit., pp.269-273.

his opponents, Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, as being overly adventurous and economically unsound.³⁶

A precarious balance of forces took shape in the leadership...of the nine men who held membership in the party Presidium at the time, four were later identified as dissentients, viz., Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Bulganin. The resistance of Molotov was bitterest. For three years he obstinately kept silent about virgin lands in policy speeches which touched on agriculture...The clash over investment priorities was officially disclosed after the supporters of Khrushchev managed to call the Central Committee into plenary session on June 22, 1957, for a week-long discussion that would ultimately reverse a 7-4 vote in the party Presidium for dismissal of the first secretary as a fledgling usurper and menace to hierarchical discipline. The decree of the session charged that Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Molotov had, among other things, "waged an entirely unwarranted struggle against the party's appeal...." Molotov alone was singled out for opposition to the new lands program in the decree of the June 1957 Central Committee Plenum; the others were named at the Committee session in December 1958. Malenkov, perhaps, was not originally accused of fighting Khrushchev on the issue because of the uneven performances in Kazakhstan prior to the record harvest of 1958.³⁷

Yet the program was acclaimed by the government as a financial success in that it cost only 5.3 billion roubles, while the State, in turn, received more than 8.6 billion

36. C.D., vol. x. no. 50 (1959), pp. 21 and 22.

37. Ploss, op. cit., pp. 82 and 110.

new roubles from the turnover tax and profits on the increased volumes of grain which the program produced.³⁸ But calculations of this sort failed to take into account the very substantial waste resulting from the high degree of labour turnover, shortages of spare parts for the new tractors and grain combines, as well as of the frequent necessity to deprive the old farms of their basic machinery requirements and often the personnel who had been trained to operate them.³⁹

Thus, Khrushchev's highly controversial effort of opening up of the virgin lands did not come up to full expectations. In fact, by 1963, the most that Khrushchev himself could claim was that it served its purpose by stepping up grain production during the most critical years.

Just as, since 1928, any overall increase in Soviet agricultural output had mainly resulted from an expansion of sown acreage, Khrushchev's effort to increase the areas sown also coincided with a failure to raise the yields per acre significantly, except in the case of certain industrial crops.⁴⁰

38. Tsentral 'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, Naradnoe Khoziaistvo SSR v 1961 godu, Moscow, 1962, p. 375; as cited by Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., p. 130.

39. Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., p. 130; and Durgin, op. cit., pp. 271-275.

40. Ellison, op. cit., p. 130.

The virgin lands development has undoubtedly been the most spectacular and expensive innovation in agricultural policy. A crash program to increase grain production by extension of arable lands rather than by intensifying production in more fertile regions, it was responsible for the major part of the 50 per cent increase in land under cultivation by 1958.... however by the beginning of the 1960's the program had not met, and did not hold much promise of meeting, the main productive needs of Soviet agriculture.⁴¹

The main premise of the virgin lands program was openly repudiated by a conference of agronomists which announced in June, 1960 that a highly intensive form of agriculture should replace the extensive form which had been founded mainly on the basis of increasing cultivated areas.⁴²

Khrushchev was more successful in his efforts to achieve what he considered to be an ideologically more acceptable form of agricultural organization, particularly the expansion of the area of socialist production. For, the total increase in the area of sovkhoz land nearly tripled between 1953 and 1958. A third of this increase was due to the opening of new areas, and the other two-thirds resulted from the re-organization of kolkhozes which were economically weak.⁴³

41. Jackson, op. cit., p. 172.

42. C.D., vol. xii. no. 24 (1960), pp. 6, 7 and 11.

43. Ellison, op. cit., p. 131.

In the final analysis, though the virgin lands program proved ultimately disappointing in the face of Khrushchev's initial expectations, it was not as clear-cut a failure as is frequently alleged. For, during a few very critical years, it did, in fact, bridge the gap between supply and rising demand. The problem facing the Soviet leaders after Stalin's death was not one that could have been solved simply through the continued extraction of produce from the peasants. The ratio of townspeople (mainly food consumers) to country farmers (mainly food producers) had risen to 52:48 by 1963. Simultaneously, and mainly as a result of Khrushchev's virgin lands program, between 1953 and 1961 the feed crop acreage had increased by 87.5 per cent, sugar beet production rose by 89.5 per cent and the total area devoted to industrial crops increased by 13.6 per cent.⁴⁴ „So great an expansion in so short a period has no parallel in agricultural history.”⁴⁵

Perhaps most important of all, the new grain supplies did make it possible to re-allocate part of the older areas formerly devoted to grain to the production of livestock, industrial crops and fodder, according to Khrushchev's original plan.

44. Tsentral 'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR Narodnoe Khoziaistvo SSR v 1961 godu Moscow, 1962, pp. 331, 332 and 337; as cited by Karcz and Timoshenko, op cit., p. 131.

45. M. Frankland, Khrushchev, Middlesex, 1966, p. 104.

In a very real sense the virgin lands program made Khrushchev's corn program possible, particularly for the increase in the areas sown with corn for fodder. In January 1955, he ordered corn planted in both Northern Kazakhstan and Siberia,⁴⁶ on just about every kind of terrain: on flat and hilly country, and in both warm and cold regions, earning Khrushchev the nickname Kukuruzchik (corn enthusiast).

Khrushchev's program for corn expansion was aimed directly at remedying the acute shortage of fodder which, he rightly considered, was responsible for the serious weakness in the livestock sector of the Soviet economy. Khrushchev was very impressed by the successful cultivation of corn as a major fodder crop in the United States.⁴⁷ Although climatic conditions in Russia are not favourable for the growing of corn beyond a limited area in the south, the rest of the country being either too cold or too dry, Khrushchev went ahead in 1955 setting a goal of 70 million corn acres to be sown before 1960,⁴⁸ which would mean nearly a sevenfold increase as compared with 1954. Besides, Khrushchev realized that considerable extension of corn culture would be involved in areas where the growing season was far too short to permit the corn grain to mature properly, and so consequently, he

46. C.D., vol. vii. no. 6 (1955), pp. 4 and 5.

47. Fainsod, op. cit., p. 548.

48. C.D., vol. vii. no. 4 (1955), p. 18.

proposed that a very high proportion of corn would have to be kept in reserve as silage, before the ears were formed, or could be used for green forage.⁴⁹

Khrushchev's corn plan was a hurried program which was introduced impulsively, in spite of climatic obstacles and without adequate preparation or forethought. Khrushchev neglected to think of using the proper varieties of corn seed, fertilizer, or tilling machinery, nor did he, in this particular instance, consider introducing the proper incentives which might possibly have made the farmers take a more favourable attitude to the widespread adoption of that crop.⁵⁰

Although the underlying idea behind Khrushchev's corn program was sound, it met with very limited success. Since the corn was sown chiefly in cold and dry regions, production was generally low. But over the long run the excessive concentration upon this crop did result in an increase both in the quantity and the quality of the country's fodder supply, which was certainly a contributing factor to the increase of milk yields. On the other hand, had a more careful and balanced program been introduced, the corn yield would have been significantly greater than it was.⁵¹

49. Abram Bergson and Simon Kuznets, Economic Trends in The Soviet Union, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, pp. 228-230.

50. Nove, op. cit., p. 581.

51. Ibid.

The major trouble had been Khrushchev's campaigning methods themselves, which resulted in a very rapid extension in corn planting, but to a large extent in unsuitable areas and under poor conditions.⁵² In fact, Khrushchev had repeatedly claimed that corn could be grown as far north as Archangel.⁵³ This was an example of Khrushchev's habitual tendency to overdo a good idea and to impose his views by decree, spoiling many of the good effects which such a plan might have produced with a little more afterthought and care. For example, he ordered that corn be cultivated in 'square clusters',⁵⁴ although he was constantly being advised by professional agronomists that it often paid to grow corn in long rows, side by side. But agricultural experts or officials who failed to see things his way, had to be either re-educated or forthwith removed. Consequently, in some areas where corn was simply planted 'by order' the yields often turned out to be very low, particularly in the Ural and Volga regions.⁵⁵

These weaknesses were, for a time, concealed by Khrushchev in his 'official' published averages.

52. A Bergson, The Economics of Soviet Planning, New Haven, Conn., 1964, p. 221.

53. C.D., vol. vii. no. 15 (1955), pp. 10 and 12.

54. Ibid., p. 11.

55. Nove, op. cit., pp. 581 and 582.

The important fact was that only in the southern regions of Russia where the growing season is sufficiently long can corn be cultivated to the fullest degree of maturity. Elsewhere, where the season was shorter, the corn crop could be used only as green-fodder.

In his report to the plenary session on agriculture on 5 March 1962, Khrushchev admitted that the use of corn for green fodder was practically useless except as a supplement to summer feed. At the same time he urged a higher output of highly developed „corn with ears, sugar beets for livestock fodder, peas and fodder beans on every collective and State farm.”⁵⁶

This indicated, contrary to his previous statements, that the extensive sowing of corn did not necessarily provide the ultimate solution to the Soviet grain production problem.⁵⁷

The final result was that slowly and gradually the cultivation of corn was quietly dropped in several of the newer areas. It did, nonetheless, provide a new and valuable crop in certain regions where they discovered it did pay to grow it. For, instead of continuing to extend the sown area by ploughing up marginal land, corn farming was intensified in the western and southern areas with better climate, through the application of more fertilizers.

56. C.D., vol. xiv. no. 8 (1962), p. 10.

57. „Expanded corn sowings in our country are the best possible means for increasing grain production....It will also be expedient to substitute corn for various fodder crops (grass, root crops) as well as for less productive fodder crops.” Khrushchev's report on Increasing Livestock Products, 25 January 1955, C.D., vol. vii. no. 6 (1955), pp. 4 and 5.

CHAPTER THREEDECENTRALIZATION: THE ELIMINATION OF THE MACHINE AND TRACTOR STATIONS AND THE ABOLITION OF PRICE 'QUOTAS'

On 6 March 1954, the Central Committee of the Communist Party disclosed that the 1953 total grain acreage (other than wheat and rye) was still 8,900,000 hectares below that of 1940¹ and approved Khrushchev's proposal to launch an emergency program of sowing over 30,000,000 acres of wheat in the virgin territories.²

By the spring of 1954, Khrushchev emerged into a position of new public prominence, which was beginning to pose a serious threat to Malenkov's primacy in the Party structure.³ In the summer of 1954 he was in a strong enough position to see that the Party would be listed first in all pronouncements issued jointly with the State.⁴

Khrushchev was constantly trying to discredit his ministerial opponents, and by early 1955 he had accumulated enough influence, by virtue of his stronger position in the Party and his victories over Malenkov and others over agricultural policy issues, that he was able to effect Malenkov's

1. C.D., vol. vi. no. 9 (1954), p. 4.

2. Ibid., vol. vi. no. 10 (1954), p. 19.

3. Ploss, op cit., pp. 87 and 89.

4. C.D. vol. vi. no. 33 (1954), pp. 4 and 5.

dismissal from the Council of Ministers. On 8 February 1955, Malenkov, while resigning as Premier made an unprecedented statement, in which he referred to his „inadequacy of experience", and took upon himself the „blame" for what he admitted to be „the unsatisfactory position that has arisen in agriculture", and despite the fact that agriculture had been almost wholly managed by Khrushchev for the past year and a half.⁵

Khrushchev was now in a position to move toward the decentralization of agricultural planning. A decree of 9 March 1955, assigned responsibility for detailed production planning of crops and livestock to the collective farms themselves.⁶ Central planning was henceforth to be confined to the setting of government purchase prices for farm products as well as to deciding the volume of work which the MTS were expected to perform.⁷ Henceforth, as long as they 'fulfilled the plan', each kolkhoz was (in theory) free to plan its own output. At the plenary session, it was agreed that:

The existing system of agricultural planning, with its excessive centralization and the great number of indexes which are worked out for the collective farms, Machine and Tractor Stations and State farms, has not been necessary

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5. R.S., "Malenkov's Letter of Resignation" Soviet Studies, vol. vii. no. 1 (1955), pp. 92 and 93.
6. C.D., vol. vii. no. 7 (1955), pp. 16 and 17.
7. Ibid., p. 17.

from the state point of view....With such bureaucratic, inordinate planning, divorced from reality, the chief thing was overlooked - the need for planning a volume of marketed output by the collective and State farms to meet the country's requirements of agricultural products.⁸

Shortly thereafter the government ordered dissolution of the district agricultural administrations, and the transfer of their technical services to the MTS.⁹

Then in April of 1955, Khrushchev announced a mass replacement of collective farm chairmen by local urban party workers. In addition, a team of instructors from the Party was placed in each Machine Tractor Station, and given the power to interfere directly in the collective farm management.¹⁰ This decree, however, gave local authorities as well as the MTS certain new farm planning and supervisory responsibilities which frequently encroached upon the usual and regular planning functions of the collective farms themselves. Besides there always existed the danger of the new local officials trying to use their expanded powers to put their own interests ahead of those of the State.

