

ALEC NOVE

Reply

I have very few bones indeed to pick with the discussants. I agree with almost every word of Douglas Jackson's comments. He is right in saying that natural conditions must figure prominently in an analysis of the performance and potential of Soviet agriculture. But of course they are a constant. To a great degree they were the same under Stalin and Khrushchev as they are today, and so, in writing about recent changes, I largely left soil and climate aside. However, new problems were posed by the expansion of sowings into Kazakhstan and Siberia under Khrushchev, and are also being posed by Brezhnev's plans to enlarge the irrigated area and increase yields on the podzol soils of the center and northwest. So Douglas Jackson adds balance to my own account. I only venture to disagree with him in one respect, and then only in emphasis. Of course the podzol soils in question are acidic and of limited natural fertility. But yields of grain and potatoes on these lands in the RSFSR are very low indeed compared with yields on similar soils in many countries (Finland, East Germany, Poland, even Estonia). With liming and fertilizing there is great potential here for increased production. Of course this potential may not be realized, but at least Brezhnev is aware of it, unlike Khrushchev, who persistently neglected the nonchernozem zones.

Again, I see very little to quarrel with in Karcz's perceptive comments. He points out that the abolition of the MTS in 1958 was part of a complex of measures which reduced agricultural inputs and incomes. Karcz's wording might suggest that I do not agree with this, but I do, and I thought that my paper made this clear. I also referred to the fact that steps to reverse this policy were being taken in the last two years of Khrushchev's political life (some increase in prices, in investments, in output of equipment, and in peasant incomes in and after 1962). Again, I can only agree that there is a labor problem, which ought to be regionally differentiated. Machinery, as we both pointed out, is often of poor quality. Of course, a list of remediable defects is also a list of items *potentially* improvable, though there is indeed no grounds for expecting any very striking improvements in the immediate future.

I do not agree with his comments on the volume of grain procurements, however. Let us recall the context. It was alleged by critics of Khrushchev after his fall that he had so greatly increased procurements that there was less grain available to farms. In some areas, such as Moldavia, this was so. But nationally the figures seem not to support this conclusion. My article was not

Grain Production (millions of tons, rounded)

Year	Harvest	Procurements	Remainder
1955	103	37	66
1956	125	54	71
1957	103	35	68
1958	134	56	78
1959	120	47	73
1960	126	48	78
1961	131	52	79
1962	140	57	83
1963	107	45	62
1964	152	68	84

Source: *Nar. khoz.*, 1967, p. 370.

really concerned with the first post-Stalin years, but let us take a look at the official figures for ten years in the table above.

Of course, the official statistics may be questioned. But they do not support the view that, overall, the period 1959–62 was one in which the farms were left with less grain than for the period 1955–58. We all agree that 1963 was an exceptionally bad year. It is also clear that in Khrushchev's last years there was strong pressure to expand deliveries of livestock products, and this, coincident with the decline in the number of private cows, may well have led to a reduction in peasant consumption of such commodities as milk, and to a strong feeling of resentment.

Since this discussion was written, the July 1970 plenum has been held. It adopted some new targets for the period 1971–75, which included substantial increases in grain production and in output and state procurements of meat. There is an upward revision in prices of livestock products (milk by 20 percent, meat by an amount which is not clearly stated), and sales of livestock products in excess of the plan will be subject to a 50 percent bonus. Yet retail prices are left unchanged, so the subsidy will become even larger. A major effort is announced to expand production of agricultural equipment. The entire emphasis of Brezhnev's speech was on discipline and party and state control over agriculture. He even revived the phrase "first commandment" with regard to deliveries to the state, and made it clear that overplan deliveries will also be compulsory.

Postscript to Professor Nove's Reply: I stand by my guns: Professor Nove proves my point. The increase in the amount left on farms is illusory. The decline in rural population (1.1 million) was offset by the 2 million hectare rise in grain acreage (and hence seed requirements). Livestock herds increased, and Soviet animals eat too much grain for their own good or that of the economy. Per head of "conventional" livestock grain left on farms declined from 8.8 quintals in 1955–58 to 8.0 quintals in 1959–64. (If unusual years are excluded, the figures are 8.5 and 8.1 quintals respectively.) Q.E.D.

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