

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Until the year 1948 the Bulgarian Government did very little about setting up kolkhozes because the authorities were under the impression that, inasmuch as cooperatives have long been a part of Bulgarian life, it would be a simple matter to make the transition to a kolkhoz. In that year, however, all media of propaganda were mobilized to popularize the kolkhoz and encourage peasants to join on a voluntary basis. Contrary to all expectations, the peasants offered opposition to the innovation.
2. In 1949 the authorities initiated a program calling for severe measures against recalcitrant peasants. These consisted of:
 - a. The imposition of high taxes, scaled to exceed the finances of the payee.
 - b. The forced consignment of a large quantity of produce to the state.
 - c. The confiscation of private woods without reimbursement for the lumber and wood taken.
 - d. The expulsion of members of the family from universities, high schools, and professional training schools.
 - e. The suppression of some food coupons to which members of a family were entitled.
 - f. The development of any pretext to acquisition property.
3. On the other hand, the newly created kolkhozes were granted many facilities. For example:
 - a. The state accepted responsibility for inventory matters.
 - b. Members were granted four years leeway to pay taxes on private property.
 - c. Extra ration tickets were issued for a number of supplementary items; many other privileges were granted.

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4. However, inasmuch as many kolkhozes were established in a very brief period of time, the state found itself short of means to extend sufficient aid to all. Consequently, many of them encountered difficulties during the first year, including deficits; and the peasants' earnings were very low, which added to their discontent.
5. In the village of Gradets in the Vidin district, there are 6,000 inhabitants and 1,400 homes. Widespread publicity was given to the creation of kolkhozes in 1949, but the first one did not get under way until 1950. Only about 150 of the 1,400 households entered the kolkhoz; many were induced by pressure. They contributed a total of 1,300 hectares of land, whereupon the kolkhoz assembly decreed that each member had the right to five hectares of land, one cow and three sheep as personal property. Despite this stipulation, no one was given anything. The land is cultivated with the same primitive tools brought in by the peasants, because the state tractor station in Vidin does not have even one tractor in good working condition, or any agricultural implements.
6. The same condition exists in the village of Rakovitsa in the Kula district where there are 800 homes. By the end of 1950, only 270 homes had joined, many out of fear of reprisals. The tractor station in Kula is as poorly equipped as the one in Vidin.
7. Conditions in Bulgarian villages are bad and getting worse every day. Despite the negative results produced by the kolkhozes the state has continued to give them wide publicity and apply forceful measures against private owners. The peasants are putting up more and more opposition but, at the same time, the terror exercised by the authorities has been increased. As a consequence, there has been an increase in the number of peasants escaping from Bulgaria to Serbia.