Moreover, the situation was now further complicated by the fact that for most farm products there were two sets

8. Ibid., p.16.

9. Ibid., vol. vii. no. 5 (1956), pp. 7 and 8; and vol. vii. no. 10 (1956), pp. 4 and 5.

10. Ibid., vol. vii. no. 14 (1955), pp. 8 and 10; and vol. vii. no. 15 (1955), p. 13 and 14.

of prices: those fixed by the Government for their purchases of farm products, and the usually higher free market prices.¹¹ Consequently, kolkhoz managers were continuously confronted by a multiplicity of yardsticks and pressures which obstructed proper planning procedures from the bottom up. There continued the frequent turnover and irresponsible removal of collective farm managers; in fact the importance of the managerial function of collective farm chairmen and his assistants in the success of the kolkhozes posed a serious problem. Khrushchev's regime was never actually able to solve it satisfactorily, despite many drives to move reliable Party personnel from the cities to the farms and the very large number of agricultural specialists being trained by colleges and vocational schools. Certainly, collective and State farms were never able to organize their personnel as well as the factories.¹²

Khrushchev tried to alleviate the situation by introducing more regular payments for labour. Arrangements were made for the collective farmers to draw monthly money payments from the farm administration against the final distribution of labour remuneration, up to the value of approximately half the

11. With few exceptions such as cotton and a few other commodities for which there was no free market price, since their whole output had to be sold to the government.

12. C.D., vol. vii. no. 14 (1955), pp. 12 and 13; vol. vii. no. 17 (1955), p. 25; and vol. vii. no. 22 (1955), p. 25.

compulsory deliveries of the major products.¹³ However, it was found that the poorer farms often had no cash on hand until after the harvest was over.¹⁴

At the same time Khrushchev recommended a broader use of the bonus type premiums for both individuals and groups of labourers working on the collective farms.¹⁵ But this proved to have a detrimental effect on the other workers who did not necessarily qualify for these productivity bonuses, and as a result often had to suffer a reduction in the payments for their own basic labour in order that sufficient funds be available for the payment of the bonus premiums.

The system of issuing bonuses or pay deductions in proportion to harvest plan fulfillment, also led to further complications. For under these conditions, the peasants would not work when they noticed that the harvest was very far behind the plan. They realized that however hard they might work, the plan yield could never be attained and they would be penalized in any case.¹⁶

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13. Ibid., vol. vii. no. 19 (1955), p. 5; and vol. vii. no. 10 (1956), p. 5; and Direktivy KPSS i sovetskogo pravitel'stva, po Khoziaistvennym Voprosam, vol. 4, Moscow, 1958, pp. 603-05; cited by Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., pp. 136 and 138.
14. C.D., vol. vii. no. 19 (1955), p. 5; and A. Nove, The Soviet Economy, London, 1965, p. 129.
15. C.D., vol. vii. no. 5 (1956), pp. 28 and 29; and vol. vii. no. 20 (1956), p. 11.
16. A. Nove, "Incentives for Peasants and Administrators", Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs, (ed. by R.D. Laird), op. cit., p. 58.

In this way a certain distortion in the structure of peasant incentives tended to offset Khrushchev's measures to reduce peasant income inequalities. For, particularly in a planned economy, the less directly these bonus incentives were related to effort, the harder it was to make them effective, especially where the farmers had the option of consuming the produce rather than selling it. This left only the private sector of Soviet agriculture to respond to incentive stimuli.¹⁷

Yet in this regard, Khrushchev introduced legislation in 1956 which allowed the collective farm management to reduce the size of the peasant's household plot as well as the number of animals which the peasants could keep on each plot.¹⁸

By the time of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, Khrushchev was virtually at the helm of the State. In contrast to Stalin, Khrushchev had tried to strengthen the Party apparatus and use it as his primary instrument of rule. At the same time it was gradually becoming clear that he would have to rule through the Central Committee and not above it as Stalin had done after 1936. Throughout his entire administration Khrushchev was forced to cope with increasing internal tensions within the Party leadership itself.¹⁹ For his

17. G. Grossman, "Notes for a Theory of the Command Economy", Soviet Studies, vol. xv. no. 2 (1963), pp. 118 and 121.

18. C.D., vol. vii. no. 10(1956), p. 4.

19. Ploss, op. cit., p. 61.

rivals, and most notably in the economic segment of the economy, were sufficiently strong to force the inclusion of their representatives in the Party Presidium, and counter not only his policies where they saw fit, but also his drive toward attaining supreme power. Quite clearly this power struggle played an important but by no means the major role in Khrushchev's process of promulgating agricultural reforms, which, in turn, were of key significance in the struggle between Khrushchev and the 'anti-party' group within the leadership.²⁰

In 1957 and 1958 Khrushchev took certain steps which resulted in one of the greatest upheavals within the Soviet Union since 1928. He felt that the concentration of so much authority in Moscow, with its topheavy staffs, made control of delays and illegal practices almost impossible. As he pointed out, direct control of all production from Moscow had developed an extremely bloated and wasteful administrative apparatus.²¹

Khrushchev's efforts to decentralize agricultural administration were motivated partly by his desire to undercut the power of the Council of Ministers. He felt that

20. Ibid., pp. 82, 102, 187 and 190; and R. Lowenthal, "The Nature of Khrushchev's Power", Russia Under Khrushchev, (ed. by A. Brumberg), op.cit., p. 118.

21. C.D., vol. viii. no. 52 (1956), pp. 11-13; vol. ix. no. 14 (1957), p. 23; vol. ix. no. 18 (1957), pp. 5-8; and vol. ix. no. 34 (1957), pp. 28 and 29.

decentralization of the bureaucracy would simultaneously strengthen the Party apparatus, particularly in its function of seeing that lower officials followed national plans.²²

Khrushchev decentralized the country's entire economic apparatus, and established local economic councils, Sovnarkhozy, in each economic region, replacing the thirty-odd centralized economic ministries.²³ This meant that from now on the State planning committee was responsible for basic major agricultural policies only, thus giving far more responsibility and flexibility to the local farm officials.²⁴ In the social structure of the Soviet Union, this change meant also that power was shifted from the top State bureaucrats to the lower functionaries.²⁵ In doing this, it was Khrushchev's intention to break down the united strength of the technological intelligentsia. The increasing power of the 'Managerial class' had for some time been bothering him as becoming a possible threat to the Party's primacy as opposed to that of the State.²⁶

When Khrushchev's new plan for decentralization met with resistance from the anti-Party group in the Central

22. Swearer, op. cit., p. 11; and Ploss, op. cit., pp. 103.

23. C.D., vol. ix. no. 18 (1957), pp. 11-15; and vol. ix. no. 19 (1957), pp. 4-6; and vol. ix. no. 20 (1957), pp. 12-16.

24. G. Hodnett, "Khrushchev and Party-State Control", Politics in the Soviet Union, (ed. by A. Dallin and A.F. Westin), New York, 1966, pp. 122 and 126; and Ploss, op. cit. p. 92.

25. L. Schapiro, The Government and Politics of the Soviet Union, London, 1965, pp. 129-131.

26. Lowenthal, op. cit., p. 118; and Ploss, op. cit., pp. 72 and 102.

Committee, he solved the problem on 29 June 1967, by removing and transferring to subordinate positions in remote regions, Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich from the Central Committee and the Presidium, and Shepilov from the Central Committee as well as from his post as its secretary.²⁷ He charged these members with factionalism within the Central Committee, with resistance against new economic plans and dogmatic adherence to outdated methods,²⁸ as well as attempting to block his policy of peaceful co-existence.²⁹

So, in effect, whereas Stalin had used the State to systematically accumulate control over the farms, Khrushchev relaxed this control by decentralizing agricultural management. Yet, at the same time, he more effectively strengthened any actual control over the collective farms by surrendering a good deal of the authority to municipal functionaries, farm specialists and other rural Party personnel.³⁰

Khrushchev's increasing interest in collective farm production costs resulted in extensive studies of the problems of how to evaluate payments in kind for the MTS services. The

27. C.D., vol. ix. no. 23 (1957), p. 7.

28. Ibid., pp. 7 and 8; and vol. ix. no. 50 (1957), pp. 18 and 40.

29. Ibid., vol. ix. no. 23 (1957), p. 7

30. Fainsod, op. cit., pp. 143 and 144; and Ploss, op. cit., pp. 102 and 103.

first serious survey of such cost accounting, entitled "National Economy of the U.S.S.R.", was released in 1956.³¹ Until his appointment as Premier on 26 March 1958, however, he lacked sufficient strength in the Party Presidium, which he needed to undertake such a significant upheaval in Soviet economic institutions as the elimination of the MTS.

The MTS were the special units into which tractors, combines, and other large machinery used on collective farms, were grouped together, in order to provide facilities for repairing and operating machinery and supervising personnel.

Originally, the idea behind the MTS was associated with the advantages derived from pooling power and equipment for joint cultivation by the poorer small kolkhozes which were in no position to own tractors. Furthermore, the MTS was introduced in the very early stages of collectivization and considered by the government as an integral part of State ascendancy in the control over collective agriculture. Since the MTS were remunerated in kind for their services to the collectives, they also played a significant role as collectors of agricultural produce for the State. As the MTS also served as a convenient check on kolkhoz sales to the State, they had become an important focal point for Party control over the lives of the peasants and any political activities on the farms.³²

31. C.D., vol. viii. no. 5 (1956), p. 6; and vol. viii. no. 23 (1956), pp. 10 and 11.

32. Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., p. 76.

But any advantage derived from this system was offset by dual management of farm operations in which serious conflicts of interest often arose between the managers of the collective farms began to argue in the press that the MTS were impeding efficiency and duplicating what the farms could do for themselves. They explained that there was no longer any need to put machines in a central depot from which they could be dispatched to the different farms on alternate days.³³ No chairman actually suggested that the Machine Tractor Stations were no longer necessary as instruments of political control: this, however, was the implication of their basic argument which centered around efficiency alone.

