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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MEASURES TO FURTHER THE DEVELOPMENT
OF SOVIET AGRICULTURE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Research and Reports

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FOREWORD

On 7 September 1953 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union made public a series of measures for raising the output of the agriculture of the USSR. On the surface it might appear that the Kremlin has changed its policy toward producers of agricultural commodities, but a careful reading indicates that there has been no material change in the fundamental policies of the government to control the economy of the USSR. Certain concessions have been made to obtain the temporary cooperation of the collective farm workers during the interim required to make the cadres of the government-owned and government-operated Machine-Tractor Stations, and not the collective farmers themselves, the decisive force in agricultural production.

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OF SOVIET AGRICULTURE

The keynote of the decisions on agriculture passed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on 7 September 1953 is found in the following statement: "When collective farms become big diversified enterprises" and when "the Machine-Tractor Stations constitute a decisive force in agricultural production," both must be strengthened with skilled personnel.

The collective farm system serviced by the Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS's) had failed to meet the expectations of the Kremlin at the outbreak of World War II. The average standard of living through the USSR was lower than that enjoyed under the Tzar's regime immediately preceding World War I. The position of the collective farm system as a source of food for the nonfarm population and of materials for industry worsened during the war. Although the US supplied the USSR with meat products equivalent to the ration of 15 million men under arms, fats and oils nearly equivalent to the quantity processed by the food industry of the USSR, and 80 percent of the US production of lump sugar, millions of town dwellers and factory workers were unable to obtain even sufficient bread to meet subsistence requirements. Town dwellers and factory workers were, therefore, forced to cultivate private garden plots to get potatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, and other vegetables to eke out their inadequate food supply. The Russians were unable to furnish sufficient seed for the gardens, and the US, under Lend Lease, shipped tons of seed to salvage the situation.

Throughout the period 1945-49 the Kremlin made every effort to regain lost ground and to increase agricultural production to the level required to supply the needs of the increasing population. The problem was not only one of production but, more than that, one of procurement of bread grain, potatoes, meat, fats and oils, and other products for distribution to nonproducers and for affording supplies with which to implement economic developments at home and political policies abroad.

The Soviet government succeeded more or less in the cases of cotton, sugar, tea, and citrus fruit and actually increased the acreages of wheat and rye by cutting down the acreages of barley,

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oats, and corn. The Soviet government also attempted to bolster up meat, milk, butter, and egg supplies by forcing peasant households to sell privately owned cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens to the collectivized farm economy, leaving about 40 percent of the households without cattle. But, at best, the production of animal products by the collectivized herds was not proportionate to the increase in numbers.

Production of potatoes fell off sharply because the collective farm households were more interested in producing potatoes and vegetables on their own private garden plots for sale on the open market than in working intensively on the collectivized fields, which competed with them on these same markets.

Without going further into detail as to causes, the production, particularly the procurement situation, was unsatisfactory for the consumption year 1 July 1949 through 30 June 1950. The controls set up during the war to regulate the collective farm system had got out of hand. The morale of the collective farm householders, who had had hopes that the whole system of collectivization was about to be abandoned, was low, and incentive to work on the collectivized fields was feeble.

In 1950 the Kremlin, in order to facilitate the procurement of farm products and strengthen its control over the collective farm households, rescinded the charter guaranteeing to each collective farm that its boundaries were inviolate and took drastic steps toward consolidating 254,000 farms into a few big farming enterprises -- 94,000 as of 1953. The Kremlin went further than that and took steps toward concentrating scattered village populations into big, so-called "agrorods." This meant the loss to the collective farm households of their ancestral private garden plots. Unrest was created among the villagers, who were already dissatisfied over the loss of their privately owned livestock. The plan of the "agrorod" had to be abandoned temporarily.

The government, it is true, had its 94,000 big collective farm enterprises, but these were poorly managed. Only 2,400 collective farm chairmen had higher agricultural education, and 14,200 had intermediate special education. The discipline of collective farm workers was at a low ebb. Even the operations of the government-owned MTS's were unsatisfactory. The overwhelming majority of directors, chief engineers, and chief agronomists of the MTS's had

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no higher education. The MFS's rented to the collectives their tractors, combines, and other machines, which were operated inefficiently by the all-too-poorly-trained collective farm workers themselves.

