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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

REPORT

25X1

SUBJECT Recruitment of Labor for Agriculture

DATE DISTR.

24 March 1955

NO. OF PAGES 4

DATE OF INFO.

REQUIREMENT

25X1

PLACE ACQUIRED

REFERENCES

25X1

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REPORT 25X1

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia
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DATE DISTR. 28 Dec 1954

NO. OF PAGES 3

DATE OF INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

PLACE ACQUIRED

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1. A shortage of agricultural labor was one of the reasons for inefficiency of agricultural production in Czechoslovakia under the Communist régime. This was admitted officially at the end of 1953. Actually, there were three different categories of this labor shortage: a general shortage of agricultural labor since 1945, a lack of young people in agriculture, and shortage of village artisans such as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and saddlers. The two latter categories have affected agriculture since February 1948. The general shortage of labor existing since 1945 was caused by the movement of people from rural areas into towns and the movement of Germans out of Czechoslovakia. The lack of young people working in agriculture, and this was true of private farms, Unified Agricultural Cooperatives (JZD), and state farms, was caused by the recruitment of young villagers for industry. This was part of the policy of the régime. Frequently this was a forced type of recruitment, especially in cases regarding kulaks. In addition to industrial recruitment, the shortage of young people in agriculture was caused by the government wage policy; the average monthly wage in industry was much higher than in agriculture, i.e., 8,000 to 10,000 crowns compared with 2,000 to 3,000 crowns. Industrial recruitment was in effect until early 1953 and was followed by a period of waiting and uncertainty regarding assignment of workers which lasted until late 1953. The employees of village blacksmiths, saddlers, and wheelwrights, including their own children, left for city factories because of the general government policy governing handicrafts and because there was not enough work for them in the village shops. The private farmers, awaiting collectivization of their farms, were not interested in purchasing new agricultural equipment or having old equipment repaired. These facts were taken into consideration when the régime decided, in addition to holding present agricultural workers in their jobs, to make an all-out recruitment of labor for agriculture. This recruitment started early in 1954 and was to be completed by the end of 1957, when the new Five-Year Plan would begin.

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2. In accordance with this new recruitment policy, all surplus industrial employees were to be transferred to agriculture. Each type of industry had to release a certain number of employees. In addition to workers who decided to transfer to agriculture on their own, those who lived in villages and commuted to city factories were released for agricultural work, unless they were considered indispensable. The majority of workers who chose to leave industry for personal reasons were married people who could not find suitable housing for their families in the cities. Most of these people would move to the border areas to be employed on state farms there. The state farms in the border areas received funds from the Ministry of Agriculture for reconstruction of abandoned houses for the new employees; however, the state farms had difficulty in securing construction firms to do the necessary work. For example, the State Farm, Large Farm Unit, in Tachov (N 49-48, E 12-38) received 1,200,000 crowns for reconstruction of housing which had to be used during 1954. More people desiring to go to the Tachov area were registered with the Prague labor office than could be accepted at the state farms there but, as of summer 1954, the state farms had been unable to secure a construction firm to perform reconstruction of housing. The construction firms claimed they had more important work under way. If the allocated funds were not used during 1954, they would no longer be available for use by the state farms, although still larger amounts were to be allocated to the Tachov state farms for 1955. The Unified Agricultural Cooperatives (JZD) in the border area also had plans for providing housing facilities for new employees. The cooperatives were assisted by the national committees in this task. The transfer of people from towns and cities to rural areas was underway early in 1954. By summer 1954, most of the people had gone to work with Machinery and Tractor Pools (STS).
3. In addition to the general recruitment of industrial workers, all those who had one or more years of agricultural education were to go into agricultural work, regardless of their present employment. Should their salaries be less in agriculture than in their previous employment, which would be the case in most instances, they were to receive additional payment to cover the difference. A program was in process to introduce payment on a piece-work basis in agriculture. This recruitment was handled by labor offices and through the local CP and was in its initial stage by summer 1954. It was apparently a forced recruitment because employees meeting the educational qualifications for transfer were simply instructed to report to the labor offices.
4. A larger number of youth than in previous years, upon completion of eight years of elementary education, were assigned by the labor offices to work in agriculture. Agricultural schools of all types accepted more students for the year 1954-55 than in previous years. For instance, the agricultural college in Brno accepted approximately 350 students for 1954-55; approximately 250 students had been accepted for each school year from 1951 to 1954, and 150 students for 1949-50. Schools for agricultural youth were established throughout the country, frequently located at state farms. The young people assigned to work in agriculture by the labor offices were to attend a one-year training program at these schools. The training was both practical and theoretical and trainees had to specialize in a particular field such as cattle-breeding, swine-breeding, repair of implements, etc. Students from agricultural high schools and people with many years of experience in agriculture were to teach at these schools. It was also planned to establish winter training courses in agriculture such as those which existed during the First Republic and later were abolished by the Communists.

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5. Of the three divisions of agriculture, i.e., private farms, Unified Agricultural Cooperatives, and state farms, the state farms had priority in recruitment of people from industry. All highly qualified people were transferred to state farms, with the exception of a few who had agricultural high school or college educations. They were transferred to the agriculture desks of district and regional national committees. People with small agricultural plots who resided in villages but earned their living by working in city factories (kovoze medelci - factory farmers) were to be transferred to the Unified Agricultural Cooperative in their village. As of summer 1954, they were the only newcomers to the Unified Agricultural Cooperatives. These people were unhappy about leaving industrial work because in industry they were assured of a certain minimum wage, which was not the case in the agricultural cooperatives.
6. The former usual practice of family farms being passed on to heirs, which had been discontinued in 1948, was reestablished during 1954. In other words, children were no longer forced to leave their family farms to work in industry but were ordered to remain on their own farms by the labor offices. Children of farm families who were not needed at home because of the size of the farm were usually required to work elsewhere in the field of agriculture.

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