But what the chairmen did not say about politics, Khrushchev was soon to add. In 1958 he described this situation as having „two bosses on the land“, and set about eliminating such dichotomy between the MTS and collective farms:

Now that the collective farms have become strong and have produced cadres capable of coping with any tasks, now that the Party organizations are strong in the villages and the Party committees, which have begun to concern themselves more deeply with the economy, are headed by persons with, as a rule, considerable theoretical training, there is no longer the need to invest the MTS with the role of organizers of production.³⁴

33. C.D., vol. x.no. 1 (1958), p. 29; vol. x. no. 2 (1958), pp. 37 and 38; and vol. x. no. 3 (1958), pp. 27 and 28.

34. Ibid., vol. x.no. 4 (1958), p. 13.

But Khrushchev himself admitted, the liquidation or, as it is officially termed, the re-organization of the MTS met with considerable ideological opposition from his opponents, who objected to the downgrading of what was regarded by the official Communist line as a higher type of property, i.e., the State property of the MTS, to the lower level of cooperative, kolkhoz, property. This sort of opposition stemmed back to Stalin's firm stand against the liquidation of the MTS. Khrushchev tried to overcome this ideological opposition through arguments which minimized the distinction previously made by Stalin's theoreticians between the two types of property.³⁵

In abandoning Stalin's doctrine on the retention of the MTS as an instrument of Soviet rule, Khrushchev claimed that first of all such re-organization of the MTS would eliminate dual farm management.³⁶ With virtually all the farms now enjoying the services of thousands of State trained agricultural specialists, together with the new district Party officials sent in to strengthen the Party apparatus in the countryside, the MTS could be of no further use as an intermediary link of State guidance of the collectives.³⁷

35. L. Volin, "Agricultural Policy of the Soviet Union", The Soviet Economy, M. Bornstein, and D.R. Fusfeld, Homewood, Illinois, 1962, p. 259.

26. C.D., vol. x. no. 4 (1958), p. 13.

27. Ibid.

Not only had the importance of the MTS as an instrument or lever of State acquisition of kolkhoz products diminished, but the MTS had become an increasing burden on the State's budget. It was felt that collective farms were now in a position to purchase, maintain, and operate the MTS machinery because of increased produce prices and incomes, as well as higher anticipated incomes from more efficient over-all management.³⁸ Some of Khrushchev's economists even were of the opinion that,

On the whole we may conclude that the collective farm of the USSR will be able to buy the needed machines from the MTS for cash during the next two, or at the most, three years.³⁹

Khrushchev further assured his listeners that the machinery sales would not lead to an increase in the cost of goods delivered to the State,⁴⁰ on which statement he eventually had to reverse himself.⁴¹

Khrushchev went on to argue that the purchase of MTS machinery would be a good way for the collectives to invest part of their increased income,⁴² their opportunity for

38. Ibid.

39. P. Karotamm, "Neobkhodimy i svoevremenny shag", Voprosi ekonomiki, no. 3, 1958, p. 30; cited by Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., p. 83.

40. C.D., vol. x. no. 4 (1958), p. 13.

41. Ploss, op. cit., p. 124.

42. C.D., vol. x. no. 9 (1958), p. 8.

any productive capital investment being otherwise restricted. Without such opportunity to invest their capital, a further increase of peasant earnings could likely lead either to inflation or necessitate a considerably faster pace of output for the consumer goods industries which would require a much more efficient and faster distribution of consumer goods to rural areas than would be presently feasible.⁴³

But what Khrushchev did not add, and perhaps most important of all, was the fact that frequently the requirements placed upon the MTS were not in accord with the actual needs of the farms, and that there had been in fact no distinct relationship between the MTS machine operators' income and the actual crop yields. For in pursuit of ploughing up only soft soil, which by law constituted the only work for which the operators would get paid, the MTS had naturally done only the "plan" work, advantageous to itself, and had neglected unprofitable jobs such as keeping roads open to enable farms to make their meat deliveries to the State and fulfill their plan.⁴⁴

Following a resolution of the Party's Central Committee issued on 25 and 26 February, 1958, which gave

43. Volin, op. cit., p. 260.

44. Ivan Vinnichenko "Time Doesn't Wait", Oktyabr, no. 11 (November 1957), pp. 205-223, as translated in C.D., vol. x, no. 5 (1958), p. 7 and C.D., vol. x, no. 5 (1958), p. 33.

complete approval to his "Thesis",⁴⁵ Khrushchev, on 27 March, strongly reasserted that while the machine tractor station had previously been necessary as the State's instrument of leadership, the State could now exercise a more direct effect upon the farms through the supply of machinery, the control of which could be exercised through the help of farm management alone.⁴⁶

Then, on 31 March 1958, "in order to develop the collective farm system, and to advance all socialist agriculture", the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers jointly put into operation the plan proposed by Khrushchev to permit and encourage collective farms to purchase and maintain their own tractors, combines, and other machinery.⁴⁷ As of 1 July 1958, the Machine Tractor Stations which had exercised such a vast political and economic power, were to be re-organized and reduced to constitute simple repair and technical service stations (RTS). According to Khrushchev,

....the RTS were to be responsible for providing repairs for tractors and other machines, technical service to the Kolkhozy and Sovkhozy with new techniques, spare parts, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals and

45. C.D., vol. x. no. 9 (1958), pp. 3 and 4.

46. Ibid., vol. x. no. 13 (1958), pp. 8 and 9.

47. Ibid., vol. x. no. 16 (1958), p. 16.

other commodities needed for production. The Repair Technical Stations will also be responsible for henceforth organizing and renting machinery which the Kolkhozy will not purchase but rather fulfilling by agreement with the Kolkhozy specific forms of specialized and other work, rendering help to the Kolkhozy in the introduction of new production techniques into the farms, the advance of science and advanced experience in the area of maintaining and utilizing the machine-tractor park, and also in increasing the qualifications of mechanization cadres. The administration of repair-technical stations will be organized on the basis of cost-accounting.⁴⁸

The final decision on the payments-in-kind issue was consequential enough to call a Central Committee meeting on 17-18 June 1958, for further discussion and formal sanction. This plenum heard and approved Khrushchev's proposals for cash transactions between the RTS and kolkhozes, considerable increases in State prices for farm products, and the abolition of 'quotas' in favour of a system of planned State purchases,⁴⁹ which will be dealt with separately at the end of this chapter.

The same Council of Ministers' decree also clearly defined the responsibility of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) as far as farm policy was concerned. Henceforth, although deliveries (quotas) to the State would not be described

48. Ekonomika Sel'skovo Khoziaistva, March, 1958, pp. 3-13; cited by Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., p. 82.

49. C.D., vol. x. no. 24 (1958), pp. 7-9; and vol. x. no. 25 (1958), pp. 4 and 5.

as „obligatory“, State plans would continue to be regarded as „law“. ⁵⁰ In effect, this meant very little change for now Gosplan, and not the collective farms, would be responsible for determining agricultural output. ⁵¹ The farms, however, were now permitted greater freedom in planning their production work on a day-to-day basis. But they were to be carefully watched over by the Party officials local (raion) level, who were now to assume many of the supervisory duties, such as „inspecting“, previously performed by the MTS Party inspectors:

The district farm inspection service shall have the following functions: propaganda and introduction of advanced experience and achievements of science in agricultural production, organization of seed growing and livestock breeding, land use and State land inventory, organization of veterinary service, supervision of measures for combatting pests and plant diseases, and assistance to collective farms in setting up bookkeeping and accounting in preparing annual and quarterly reports. ⁵²

The abolition of the MTS itself was of profound importance. Not only had it been the repository of specialists and machinery, but it served as the major focal point of control over the collective farms, while at the same time serving the purpose of a lever to extract farm produce for the State. This complete transformation, in fact, demoted the MTS

50. Ibid., vol. x. no. 26 (1958), pp. 6 and 7.

51. Laird, Sharp, and Sturtevant, op. cit., p. 87.

52. C.D., vol. x. no.17 (1958), p. 5.

employees from the position of bosses to virtual employees of the collective farms,⁵³ but it was explained that:

....the free sale of tractors and other machinery to the collective farms is an advance to a higher level in agricultural management. The economic ties of the collective farms with socialist industry will expand when the MTS are reorganized; the production aid rendered by the city to the village will grow and become more and more varied. Under the new conditions, this aid will be rendered in various forms and on a broader scale through the supply of tractors, machinery, spare parts, fuel, vehicles and fertilizers to the collective farms and by passing on the production and technical experience of enterprises to the collective farms. The collective farms will be able to draw up their own orders for new and improved equipment that meets the specific requirements of the farms of the different zones of the country. The sale of machinery to the collective farms will strengthen the material and technical base of the collective farms and contribute to the development of the communal property of the collective farms, to the growth of their indivisible funds, which are a main source of strength and stability of the collective farm system.⁵⁴

The reform appeared to suggest the reduction of Party controls over agriculture. The abolition of the MTS and transfer of machinery gave the collective farms a power of choice over machine use that they had never had before.⁵⁵ This seemed to have the effect of loosening the controls which

53. Swearer, op. cit., pp. 24 and 25.

54. C.D. vol. x. no. 13 (1958), p. 11.

55. N.S. Spulber, The Soviet Economy, New York, 1962, p. 79.

the farming system had placed upon peasant initiative. The independence of kolkhozes, however, proved somewhat artificial. The kolkhozes were indeed given the right to own and operate their own machinery, but at the same time they were still entirely subject to the will of Party authority.⁵⁶

The impact of this development was obvious. The influx of former MTS personnel, usually Party members, and a campaign to attract new Party members in rural areas enabled Khrushchev to organize permanent Party cells on most collective and State farms. This made it possible to exercise control from within, and expose the peasants to the Party as a local force working along with them, rather than as an alien force.⁵⁷ Khrushchev took into account that the presence of these new local Party cells could make the collective farms more autonomous, particularly when it came to making minor internal decisions.⁵⁸ But, by the same token, he was satisfied that the larger and more important decisions would still be carried out in accordance with Party policy.⁵⁹

The MTS, however, had been an important instrument of Party control which Khrushchev's re-organization did not replace.⁶⁰ He had previously criticized the local Party officials

56. Ibid; and Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., pp. 88 and 91.

57. Kahan, op. cit., p. 295.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., p. 88 and 89.

for becoming too involved in the affairs of their own district, to the point of interfering with their primary duty to follow orders from the Party headquarters. Now in their new capacity as general managers and farm guidance officers, they had a still greater role to play in local affairs.⁶¹ On the other hand, the local inspectors were often distracted from their organizing activities by constantly having to stop and answer a large number of requests for statistical data consisting mostly of excessive formality and routine. They did not try to actively stimulate production.⁶²

By July of 1959, 94% of all collectives had purchased, either on a cash or credit basis, the MTS farm machinery, which comprised more than 512,000 tractors, 221,000 grain combines, as well as most of the other types of machinery. While the transition which the virtual merging of MTS with collectives seemed to take place quite rapidly, it did involve very considerable readjustment. Things were not always smooth, as new and unexpected problems arose, such, for example, as inadequate repair facilities and lack of spare parts. The new Repair Technical Stations (RTS) were often accused of selling the kolkhozes equipment that was defective, and being unhelpful when repairs were called for. In many instances

61. Ibid.

62. Ploss, op. cit., p. 135.

new tractors had to be purchased as a result of not being able to find a small part, such as a wheel, for a tractor needing repair.⁶³ Moreover, the MTS as the one means of controlling fraud, was gone.⁶⁴

But the most violent impact of the whole transformation fell upon the pocketbooks of the peasantry. The cost to the collective farms of taking over the MTS created a definite burden on their finances, and furthermore, farms frequently found themselves paying for machinery not desired. Although the farms' revenues did show substantial increases, there were still further burdens in the form of excessive charges for part replacements or repairs, added to the rather high guaranteed incomes which they now had to pay to their tractor men and combiners, formerly paid by the MTS. As the tractor men had been used to paid vacations as well as other social amenities and welfare benefits, this naturally led to many social stresses and strains between these machine operators and the ordinary farm labourers now living and working together.⁶⁵

In 1952 Stalin had argued that the indirect subsidy of the collectives through State investments in the MTS was

63. R.D. Laird, "Soviet Goals for 1965 and the Problems of Agriculture", The Soviet Economy, (ed. by H.G. Shaffer), New York, 1963, pp. 147 and 148; Fainsod, op. cit., p. 551; and volin, op. cit., p. 260.