There was little improvement in the general situation during 1951 and 1952. Although favorable weather conditions somewhat increased the production of certain of the field crops, the animal industry situation was bad, with the prospect of becoming worse. Against this background were made the decisions affecting agriculture that were passed by the CPSU on 7 September 1953.

The 94,000 "big diversified enterprises" under the temporary guise of "collective farms" have been pronounced to be the Soviet base for the production of foodstuffs for the population and raw materials for industry. The operation of these big farming enterprises is to be under the control of the MFS's under the following mandates from the CPSU:

1. To increase yields of crops;
2. To insure an increase in the number of commonly owned livestock with a simultaneous rise in the productivity per head;
3. To complete the mechanization of field crop production;
4. To augment the total output and the output for market of farm and livestock products in the collective farms which they serve;
5. To extend the mechanization of labor-consuming processes in animal husbandry as well as in the production of potatoes and vegetables;
6. To introduce into collective farm production the achievements of science and the most advanced practices of agriculture;
7. To insure the further organizational and economic consolidation of collective farms; and

8. To improve the material well-being of the collective farmers.

There were 8,950 MTS's in 1953, or 1 station to about 10 of the big farming enterprises, which, under the present organization, appears to be spreading the control too thinly to be effective. If the MTS's are to be the decisive force in agricultural production, their numbers and staffs must be increased.

During 1954 and 1955, some 6,500 engineers are to be sent to the MTS's from industry and technical institutions to become directors or other key personnel. By the spring of 1954, 100,000 agronomists and zootechnicians are to be attached to the staff of the MTS's. Tractor drivers; heads of tractor teams and their assistants; as well as combine and excavator operators and their assistants; record keepers; and mechanics are to be employed as permanent cadres to perform the actual work of making the MTS's the decisive force in the agricultural production of the USSR. In addition to the permanent cadres, assistant combine operators and attendants of power-drawn agricultural and ditch-digging machines are to be employed on a seasonal basis. The Kremlin foresees that under this plan it will take from 6 months to a year, or even longer, to teach a worker to operate power machinery. After a worker is taught the mechanics, he requires two or more years of practical experience in the field to become proficient in the art of farming with power machinery.

The present plan of the MTS's becoming the vital force in Soviet agriculture can have little or no effect on the production of 1954 and probably will have little effect on that of 1955 and possibly even little effect on that of 1956.

As presently organized, "the Machine-Tractor Stations are big State enterprises which do about three-fourths of all agricultural work in the collective farms." From 1954 through 1 May 1957, not less than 500,000 general-purpose tractors -- in terms of 15 horse-power -- and 250,000 tractor cultivators, as well as the necessary quantity of agricultural machines, motor vehicles, mobile repair shops, containers for oil products, and other equipment are to be sent to the MTS's. The government can, in all probability, supply the MTS's with this additional equipment. All of this added power will not materially affect the production of grain, which at present is more than 90 percent mechanized. The tractor cultivators are

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designed to take over the cultivation of row crops which at present are largely hand-hoed or worked with horse-drawn implements. Cultivation of potatoes on collective farms is to be mechanized 40 to 65 percent in 1954 and 80 to 90 percent in 1955. Between-the-row cultivation of vegetables is to be mechanized 70 percent in 1954 and 80 to 90 percent in 1955. Mechanization will not necessarily increase yields but will greatly reduce the dependence of the government on the collective farm households to perform this work. By 1955, hay cutting, now done largely with scythes or horse-drawn mowers, is to be 80 percent mechanized; silaging, 75 percent; lifting root fodder, 90 percent; while gathering and stacking straw is to be mechanized 70 percent. It is probable that the government can put enough tractors and other machinery into the field to effect these increases in mechanization, but the quality of the work will leave much to be desired. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this extension of mechanization in farm operations will make the government increasingly independent of the collective farm households.

It is interesting that with the exception of the rather optimistic resolution of the CPSU to expand potato acreage by 4,128,500 hectares and vegetables by 1,300,400 hectares in 1954, little is said about acreages. It appears that in increasing production, great reliance is to be placed on increasing yields through the introduction of better breeds, better and mechanized techniques, and the use of more mineral fertilizer.