64. Swearer, op. cit., p. 26.

65. Nove, "Incentives for Peasants and Administrators", op. cit., pp. 53 and 55; and Laird, Sharp and Sturtevant, op. cit., pp. 83 and 84.

so large that if the machinery were to be sold to the farms,

....it would involve the collective farms in heavy loss and ruin them, undermine the mechanization of agriculture, and slow up the development of collective farm production.⁶⁶

This was, in fact, proven to be the case when in 1958 the peasants were forced to pay for the actual costs of the MTS work. Their living standards fell even lower than they had been, which to the poorer farms meant a disproportionately still larger sum.⁶⁷

In point of fact, however, it should not have been beyond Khrushchev's understanding that the resultant lower net incomes for the peasants, particularly at a time when they expected some form of a continued increase, would in the long run have bad effects. Khrushchev, at the time of his 1958 price reform stated plainly that further increases in peasant incomes would be dependent upon higher productivity,⁶⁸ although later he reduced incomes in spite of increased productivity.

In 1958, also, Khrushchev discontinued the rather complex multiple price system, and strengthened the use of money in relations between the farms and the State procurement agencies. The long-established system of obligatory State

66. J. Stalin, op. cit., p. 100.

67. Nimitz, op. cit., pp. 14 and 15.

68. C.D. vol. x. no. 24 (1958), p. 9.

deliveries at prices well below market levels was abolished and replaced by State purchases from the farmers at open market prices.⁶⁹ Khrushchev did this because he believed that this system would make it seem important to the farms to cut down production costs in order to enjoy a profit of free prices.

Thus, in effect, the reform unified the different types of procurements into a single system of State purchases.⁷⁰ The new system, however, retained quotas per unit of land which collectives had to meet. Only now, instead of multiple prices per unit of land, single prices were fixed by the State for each commodity within a certain region.⁷¹

Although price stability was one of the aims of the reform, provision was made for raising or lowering prices to cope with sharp fluctuations in output,⁷² thus giving some recognition to the law of supply and demand.

Khrushchev indicated, that by inaugurating this reform, the government would no longer need to fear that farmers would assign unjustly large sections of the farm to private enterprise without very good reason.⁷³

69. Ibid., pp. 8 and 9.

70. Volin, op. cit., p. 263.

71. C.D. vol. x. no. 25 (1958), p. 4.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid. vol. x. no. 24 (1958), p. 9.

Another important change was the abolition of the variable premium prices for larger deliveries used for some crops such as cotton, hemp and sugar beets under the former contract system.⁷⁴ These changes were indeed steps toward a more rational price system, as through this further simplification of the cumbersome procurement and price system, there were now to be only two prices for a commodity in each locality, a Government price and a free market price for a commodity traded on the limited private market.⁷⁵ Khrushchev admitted, however, that this abolition of premium price payments was somewhat hard on kolkhozes growing such crops as cotton, sugar beets, hemp, and others which had previously received preferential price treatment.⁷⁶ At the same time, he contended, the more productive collectives should have a higher income, not from price differentials but by lowering production costs and increasing output.⁷⁷

But in fact, these new prices were really tailored for the benefit of the average or less prosperous kolkhozes. For, as Khrushchev did not care to mention, the average prices paid by the State to the kolkhozes, were to be lower, and this

74. Ibid.

75. Volin, op. cit., p. 263.

76. C.D. vol. x. no. 24 (1958), p. 9.

77. Ibid.

would effect their gross money income.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Khrushchev stated:

Although the State's total expenditures on the purchase of farm products from the collective farms will remain at approximately the same level as in 1957, the new prices will result in a more equitable distribution of these funds among the collective farms.⁷⁹

Thus, the law of supply and demand was slowly allowed to make its appearance, along with the introduction of an annual review of prices. In the long run, however, Khrushchev's 1958 reforms helped to increase the income disparities between the wealthier and poorer farms.⁸⁰ This was because the more prosperous farms with greater soil fertility had in the past been charged differential types of rent, whereby they paid more for the services performed by the MTS, and at the same time had to deliver larger quotas of produce and at much lower prices than the poorer collectives. However, with the abolition of the MTS there was practically no difference between the prices paid for produce from the more fertile and the poorer farms.⁸¹ For although material incentives, on the whole, were greater, the new price reform measures were too complex, and the favourable impact was not as

78. Volin, op. cit., p. 78.

79. C.D., vol. x. no. 24 (1958), p. 8.

80. Nove, Soviet Agriculture Marks Time, op. cit., pp. 584 and 585.

81. Ibid., p. 585.

great as it seemed at first sight.⁸²

The price system still contained a multitude of anomalies, but the 1958 reform....represented a considerable advance over the short-sighted attitude toward agriculture that had been prevalent in Stalin's time.⁸³

Nevertheless, despite interkolkhoz disparities still remaining, the 1958 grain harvest set an all-time record; cotton and sugar beet production was high; and milk yields increased as a result of the improvement in both the quantity and quality of fodder.

82. Bergson, op. cit., p. 192.

83. Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 84.

CHAPTER FOURTHE SEVEN YEAR PLAN

In the first five years after Stalin's death, Russia had achieved a significant, but short-lived advance in the productivity of agricultural resources. The influence of Khrushchev's initial measures was evidenced by an increase in the average yearly increment in production from 3.9 per cent between 1950 and 1955 to 8.6 per cent between 1955 and the good year 1958,¹ which, due to exceptionally good weather in 1958, produced a record harvest.²

In an atmosphere of optimism, and in the belief that the recent abolition of the MTS would result in greater farm operating efficiency, Khrushchev, on 14 November 1958, proposed that a new economic Seven-Year Plan to overtake the United States in per capita food production be drawn up for nationwide discussion.³ The same day, the Soviet press published Khrushchev's forecast for the new plan under the title "Control Figures for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR during 1959-65".⁴

In his report to the Central Committee on 15 December 1958, Khrushchev reflected a new cost consciousness. He

1. Ingram, The Communist Economic Challenge, London, 1965, p. 84.

2. C.D., vol. x. no. 45 (1958), pp. 14 and 15.

3. Ibid., vol. x. no. 46 (1958), pp. 16-18.

4. Ibid.

admitted that 320 per cent more labour on State farms and 410 per cent more on collective farms was needed in Russia than in the United States to produce the same amount of potatoes.⁵ Once more, Khrushchev strongly criticized Malenkov's reliance upon „biological" estimates and particularly supporting their use in Stalin's time. Khrushchev, in his speech, appropriately referred to these inflated biological figures as „Ochkovtiratel'stvo" (eye wash).⁶

The farms cannot be operated any longer without profound and comprehensive study of production costs - without control by the rouble.⁷

Personally convinced of the moral superiority of the Soviet system, Khrushchev believed that results alone could be relied on to win people over to communism.⁸ In fact, Khrushchev had been constantly telling people that they were correct in asking for a better life, as a legitimate demand. Khrushchev considered that a higher standard of living for the Soviet people would enhance the political attractiveness of the communist system, not only in the eyes of the underdeveloped nations, but also in the poorer countries of Western Europe, such as Italy and Greece.⁹ As Khrushchev aptly phrased it,

5. Ibid., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 18.

6. Ibid., vol. x. no. 50 (1958), p. 5.

7. Ibid., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 18.

8. Ibid., vol. x. no. 50 (1958), p. 3.

9. Ibid., vol. xi. no. 3 (1959), pp. 6 and 7; vol. xi. no. 4 (1959), p. 17; and Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 87.

The economy is the chief field in which the peaceful competition between socialism and capitalism is unfolding....Now the task is to tip the scales of world production in favour of the socialist system against the capitalist, to surpass the most advanced capitalist countries in productivity of social labour and per capita output and attain the world's highest living standard....The experience of building socialism and communism in our country has international significance.... The Seven-Year Plan is an embodiment of the peaceful policy constantly pursued by the Soviet Union - the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence, in direct contrast to the aggressive policy of the imperialist countries, which are following the path of militarization of the economy, a mad arms race and preparation for a new war.¹⁰

Khrushchev's vision of a Soviet Union in which every house had a well-covered table within a reasonable period of time, was at its highest when the 21st Party Congress met in January, 1959.

It was against this background „of the full-scale building of communism", that Khrushchev didn't make a simple kind of report to the Congress. Instead he introduced a Seven-Year Plan, which aimed at a higher performance of the economy up to 1965, than the fifty per cent increase in productivity which had already been attained between 1954-1958.¹¹ As any attempt to raise farm labour productivity in the Soviet Union begins from a fairly low base, spectacular gains would, in fact, be not altogether impossible.¹²

10. C.D., vol. xi. no. 4 (1959), p. 17; and vol. xi. no. 9 (1959), p. 26.

11. Ibid., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), pp. 15 and 16.

12. R.W. Campbell, Soviet Economic Power, Boston, 1966, p. 158.

By the provisions adopted on 5 February 1959, a new master plan was effected by the specially convoked 21st Congress of the CPSU.¹³ The political and economic challenge of the new Seven-Year Plan was the most ambitious such document ever unveiled by the Kremlin. Most striking of all were Khrushchev's promises to the Soviet consumer. The plan envisaged a 70 per cent increase in the total volume of agricultural output.¹⁴ The Seven-Year Plan grain output proposed for 1965 was to range from 164 to 180 million tons, as compared to the 180 millions previously intended for 1960.¹⁵ Although this represented a rather large reduction as compared with previous plans, it still set a high target which entailed a faster rate of growth than ever before. For, total agricultural output was to grow at an average yearly rate of 7.8 per cent compared with one of 7.1 per cent, as officially claimed, for the years 1954-1957.¹⁶

Khrushchev also looked further into the future, in fact as far as 1970, when Soviet agriculture would actually exceed that in the U.S.A., not only per capita but also in total output.¹⁷ Satisfactory comparisons between Western countries and Soviet Russia are, nevertheless, almost impossible to obtain. Agricultural policy, to be sure, has been a major

13. For "The Seven-Year Plan Goals Adopted by the Congress", see C.D., vol. xi. no. 9 (1959), pp. 3-30.

14. C.D., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 15; and R.W. Campbell, "The Soviet Economic Challenge", The Soviet Crucible (ed. by S. Hendel) Princeton, 1963, p. 540.

15. C.D., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 16; and Ingram, op. cit., p. 73

16. Ibid.

17. C.D., vol. xi. no. 9 (1959), p. 4.

problem in the United States as in Russia. But the causes and objectives of the agricultural problems and policies of the United States and the Soviet Union are diametrically opposite. In dealing with comparative statistics, one encounters inescapable problems of definition which make an interpretation and collation extremely difficult. For example, Russia's prices and exchange rates are fixed by the government, and the quality of goods in relation to their price cannot really be assessed.¹⁸ Beside the basic fact that the Soviet figure applies to gross industrial output, and that for the U.S.A. to net output, there is nothing to indicate that these rates bear any relation to reality. Soviet gross output figures include a certain amount of intentional 'double counting' of intermediate products, whereas the U.S. figure is a conventional value-added calculation.¹⁹

Comparisons between the two countries often fail to take into account the very important changes in consumer consumption patterns. Khrushchev's new program forecasted that during the next decade, the USSR would overtake U.S. production, per capita, in the main types of agricultural produce. However, the Soviet Union was, at the time of Khrushchev's speech, already far ahead of the U.S.A. as regards wheat, potatoes, flax, sugar beet, and wool.²⁰

18. Hans Heymann, Jr., "Problems of Soviet-United States Comparisons", Comparisons of the United States and Soviet Economies, part 1, Washington, 1960, p. 4.

19. Ibid., p. 5; and N. Jasny, The Soviet Price System, Stanford, 1951, p. 44 and pp. 48-50.

20. C.D., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 16; and Campbell, Soviet Economic Power, op. cit., p. 153.

Moreover, the information on future trends in U.S. agricultural output over the next decade, made Khrushchev's figures for the Soviet Union, appear completely out of context, in that the main preoccupation of the U.S. Government at the time was the need to reduce overproduction. One reason for the high American grain yield was that corn was an important element in the grain economy. Besides, in the U.S.A., corn has a yield per acre several times that of wheat. But the Soviets have a very limited area where they can grow corn to maturity, which is not comparable to the huge U.S. corn belt.²¹ Soviet wheat yields were low, because over much of their wheat area insufficient moisture and a short growing season interfered with both planting and harvesting.²² At the same time, the Soviet diet was already overbalanced with calories from bread and potatoes, but lacking mainly in meat, milk, eggs, and other varieties of high-protein commodities,²³ (although fish supplies are important in augmenting the insufficient animal protein content in the Soviet diet).²⁴

21. Campbell, Soviet Economic Power, op. cit., p. 154.

22. Ibid., pp. 154 and 155.

23. Ibid., p. 153.

24. Fish provided roughly a fifth of the diet protein provided by meat, or one-twelfth of all animal protein intake, when eggs, milk and cheese are also considered.

The efficiency of both distribution systems, and hence the general availability of produce also make comparisons difficult. While in the U.S.A. the economy was primarily orientated to satisfy the domestic consumer, in the Soviet Union the main aim was still the establishment of a strong industrial base, at the expense of consumer needs.²⁵

Therefore, the purpose and direction of both economies were often not given adequate consideration when Khrushchev made his comparisons, and his slogan, „catch up with the U.S.A.“ was practically meaningless, except in its propaganda context. It is not possible to ascertain to just what extent Khrushchev relied on the propaganda impact that his Seven-Year Plan would have at home. At the same time, he took the risk that a gross failure to reach such high goals would indeed have major undesirable repercussions for the Soviet regime both at home and abroad.

Nevertheless, Khrushchev set such high agricultural targets in 1959, mainly in the hope that his virgin lands program would be more successful. His ambitious plans also presupposed that international political conditions would be favourable. He assumed that there would be no heightened international tension that would require sharply stepped up

25. Volin, op. cit., pp. 248 and 249.

military preparedness,²⁶ nor further catastrophies such as the Polish and Hungarian revolts which had required direct Soviet military intervention or the large scale pouring in of Soviet goods to quiet discontent.

Khrushchev announced that total government investments in agriculture between 1959 and 1960 were to be almost doubled in comparison to those between 1953 and 1958.²⁷ The major portion of these funds were to be directed towards improving the quality and different types of farm machinery.

Our industry has until now directed its efforts toward production of the largest possible number of tractors and combines for agriculture. We are not removing from the order of the day the task of continuing to supply the collective and State farms with new and improved tractors and combines. But the main thing now is...to organize sufficient production of other machines that agriculture greatly needs. This refers to all machines which would release a great many people from arduous labour and make possible expansion of farm production, greater output with smaller expenditures.²⁸

Rural electrification, and fertilizers, together with improvements in over-all farming technique, such as pedigree stock raising, seed straining and better pesticides and insecticides would also receive financial assistance.²⁹

State farm investment was to experience a slight

26. C.D., vol. xi. no. 9 (1959), p. 27.

27. C.D., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 16.

28. Ibid., p. 12.

29. Ibid., vol. xi. no. 3 (1959), pp. 3-5; and vol. xi. no. 9 (1959), p. 14.

decline from the annual average attained over the past five year period, while investment in collective farms was to double, and overall annual investment was to increase by roughly 50 per cent. State farms were to receive investments of 150 billion roubles between 1959-1965, whereas the collective farms were to have total investments of 345 billion roubles.³⁰ Khrushchev felt that the collective farms which accounted for well over twice as much land and seven times the number of workers as the State farms, could make up this difference from the capital derived from their own profits. He said that collective farm income would grow automatically along with the steady annual increases in productivity, that were expected.³¹ For under the Seven-Year Plan, agricultural output per worker was to increase by 100 per cent between 1959 and 1965 on the collective farms, and by 55 to 60 per cent on State farms.³²

In this context Khrushchev counted on rapid improvements in collective farm efficiency, with a resultant natural reduction in operating costs. He felt that this would eventually enable the government to lower the prices that it paid for farm produce which would, in turn, lower the cost of food to the ultimate consumer.³³

30. Ibid., vol. x. no. 5 (1958), p. 16.

31. Ibid., pp. 14 and 16.

32. Ibid., p. 16.

33. Ibid., pp. 14 and 17; and vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), p. 13.

In reality, however, with such a comparatively low amount of government financial help, the collective farms could hardly be expected to increase their labour productivity very much faster than the State farms. Nonetheless, Khrushchev later saw fit to reduce the government purchase prices, and at the same time to increase the retail store prices for produce.³⁴ This meant that the consumer and not the government was paying for any additional investment into agriculture.

The main obvious weakness in the Seven-Year Plan was, however, still the labour factor. For Khrushchev expected the farms to increase production by 70% but at the same time to move 5 million additional farmers into the factories.³⁵ In this respect it had been estimated that between 1956 and 1959 already 5 1/12 million persons left the farms for urban areas where they provided a valuable source of labour for industry. Moreover, it was established that work productivity on the collective farms turned out to be roughly three to four times lower than that on State farms.³⁶

Khrushchev proposed to correct this situation through the further conversion of collective farms into State farms. He felt that collective farm workers performed only the bare minimum number of compulsory workdays per year, whereas those

34. C.D., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), p. 26; and Nove, "Incentives for Peasants and Administrators", op. cit., p. 54.

35. Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 184.

36. Ibid.,

on State farms were compelled to remain on the farms as full-time employees of the State.³⁷ But there were also ideological reasons. At the 21st Party Congress on 28 January 1959, Khrushchev put communist dogma before economic practicality and stated

With the further development of the productive forces there will be a rise in the degree of socialization of collective-farm production, and collective-farm-coöperative ownership will come to approximate public ownership more closely.³⁸

He added that it would eventually be expedient to convert all agricultural land into State property,³⁹ without realizing that this would have a braking effect on the incentive of the collective farmers. In 1953 he had expanded, not contracted, the rights of the collective and private sectors, and then again had further added to their privileges by abolishing the MTS in 1958. In addition, unlike the professional worker of the towns, the agricultural worker had to haggle for what he had been promised. With cash earnings, receipts in kind from the private sector, and welfare services from the State in 1959, the average farmer still received a real income which was roughly half that of a city worker.⁴⁰

37. Ibid.

38. C.D., vol. xi. no. 5 (1959), p. 15.

39. Ibid.

40. D.B. Shimkin, "Current Characteristics and Problems of the Soviet Rural Population" Soviet Agriculture and Peasant Affairs (ed. by R.D. Laird), op. cit., p. 100.

In May and June 1959, Khrushchev argued that the USSR and Union-Republic Ministries of Agriculture should no longer have the right to distribute spare parts and chemical fertilizers to the collective farms. To comply with Marx's prediction that the State would wither away, Khrushchev called for the step-by-step transfer of governmental functions to non-governmental public organizations.⁴¹ These functions, he said, had to be taken over by commercial organizations, special agricultural agencies, perhaps cooperating with experimental establishments, in order that their technically qualified personnel might act as instructors on the farms. In the preface to his speeches at the June 1959 Central Committee session, he blamed over-administration and bureaucratism as being the main cause of the existence of backward farms.⁴² Khrushchev recommended the same course of action again in December of that year,⁴³ but no positive steps were taken until March 1960, when the 3500 RTS controlled by the ministries were deprived of their sales and supply functions and reorganized into machine repair shops.⁴⁴

41. C.D., vol. xi. no. 19 (1959), p. 10; and vol. xi. no. 27 (1959), pp. 4 and 5.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 9 and 10.

44. Ibid., vol. xii. no. 12 (1960), p. 27.

This meant in effect that the totalitarian State would continue its same control functions but under a different label - the RTS. In 1960, under this guise, the Party was also able to assume a closer control over agriculture.⁴⁵

Yet this did not provide Khrushchev with a means of conciling his policy of economic efficiency and profitability with Marxist doctrine. For by the end of 1959 the economic effects of his campaign for ideological correctness were clearly for the worse, as

the tendency toward accelerated transformation of the collective farms into State farms was profoundly mistaken.⁴⁶

Besides, collective farmers' incomes had, in reality, scarcely increased and Khrushchev's restriction on individual plots had resulted in a heavy reduction of one of the most productive sources of scarce livestock products.⁴⁷

The plenary meeting on agriculture in December 1959 was open to the general public. Besides members and candidate members of the Central Committee, it was attended by agricultural functionaries, Sovnarkozy chairmen, directors of State farms, chairmen of collective farms, agronomists, editors of agricultural journals, and even specially awarded milkmaids, shepherds, and pig breeders.⁴⁸

45. Fainsod, op. cit., p. 556.

46. Nash Sovremennik, no. 4, 1959, p. 179; cited by Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 186.

47. Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 187.

48. W. Leonhard, The Kremlin Since Stalin, London, 1962, p. 348.

The Plenum began and proceeded under an atmosphere of uncertainty. At the meeting it was announced that grain deliveries for that year had diminished by 10,000,000 metric tons over the previous year, not as a result of bad weather, but rather poorly organized harvesting.⁴⁹ A year before, Khrushchev himself had opened the meeting by delivering a comprehensive report. But now Khrushchev spoke lastly, and his remarks were more in the nature of a personal speech rather than a report.⁵⁰

The Plenum resulted in an almost open opposition against Khrushchev, particularly his claims about the great successes in grain production in the virgin lands of Kazakhstan.