By the end of 1959 the Soviet chemical industry is to provide industrial plants with a capacity of 16.5 million to 17.5 million metric tons of fertilizers annually. By the end of 1964 this capacity is to be increased to between 28 million to 30 million metric tons. It is estimated that some expansion in fertilizer facilities will take place, but it is highly unlikely that the expansion will approach the magnitude of the expansion envisioned by the CPSU. The production of fertilizer in 1952 in the USSR is estimated at 4,070,000 metric tons, of which about 30 percent was applied to cotton, 25 percent to sugar beets, 11 percent to flax, 4 percent to potatoes and vegetables, and 30 percent to a variety of industrial crops or specialized cultures. No significant quantity of commercial fertilizer was applied to grain. It is possible, in the future, if a considerable expansion in the production of commercial fertilizers takes place, that grain may be fertilized. There is at present, however, no basis for appraising the extent to which the USSR can realize its expectations in the production of fertilizer or the direction its utilization will take.

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Under Stalin the collective farm household with a private garden plot and privately owned livestock was at variance with a government-controlled economy. The use of pressure to weaken the position of the household economy has not produced the desired results of forcing the peasants to work harder in the collectivized economy. The government requires time to build up its own productive force and cannot disregard the present work potential of the households.

Until the time comes when collective farms are, in fact, "big diversified enterprises" on which the MTS's are the "decisive force in agricultural production," the Soviet government will need the productive labor force of the collective farm households, not only on the socialized fields and with the flocks and herds of the collective economy but also on the private garden plots and with privately owned livestock.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, therefore, reiterates the right of the collective farm household to retain "its small personal plot to satisfy its consumer needs which cannot be satisfied completely by the communal economy." The plenum forbade "the practice of infringing the interests of collective farmers with regard to livestock in their private possession" and reduced the norms of required deliveries by both the collective farm economy and the collective farm households. In some instances, deliveries of livestock products were relinquished, and arrears were written off. Prices paid for required deliveries and surpluses were increased, and at the same time, bonuses, advance payments, and reduced taxes were offered. The availability of consumer goods was also increased.

All these measures are designed as incentives to stimulate the collective farm households to perform more and better work, thus creating an upsurge in production not only on the socialized fields of the communal economy but on the private household garden plots as well. These measures further offer assistance in the organization of markets to facilitate the profitable disposal of any surpluses that the collective farm economy and the collective farm households may produce.

The collective farm worker responded to the stimulation applied to induce him to grow cotton, sugar beets, tea, and citrus fruit and will probably be stimulated to further productivity by the above measures. The degree to which he will respond, however, cannot be

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predicted at this time. It is probable that whatever increase in production may take place during the next year or two will be due more to the activities of the collective farm households than to the vitalization of the permanent cadres of the MTS's. In the end, under government pressure, the permanent cadres will become an increasingly decisive force in agriculture, leaving to the collective farm households the less important tasks in field crop production and animal industry.

The apparently sudden concern of the Kremlin over lagging agricultural production is not an indication of weakness within the present ruling circles of the USSR. The agricultural problem has been serious since 1928 and has recently become worse. There could be no better time to inaugurate what appear to be "new measures" than at the beginning of the new administration. The leading personalities in the new administration are much the same as those who formulated the policies in the old administration, and it is believed that there has been no fundamental change in these policies. If the various measures outlined above are carried out, they will greatly strengthen the basic Communist policy that has been in existence for the past 35 years and will result in the CPSU achieving complete control of the Soviet economy.

The government will gradually, through the MTS's, take over control of peasant markets and eliminate them as a source of income. Household economy will be weakened, and the peasants themselves will become more and more dependent upon the collectivized economy, which will sooner or later pay wages in cash. The collective farms themselves will become, in fact, "big agricultural enterprises" wholly operated by the government. The "agrogorod" inhabited by a rural proletariat will become a reality. The achievement of this goal will unencumber the Kremlin from the uncertainties of the present existence of a rural capitalistic class and leave the Soviet rulers free to prosecute their struggle with the non-Communist world more vigorously than ever.

The question as to whether the fulfillment of this policy can sufficiently increase production to meet the requirements of the increasing population cannot be answered at this time. Some of the measures are, it is believed, realistic and move in the right direction. Their effectiveness, however, will depend, to a large extent, on the ability of the local Party units and others in control to understand the multitude of problems that continuously

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arise. Heretofore, Party organizations, as well as the MTS's, have, through lack of understanding, frequently interfered with the efforts of agronomists, veterinarians, and engineers to solve agricultural problems.

The solution of the food and raw material production problems of the USSR would increase its war potential and offer a real danger for the Free World.

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