This rebelling accounted for Khrushchev's changing his plan of action half way through the meeting by publicly acknowledging the fact that his harvest the year before had indeed resulted in failure. He admitted that the most elementary prerequisites for successful agriculture had again been ignored.⁵¹

To save face, Khrushchev hurried to find scapegoats to pay for this disorganization. A. Kirichenko, an agricultural

49. C.D., vol. xi. no. 51 (1959), pp. 3 and 4.

50. Kommunist, no. 3, 1959, p. 35; cited by Ploss, op. cit., p. 173.

51. C.D., vol. xi. no. 52 (1959), pp. 7 and 8; vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 8-11; and Ploss, op. cit., pp. 178-180.

specialist, and N. Beliaiev, secretary of the Kazakhstan Central Committee, were dismissed as well as those in charge of the Party departments for agriculture in the union republics and the RSFSR.⁵²

Khrushchev tried to exonerate himself by saying that the low labour productivity was due mainly to the inadequacy of farm machinery which the State had supplied, defective machinery design, spare parts shortages, inadequate maintenance of the machines on the farm, and to a general indifference to the proper use of machines by the peasants. When machinery broke down, he pointed out, it would be often just put aside and left standing idle.⁵³ „It is quite natural", he added, „that harvesting is [often] dragged out and that part of the grain is covered with snow."⁵⁴

As a result of these delays, sowing was late, fertilizers were not used properly, and weeds were neglected. Khrushchev claimed that most agricultural officials in fact knew very little about agronomy and some were not even able to recognize the different varieties of seeds.⁵⁵ Khrushchev

52. C.D., vol. xii. no. 3 (1960), p. 29; Ploss, op. cit., p. 180; and Pethybridge, op. cit., p. 187.

53. C.D., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 8, 9 and 10.

54. Ibid., p. 9.

55. Ibid., p. 8.

blamed the bureaucracy for hindering rather than enhancing possibilities of increasing productivity. He said that State farms employed an average of 25-30 bookkeepers and accountants whose job it was merely to complete questionnaires and figure sheets.⁵⁶

Khrushchev was disturbed by the fact that the yield per acre of the predominant socialist sector, that is, the yield of the State and collective farm lands, still remained far below that of the private sector. He added that livestock in the private sector was increasing at a faster rate than in the socialist sector.⁵⁷ The farmers were now making only a very small portion of their personal livestock holdings available for sale to the socialist sector.⁵⁸ Consequently, important basic items such as meat and dairy products were in short supply. It ought to have been clear enough that some of the basic concepts of Soviet agricultural policy, especially as far as collectivization was concerned, would have to be revised however awkward this might be ideologically.⁵⁹

56. Ibid., p. 13.

57. Ibid., p. 24.

58. Ibid. This attitude of hoarding personal livestock and livestock products had resulted from Khrushchev's recent restriction on incomes from individual garden plots.

59. Nimitz, op. cit., p. 21.

However, like the industrial meeting in June of that year the December session on agriculture was paradoxical: on the one hand, shortcomings and difficulties were put forth in very clear terms; yet on the other hand, no explanation for the causes of these difficulties was given nor was any real attempt made to try to solve the problems through really serious changes. Yet in spite of the fact that these numerous difficulties were discussed at length, the Central Committee adopted a resolution confirming the aim to catch up with the United States in the production of milk, meat and butter per head of population.⁶⁰ Since his visit to America in September 1959, Khrushchev had become more and more obsessed by the time that it would take for the Soviet Union to attain the same achievements as the United States. By the Central Committee decree, the farmers were now called upon to reach by 1963 the same targets set by the Seven-Year Plan for 1965.⁶¹ For example, whereas the Seven-Year Plan had originally envisioned an increase in meat production from 8 to 16 million tons by 1965, the same target was now to be reached by 1963, and by 1965 20-21 million tons of meat was to be produced. Instead of the

60. C.D., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), p. 23.

61. Ibid., p. 26.

50 sugar refineries in the original plan, now 90 were to be established. Instead of 13 million hectares of maize, now 20 million were to be planted by 1965.⁶² The virgin lands campaign was to be continued further with 8-9 million hectares of new land added.⁶³ The committee also decreed that procurement prices for agricultural products be reduced.⁶⁴ Whereas he had raised them in 1953 in order to provide bigger incentives for the collective farmers, Khrushchev now decided to bring the procurement prices for collective farms more into line with those for State farms, especially as far as tea, cotton and citrus fruits were concerned.⁶⁵

By a further decision of the December plenary, from 1960 onward the national plan was to be revised each year, with the pre-determined targets serving only as an overall working basis.⁶⁶

At the same time Khrushchev recognized that one reason for the lagging output was the fact that collective farmers' income had been distributed on the basis of the number

62. Ibid., pp. 25 and 26.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 26.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 25.

of workdays, trudodni, which were credited to each member regardless of the quality or intensity of the work done.⁶⁷ For this reason, he suggested that this system be replaced by cash payments for piecework, in order to try to persuade the farmers to put in more than the former required minimum of time on collective production. Under this new system, therefore, the old trudoden became meaningless.⁶⁸

Khrushchev said that he foresaw the day when the State would no longer require deliveries from collective farms. It will rather just set prices based on the costs of the most efficient producers and let the collective farms compete for the business.⁶⁹

By the beginning of 1960 however, after an enormous outlay in production expense with very poor results, it was becoming clear that none of Khrushchev's production targets for the Seven-Year Plan had met or showed any promise of meeting even the most basic food requirements of the Soviet people.⁷⁰

67. Ibid., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 12 and 13; and Nove, The Soviet Economy, op. cit., pp. 127-131.

68. Ibid.

69. C.D., vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 12 and 13.

70. Ellison, op. cit., p. 130.

In 1960, output of all the main products fell again far below the original plan, with the sole exception of sugar beet whose output had always been well above plan. All the same, the grain production for 1960 was a higher figure than it had been in the very poor years before Khrushchev began his agricultural reforms, and the rise in output of meat, milk, and eggs became particularly apparent in 1960.⁷¹

In June 1960, a large conference of agricultural experts met in Moscow and criticized Khrushchev's extensive programs by announcing that, from the State's viewpoint, it appeared soundly economical to try to concentrate on growing one or two types of crop only, on the collective farms in order to make the peasants more dependent upon the State for their food supplies.⁷²

On October 29 1960, Khrushchev submitted a memorandum on agriculture to the Party Presidium which pointed out the shortages in meat, dairy products, and livestock fodder.⁷³ Khrushchev showed certain alarm in warning that,

if the needed measures are not taken,
we may well revert to the situation
which existed in 1953.⁷⁴

71. C.D., vol. xii. no. 4 (1961), pp. 4 and 5; and Ingram, op. cit., p. 78.

72. C.D., vol. xii. no. 24 (1960), pp. 6-8.

73. Ploss, op. cit., p. 200.

74. Ibid.

In 1960 investments in both collective and State farms amounted to only 5.2 billion roubles or just 15.3 per cent of the total national investment for that year, which was the lowest ratio since 1953.⁷⁵ Besides, since 1958, the distribution of government investment in farm capital stock was concentrated mainly in farm buildings, which included not only barns and warehouses, but bakeries, restaurants, children's homes, and boarding schools for the purpose of freeing women from housework to give them the possibility of producing something.⁷⁶ The forms of investment which most directly help crop and livestock yields, such as feed and water supply (irrigation systems), proper electrification and the quantity and quality of machinery, etc., accounted for a very small proportion⁷⁷ of the investments made.⁷⁸

At the same time, through 1960 the financial difficulties of the collective farms were further aggravated by undue and often illegal pressures from the local Party officials who were trying to over-fulfill the plan for their own benefit and perhaps even promotion.⁷⁹

75. Voprosy Ekonomiki, no. 7, 1962, p. 50; cited by Ploss, op. cit., p. 200.

76. C.D., vol. x. no. 51 (1958), p. 15; and Nimitz, op. cit., p. 20.

77. only 46 per cent as compared to 55 per cent between 1953-1958.

78. Vestnik statistiki, no. 5, 1964, p. 91; cited by Nimitz, op. cit., p. 20.

79. Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., pp. 144 and 145.

The number of livestock had increased during the year by only .2 per cent as an average, while in many districts livestock raising had actually experienced net declines. Consequently in 1960, the total output of meat and animal products declined by three per cent as compared to 1959.⁸⁰ Farm officials would frequently try to buy any additional livestock which they needed to fulfill the plan, from the peasants' individual plot, and usually at inflated prices. They would try to cover up milk production deficiencies by buying additional quantities from the local grocery store at the retail price, and charging it to the farm's expense account.⁸¹ As a result, farms often found themselves too short of money to pay out many of the productivity bonuses which had been promised to the workers.

Inadequate incentives for the farm managers as well as workers had helped further depress labour intensity. The average cash and kind earnings fell very sharply in 1959. The slight recovery in 1960 was the result of higher cash payments.⁸² which few farmers found beneficial in that they still considered payments in kind, such as bread and feed for the essential feeding of their families and livestock, as being more important than any supplemental cash payments.⁸³

80. S. Kabysh, "Soviet Agriculture and the Programme", The U.S.S.R. and the Future, (ed. by L. Schapiro), New York, 1963, p. 138.

81. Nove, "Soviet Agriculture Marks Time", op. cit., p. 167; and Fainsod, op. cit., p. 574.

82. The portion of cash in total payments made to kolkhoz labourers increased to 74 per cent in 1962 from 58 per cent in 1958; Ekonomika selskokhoziaistvennykh predpriatii, 2nd ed., Moscow, 1963, p. 286; cited by Nimitz, op. cit., p. 20.

83. Nimitz, op. cit., p. 20.

Khrushchev proposed that, to remedy the situation part of the funds already designated for investment in other sectors of the economy might well be diverted into agriculture.⁸⁴

The results of Khrushchev's October memorandum were discussed at a meeting of the Party Presidium held just prior to the December 20th opening of the Supreme Soviet in 1960. But despite Khrushchev's strong warnings, the financial requirements for boosting the agricultural segment of the Seven-Year Plan were neglected, the fiscal priorities remaining weighted in the direction of heavy industry and consumer goods.⁸⁵ The Council of Ministers decided that only funds left over as the result of the overfulfillment of the industrial plans during the next two years could be reinvested in agriculture and light industry.⁸⁶

With regard to the agricultural administration the Council decreed that the Party district committees and district Soviet executive committees were to decide all problems of the operative leadership of agriculture and control the

84. Ibid.; and C.D., vol. xiii. no. 7 (1961), pp. 4 and 5.

85. Ibid., vol. xiii. no. 2 (1961), pp. 22-24.

86. Ibid. The amount actually reinvested over the following two years as a result of the Council's acceptance of this proposal was 11.3 billion roubles. A. Vishnyzkov, Politicheskoe Samoobrazovanie, no. 2, 1963, p. 30; cited by Ploss, op. cit., p. 205.

fulfillment of plans. Henceforth all worried about the leadership of kolkhozes would be the concern of the Party apparatus.⁸⁷

The Ministries of Agriculture lost all direct control over the farms and were reduced to scientific research foundations.⁸⁸ On the other hand, Khrushchev was unsuccessful in his plea to decentralize the system of supplying farms with machinery, spare parts and fertilizer. For, contrary to his hopes, lists were to continue to be drawn up centrally. A new central agency, the Soiuzselkhoz-tekhnika, was formed to act as middleman in the supply of machinery, spare parts, and fertilizer to the farms.⁸⁹ In the past these lists had failed to take the farmers actual needs into account and as a result, districts often received machinery which they could not put into practical use, while other farms had to go without these same items which they needed.⁹⁰ Local technicians, however, were now given some say in the purchasing of farm machinery, although the system of distribution was to a large degree, still

87. C.D., vol. xiii. no. 8 (1961), pp. 3-6 and 25.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

encumbered with bureaucratic obstacles. On the other hand, terms of trade for the collective farms were improved, and terms of tax and credit were relaxed.⁹¹ The prices for spare parts of tractors, farm machinery and gasoline were reduced.⁹² 80 per cent of all taxable income from the sale of meat, livestock, poultry, eggs, milk, and dairy products was exempted from income tax.⁹³ Both long and short-term credit rates were lowered. The collective farms were allowed an additional five years to pay back their loans to the State bank, as well as an extension of from five to ten years to pay for the equipment and premises which the farms had acquired from the MTS.⁹⁴ It was expected that overall results of these combined measures would reduce the collective farm expenses by about 887 million roubles per year.⁹⁵

But the bumper crop of 1958 had made Khrushchev unduly optimistic. The relatively high priority accorded to agriculture before 1958 was not maintained thereafter. The

91. C.D., vol. xii. no. 8 (1961), pp. 7, 8, and 25.

92. Ibid.,

93. Ibid.,

94. Ibid.,

95. Ibid., vol. xiii. no. 7 (1961), p. 4.

Seven-Year Plan had not provided for sufficient increases in the State purchase prices for farm produce, nor for adequate capital investment in agriculture,⁹⁶ on the wrong assumption that by sheer momentum, production would continue to increase after 1958 as it had done before. On these grounds, Khrushchev himself had made it quite clear that further increases in delivery prices were unnecessary; he believed that collective farm income would continue to increase quite naturally as the result of continuing higher productivity.⁹⁷

The basic proposition of Marxist-Leninist economic theory to the effect that heavy industry must be given priority in development was put before all else in the execution of the Seven-Year Plan, with the clear result that the agricultural sector of the plan receded into the background and therefore developed entirely unsatisfactorily.⁹⁸

96. The share of agricultural investment in the total investment in the national economy declined without interruption from 17.6 per cent in 1957 to 15.3 per cent in 1960. The rate of growth of the total productive investment in agriculture declined from 12.8 per cent in 1958 to 7 per cent in 1959 and only 2.4 per cent in 1960. Voprosy ekonomiki, no. 7, 1962, p. 50 and Tsentrol'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR Kapital'noe stroitel'stvo SSSR, Moscow, 1961, p. 159; cited by Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., p. 142.

97. C.D., vol. x. no. 5 (1958), pp. 14 and 17;
vol. xii. no. 1 (1960), pp. 12 and 13.

98. Laird, op. cit., p. 148.

The existing resources were quite insufficient to produce the fast rate of growth in agricultural output which Khrushchev had so optimistically foreseen, and the government's efforts to achieve impossible targets through compulsion resulted in a serious waste of resources.⁹⁹

In each of the first three years of the Plan, the total grain harvest fell short of the plan, giving rise to a total deficit of over 30 million tons during the three year period 1959-1961.¹⁰⁰ While industrial production grew more than 8 per cent during these first three years of the Seven-Year Plan thereby exceeding the planned production target by almost 2 per cent, agricultural production in the same period of time increased by only 1 per cent. The overall rise in farm output was almost entirely due to a few modest improvements in animal husbandry.¹⁰¹ This was particularly disappointing after initial upsurges of 1953-1958.

It was only by 1960-61 that State investments were finally increased to any real degree, and the cost of some items of farm machinery and spare parts reduced. But by this

99. Swearer, op. cit., p. 15

100. Kabysh, op. cit., p. 135.

101. W. Klatt, "Soviet Farm Output and Food Supply in 1970", Soviet Affairs, no. 4 (ed. by M. Kaser), St. Athony's Papers, no. 19, Oxford, 1966, p. 104.

time it was too late. Developments in 1961 failed to bring any substantial improvements in the rate of growth of farm output as a whole.¹⁰² Khrushchev was not successful on the issue over the position of agriculture on the scale of national priorities.¹⁰³ For in spite of his statements concerning the relative diminishing investments into farming, total agricultural investment as a percentage of total investment for 1961 was less than the 1956 figure by 2 per cent.¹⁰⁴ This was mainly the result of the government's increased expenditures on defense.

Although Khrushchev continued to call the attention of the Party Presidium to the drastic shortage of material requirements of agriculture, violent controversies over general economic and social policies erupted into the decision to scrap the Seven-Year Plan, with the drafting of a new Party Program to cover the next twenty years.

The 22nd Communist Party Congress was held in October 1961. The New Party Program stated that by 1970

102. As compared to an increase of 11 per cent during 1958, the official index of gross farm output rose by only 0.6 per cent in 1959, 1.9 per cent in 1960, and 3.1 per cent in 1961. Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe, Upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, Narodnoe Khoziazistvo SSSR v. 1961 godu, Moscow, 1962, p. 293; cited by Karcz and Timoshenko, op. cit., p. 146.

103. Ploss, op. cit., p. 208.

104. Ibid.

agricultural output was to be 2-1/2 times that of 1960, and that Russia would have surpassed the U.S. level of per capita agricultural production by 1-1/2 times. By 1980, the increase was to be 2-1/2 times that of 1960.¹⁰⁵

The program proposed further financial relief for the collective farms, and also measures to speed up the supply of machinery, fertilizers, electrification and irrigation of farms, but showed no willingness to make the necessary investments at the expense of the other sectors of the economy.¹⁰⁶

The following years did witness a certain increase in grain production, but mainly because the cultivated areas themselves were extended, and not as a result of any intensification of productivity per acre or per worker.

According to the official inventory of 1 January 1962, the areas planted to all agricultural crops in 1961 totalled 204,600,000 hectares, as against 203,000,000 hectares in 1960, being an overall increase of 1,600,000 hectares.¹⁰⁷

Bad weather as well as the depressed state of farm inventories and treasuries resulted in very serious overall crop failures in 1963. The poor performance with its heavy weight on the economy, forced Khrushchev to modify many of

105. C.D., vol. xiii. no. 44 (1961), pp. 12 and 13.

106. Ibid., vol. xiii. no. 46 (1961), p. 7.

107. Ibid., vol. xiv. no. 4 (1962), p. 5.

his policies. Khrushchev's prediction that the Soviet Union would soon catch up with the United States in per capita production of meat, butter, and milk, was forgotten. Embarrassing too was his 1961 declaration that by 1970 the Soviet Union would actually exceed the United States in agricultural production, and by 1980 would enjoy the highest standard of living in the world.

The loss of economic momentum severely troubled the Soviet leadership, as Khrushchev had already made several attempts to try to eliminate shortcomings in agriculture and industry. However, in 1963 Khrushchev convincingly absolved himself of blame for the current shortages by reminding the Party Presidium of his October 1960 memorandum and claiming that „some leaders" had turned their backs on the primary technological needs of agriculture. He was able to win enough votes in the leadership to undertake extremely costly purchases of wheat from Canada and Australia.¹⁰⁸

Whereas the Seven-Year Plan had originally called for a 70% increase in farm production by 1965, ~~1965~~ by 1964, all that Soviet farmers managed to achieve was an annual increase of about 1.7 per cent, a percentage even lower than that of the yearly increase of population.¹⁰⁹

108. Ibid., vol. xv. no. 40 (1963), pp. 10 and 12.

109. Ingram, op. cit., pp. 51 and 81.

But despite a certain degree of general improvement in the material position of most of the Soviet population, a very considerable percentage still dragged on in a rather miserable existence, as far as food was concerned. In mid-October 1964, Khrushchev was removed from his position of leadership in both Party and government.¹¹⁰

It will probably not be possible for some years to come to establish, with any degree of certainty, the reasons for the removal of Khrushchev....There can be little doubt that his failure to succeed with his farm programme played a significant rôle in the Party's decision to depose him.¹¹¹

110. C.D., vol. xvi. no. 40 (1964), p. 3.

111. Klatt, op. cit., p. 106.

CONCLUSION

Most of Khrushchev's political ascendance can be attributed to the success of his initial agricultural reforms: yet it was the serious shortcomings in his farm policies that ultimately brought about his downfall.

Khrushchev's agricultural reforms have followed two paths: namely, increased capital investments and incentives in the agricultural sector of the economy; and increased controls over the peasants by further tying the collective farms to the Party bureaucracy at all levels. The primary objective of these changes was that of increasing agricultural output.

The improvement in Soviet agricultural production was spectacular between 1953 and 1958. But it must be remembered that in 1953 the situation in the countryside was little short of desperate. The principal reason for this was the low level of investment in agriculture, together with the lack of adequate incentives for the collective farm peasants.

Inadequate economic returns, low labour productivity, inadequate mechanization, misused manpower, class tensions, ideological conflicts, and poor individual administrative management, particularly at the local level, were the

resultant problems. Furthermore, very major differences in the conditions, capabilities and other problems existing in the various regions were seldom given proper consideration by the State.

The sacrifice of the individual consumer and of the peasantry, in favour of heavy industry, which had typified economic policy under Stalin, was partially repudiated by Khrushchev. In fact ideological flexibility in the economic sphere had progressively increased from Stalin to Khrushchev, both under the pressure of changing objective circumstances and also as a result of personality differences and the differences in background of the two leaders. Another factor was the progress and changed circumstances of the Soviet economy. For Khrushchev realized that old Stalinist 'command economy' methods of the 1930's and 1940's were no longer suitable for the contemporary tasks of modernizing, diversifying and expanding an already unevenly developed economy. But most of all, the slowdown in economic growth had convinced Khrushchev of the urgency of effecting major economic reforms, even at the risk of conflict with basic Party doctrine. Khrushchev became progressively more flexible and less doctrinaire in his approach to economic questions. The fact that his approach was more pragmatic than Stalin's indicated Khrushchev's

greater awareness of the realities of the Soviet economy, in the form of a genuine response to the objective circumstances which the country faced and the recognition that growing economic and social problems, if to be dealt with successfully, required greater innovation and flexibility of control.

Khrushchev was able to see economics in the light of dealing with problems such as more effective allocation of resources. Stalin, by contrast, confined important questions of economics to narrow technical and managerial questions, such as factory cost accounting or factory management, which, according to Stalin "specifically excluded economic planning".¹ Thus, whereas Stalin often isolated himself from many of the more pressing economic and other realities of soviet life, Khrushchev was more clearly aware of these conditions.

In shifting government policy to a greater emphasis on economic incentives, Khrushchev raised considerably the very low prices paid by the government for farm products which collectives had to deliver. In fact the entire system of deliveries was reorganized and simplified. But the stimulating effect of higher agricultural prices was to a large extent lost. There was only a very

1. Stalin, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

limited supply of consumer goods on the market which the farmers could buy.

In fact Khrushchev did not recognize the need to adjust to the complexities of increasing affluence and mobility. The government, under Khrushchev's leadership failed to try to establish or even predict consumer needs, but rather drew up production schedules which would suit the statistician in the bureaucracy of a state owned economy.²

Although Khrushchev did make an effort to encourage peasant incentives particularly during the very early part of his administration this was done as a sort of crisis response to encourage an initial upsurge in peasant production, mainly from their private plots and personal livestock holdings. Such measures however, were always accompanied by other moves to lighten labour discipline in the socialist sector of collective farming.

There remained no doubt that still the most substantial area of conscious dissatisfaction within Soviet society existed among the peasantry, who constituted approximately a third of the Soviet population.

2. Marshall I. Goldman, "Trade and the Consumer" Survey, no. 64, July 1967, pp. 141 and 142.

Their dissatisfaction had its roots in the simple fact that they had always maintained to an important extent their aspiration for private ownership and cultivation of the land.

And yet throughout Khrushchev's many efforts and changes in the agricultural sphere, the Soviet policy toward the peasantry was always in the direction of proletarianization, i.e., toward the creation of an agricultural working force divorced in fact and in aspiration from any form of land ownership.

Clearly, despite all Khrushchev's policy changes, the social and political problem of the peasants' outlook was never solved. Nor did Khrushchev pay attention to the serious problems of health, composition, rural class stratification, and ideological tensions in the village which were in fact being caused by government policy toward the family, the private plot, and religion.

The very nature of Soviet agriculture being such that those engaged in it are necessarily dispersed over very vast areas, to control their animosity, even on a collective farm, is immensely more difficult than is similar control over a single group of hundreds, or even thousands of workers concentrated in a factory of limited area. For unlike the factory workers in the towns, the peasants have a better chance to exist apart from the regime. Moreover,

most of the disaffected nationality groups being predominantly peasant in social composition, articulation of these latent hostilities against the regime, particularly on a collective scale, even today poses a real danger to the Communist system in Russia.

Since 1954 Khrushchev promoted the growth of Party membership in the countryside with the intention of strengthening his control over agriculture through the apparatus of the new Party organizer of the territorial production administration, at the primary level. Such a strengthening of Party forces on the countryside was necessary if Khrushchev was to fulfill his plans for granting fuller authority to the lower cadres within the Party apparatus. That is why he gave a lot of attention and first priority to the establishment of a primary Party organization on every farm. Furthermore the belief that by will-power, Communism could overcome any obstacle, was strongly engrained in Soviet agricultural policy.

Khrushchev, as part of his job as the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, constantly belaboured the theory of 'Party infallibility'. In so doing, he was always obliged to refute the fact that the Party was or even could be in error, and in thus asserting he frequently

referred to the fact that Party leaders were capable of telling right from wrong.

At the same time, Khrushchev wanted to be popular. For although he was genuine in his attempts to reduce poverty, he was also acting on the basis of cold political calculation. He wanted to use the farms, not just as a means of production, but as 'training schools' to condition the citizens in the Politburo's ideal of what a Soviet society should be like.

In this respect he frequently intervened directly through lower Party administrators and collective farm officials. But job responsibilities of local officials were seldom defined with any precision. As an official at any level was ultimately responsible for the actions of all the different levels of subordinates working under him, a system of high pressure often resulted in rash delegation of authority together with the continuous interference in petty matters, usually handled by the subordinates. Khrushchev's efforts to decentralize agricultural planning were constantly being hindered. For, under these conditions, the further one would descend the chain of authority the less would be the impact of decentralization.

Khrushchev had always stressed the importance of public organizations and popular enthusiasm in raising production. In this regard he appealed to the support of the masses by checking on the performance of officials, whom he would frequently bully in public. This meant that many officials were naturally wary of assuming new responsibilities with the fear that ^{their} ~~their~~ inability to fulfill them would result in ~~his~~ demotion or dismissal.

Moreover, Khrushchev was constantly putting local officials under tremendous pressures to effect his programs, which were run as 'campaigns'. Thus regional flexibility was curtailed and it was only natural that Khrushchev's continuous threats to demote his local officials and farm managers often resulted in the creation of unwise crop patterns.

Nevertheless, generalization and universalization of farm practices and of crop patterns continued to be imposed from above, without regard for varying and different economic conditions of the many regions. As a result, the independent planning which the managers of individual farms have been able to perform was thus almost completely curtailed. At the same time Khrushchev would complain that his lower officials were not making full use of their newly granted powers.

Efficient farm management was also hampered by the fact that members of the farm elite were seldom really suited to their positions. Retired generals and officers were often appointed as chairmen of collective farms or directors of State farms. Although Khrushchev took steps toward bringing agricultural specialists and skilled labour to the farming areas, he never did solve the problem of finding suitable men who could manage the large collective farms, and despite the increasing number he had trained in agricultural colleges and vocational schools.

Therefore the over-all extent and effectiveness of planned control in the agricultural sector of the economy has been considerably weaker than in other productive areas. For efficient agricultural planning was frequently at loggerheads with Party directives.

But Khrushchev's solution of a problem began straight away with creating prerequisites for the planning of agricultural production, instead of the much needed discussions about the techniques, which would necessarily be involved in such planning activity. He frequently made public statements to the effect that agricultural conditions were uniform over all areas which he followed up by establishing a model farm in an area, to be followed as an

example for all the farms over a broad area. For Khrushchev believed that the planning authority in the Soviet Union was able to bring about harmonious development and to control all parts of the scene, and that the most complicated capital intensive and most impressive technique was always the most efficient.

Time has proven, however, that such 'planning from above' also led to several very costly mistakes; sometimes because of indiscriminate application of general practices to all areas, regardless of specific conditions and requirements, and often because the measure introduced was based upon outdated or unsound methods and principles. In the selection of crops almost no attention was paid to the differences in soil and climate, and any consideration that was given was grossly inadequate, as Khrushchev didn't bother to pay attention to such details. For example, 'deep ploughing' was an article of Communist agricultural faith, and so it was indiscriminately applied, and consequently did more harm than good in many areas. To take another example, the grassland system was generally cancelled, not only in those areas where there might have been a valid reason to do away with it, for example, in the dry areas, but also uniformly in the humid regions, many of which had been well suited to the grassland system. Corn

was Khrushchev's favourite crop, "Queen of the fields". Because of this, he ordered it to be sown in all regions, regardless of whether or not climatic conditions were suitable.

In the past, Soviet agricultural investment had always been concentrated on the production of large tractors and other 'mechanical means of production'. Bolsheviks had been obsessed by characteristics of high capital intensity with little labour output. Tractors and large combines also caught Khrushchev's fancy, while he had far less concern for more 'mundane' machinery.

So although Khrushchev did increase the lagging capital investment in agriculture and inputs of agricultural machinery, commercial fertilizers, and construction, increased capital investment did not really put labour and land to effective use.

In contrast to the first five years of his administration, during the period 1959-1964 Khrushchev's policies were producing failures more frequently and in more fields simultaneously.

Khrushchev tried to cover up the weaknesses in his farm policies by implying that one of the main causes of strain on agricultural production had been the excessive demands of military and space production. As he himself said:

...if the international situation were better, if it became possible to reach an agreement and to shed the burden of armaments, this would multiply the possibilities for a great upsurge of the economy and for raising the living standards of the people.³

It was true that at that time there was a 'doctrinal' inhibitor in the sacrosanct priority of heavy industry, as well as a practical one in the fact that military budget outlays, particularly in support of Soviet foreign policy at the time, could not be reduced.

In large measure however, the low increase in agricultural output had stemmed directly from existing internal problems on the farms. Khrushchev persisted in over-committing their resources, with goals invariably set far beyond the theoretical capacity of available resources, in an effort to try to stimulate each unit to maximum output. Following years of failure to meet production goals, Khrushchev imposed firmer administrative controls in 1961 and 1962.

As production had consistently failed to meet its goals, Khrushchev had become more and more frenzied in his efforts to 'jack up' agriculture. He often didn't bother to think out the consequences of what he was doing, if the immediate gain seemed great enough. His obsession with speed

3. C.D., vol. xv. no. 9 (1963), p. 11.

prevented the more careful consideration of the agricultural reforms so badly needed by the Soviet economy. When he was wrong, however, the results were serious because his orders were obeyed everywhere.

The March 1965 Plenum, following Brezhnev's speech on the economic problems of agriculture, declared that all the measures which Khrushchev had taken to raise the level of agricultural productivity in the period 1959-1964 had not only been in vain but had „caused great harm to collective and State farm production”.⁴

But in fact there had been a sizeable advance in Soviet farm policy under Khrushchev, and any deficiency was essentially a failure to expand in so far as not measuring up to the over-ambitious plans were concerned, rather than failure in the form of a collapse. For the situation regarding productivity, bad as it seemed, represented a great improvement over the previous decade.

Khrushchev's farm policies had not been the complete failure that some western scholars have implied. For Khrushchev's decade of farm policy reform will be remembered for its break with the past, which was decisive, even if partial.

4. C.D., vol. xvii. no. 11 (1965), p. 4.

During the first few years as First Secretary, his colleagues had been content to sit back and do very little while Khrushchev accepted full personal responsibility for his actions in handling the critical state of agriculture.

It was Khrushchev who, for the first time since collectivization, took stock of Russia's agricultural resources, openly admitted the failures of farm policy, and initiated a vast series of reforms to recover agriculture from the 'dead end' in which Stalin had left it.

Indeed, he understood the need for change, but perhaps not the implications which that change involved. And yet the fact that he recognized the need for change and particularly his realization that this change depended on the further development of the Soviet economy, was in itself a significant contribution.

Under the Tsars, famine was an inevitable re-occurrence. Today, famine has been eliminated from Russia. Prior to Communist rule, the peasant was illiterate; today, he has at least a basic education.

As a preliminary step, Khrushchev showed a long overdue realization of the importance of the human element in the success or failure of any economic program or policy, a factor virtually ignored since the early industrialization period.

It was originally contended that collectivization was required in order to extract more food from the peasants, which would thus make possible large investments in industry. It was Khrushchev, however, who began to realize that people do not put forth their maximum effort when they are made to work solely by force or by propaganda, and that the fostering of their own economic initiative and enterprise is also a very important element in the country's economic development. For statistics had proven that the use of force or promises of future bliss are not the circumstances under which people work the most efficiently. But under Khrushchev's administration, changes were being made that would allow profit to play an increasing, but still minor part in Soviet farm policy.

But while Khrushchev plainly exposed the fundamental problems and changes which had to be faced, he was less successful in finding the appropriate policies.

Nevertheless, the changes in agricultural policy which have taken place during the Khrushchev era have had, for the most part, a beneficial effect upon production.

Many of Khrushchev's agricultural reforms have in fact started a trend that ~~may~~ result in fundamental changes in Russia.

The virgin lands development was undoubtedly Khrushchev's most spectacular and expensive innovation in agricultural policy. Acreage expansion has continued to

prove to be an important factor in the rapid expansion of agricultural production, as evidenced by the further progress in increasing farm output after Khrushchev's fall. ~~such~~ Such gradual progress goes further to indicate that the Soviet system of centrally planned collective agriculture has been generally more successful in increasing over-all acreage than in improving yields, and most encouraging of all, most successful in extracting large quantities of farm products which the steadily growing Soviet population requires. Recent efforts have been made to expand farm acreage by settling large numbers of people in the semi-drought regions east of the Volga.

There have also been important areas of continuity in the technical aspects of Khrushchev's farm policy. For example, the tendency to increase the average size of collective farms has continued; the practice of placing more emphasis upon State farms has continued; heavy investment in farm machinery, particularly large-scale tractor-drawn machinery, has continued. In all these respects, the Soviet Union has, since Khrushchev's resignation in 1964, on the whole maintained its traditional line of attack in effecting further farm policies.

But certainly one of Khrushchev's most important contributions to his country was that of encouraging public

familiarization with policy differences in the country's agricultural affairs, mainly through public opinion polls and by introducing the idea of popular referendums on policy questions into the Party Program.

Previously the preclusion of public or newspaper criticism of a policy once it had been officially adopted by the government, and most often very inadequate criticism before a policy was adopted, had made prevention and correction of such mistakes more difficult.

Khrushchev's amelioration of the harsher and cruder aspects of Stalin's control system has since encouraged administrators and under officials to speak out more frankly in public, with less to be afraid of in the way of forceful rebukes or punishments.

Furthermore, Khrushchev has told the Russian people that it is incorrect to continue to believe that there is „nothing to learn from the capitalists in the organization of agricultural production”.⁵ In so doing Khrushchev challenged one of the main dogmas of Communism's infallibility by suggesting to the Soviet citizenry that Marxism-Leninism can not always be taken as their true guide.

5. C.D., vol. xiv. no. 9 (1962), p. 12.

Recently, reports have started coming from the Soviet Union that certain papers are questioning the entire Soviet agricultural system and advocating the breaking up of the vast, unwieldy farming units for which nobody feels responsible, and which are too large to be managed effectively. Experiments are currently being made with "links", - groups of families cultivating plots into which collective farms are subdivided. It has also been suggested that all types of farms should be subjected to 'planning by price'. Such proposals indicate that even now the system of collective farming does not work and that many Soviet experts have given up hope that it ever will.⁶

Therefore, whatever one may think of the methods by which Khrushchev attempted to transform the Russian agricultural scene, and however one may judge its practical results and future prospects, we must conclude that he left Russia a better place to live than when he began his farm policy reforms.

6. Ljubo Sirc, "Economics of Collectivization", Soviet Studies, vol. xviii, number 3, January, 1962.

AUG 28 1968

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