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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STAFF STUDY

THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD "COMMUNES"
(Reference Title: ESAU I-59)

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Reference Title: ESAU I-59

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STAFF STUDY

The Soviet Attitude Toward "Communes"

This study is a working paper, reflecting information received through May 1959. It is intended to serve as a contribution to current discussion of the "communes" program in Communist China, and to introduce a new series of papers--designated ESAU--on aspects of the Sino-Soviet relationship.

This paper will later be refined as a chapter in a comprehensive discussion of the "communes" program--its origins, its early development, its modification under various pressures, and its present character. Since this preliminary discussion of the Soviet attitude has not been coordinated outside OCI, the ESAU group would welcome comment from interested parties. The analyst to whom either written or oral comment should be addressed is Donald Zagoria, [redacted]

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THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD "COMMUNES"

Summary and Conclusions

The Bolsheviks experimented with agricultural communes as the "highest" of three forms of agricultural cooperatives in the early period after the Russian revolution. All three types of cooperatives were unpopular with the Russian peasantry but the communes, involving the highest degree of socialization, were the least successful.

In the early communes, all property was pooled; produce was divided up on egalitarian principles; members lived in community dormitories; food was cooked and served in community kitchens. In the artel, a less "advanced" form of cooperative, most production was carried on collectively and most means of production were owned by the artel but each family was allowed to retain individual garden plots, dwellings, some cattle, small livestock and poultry; the family thus received both a collective and private income. The "lowest" form of cooperative, the TOZ, was simply a production cooperative in which the peasants joined together to work their land during the time of field work.

The communes, which numbered 2,100 by mid-1919, began to decline in number in the early 1920s, particularly after the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 which made important concessions to private farmers. On the eve of forced collectivization in 1929, they represented 9 percent of the total of all cooperatives.

Aware that the peasantry would not accept full communalization, Stalin did not attempt to establish the commune as the dominant form of agricultural enterprise when he launched forced collectivization in 1929. Rather he chose the artel, the halfway house between the commune and the TOZ. In 1930, he severely rebuked local leaders who sought to establish communes prematurely, and he contended that the artel was a necessary stage through which the peasantry must pass before going over to the commune. The artel was to be a "school" in socialism.

In 1934, Stalin said the communes had failed because of underdeveloped technology, a shortage of products and a premature practicing of egalitarianism. Although the "present commune" was a failure, he said, a "commune of the future" would arise on the basis of a more developed technology and

an abundance of products. It would evolve slowly out of the artel when all the collective farm members recognized that such a transition was to their advantage.

Proposals in Stalin's lifetime to turn some artels into model communes were vetoed and the Party continued to warn against overzealousness in the countryside. In Stalin's last theoretical testament to the party in 1952, although he did not specifically discuss the commune, his remarks clearly implied that he continued to regard the egalitarian commune as a far distant prospect at best.

In the years from Stalin's death until 1958, Soviet references to the agricultural commune were rare and perfunctory. In these references, the Russians continued to hold that the commune, as the highest form of the collective farm movement, would arise in the unspecified future on the basis of a highly developed technology and an abundance of products.

Since Khrushchev's radical MTS reform in early 1958, there has been increasing discussion of the manner in which the artel can be "raised" from cooperative to public property as Soviet society moves closer to Communism. While there is equivocation as to whether the agricultural commune will ever be a suitable form for the Soviet countryside, there is agreement that it will remain impractical until there is an abundance of products and a highly developed technology.

The Russians contend that the principle of distribution-according-to-need presupposes inexhaustible resources, and that any attempts to realize such distribution in the still backward kolkhoz village would "be only a parody of real communism." To achieve abundance, the "material interest" of the workers in their labor must be increased and this means a continuation of distribution-according-to-work for many years.

Moreover, Moscow holds, collective farms differ greatly in economic strength and prosperity, a situation inevitable for some time to come. It would be a denial of Communist principles to permit the inequalities which would follow from a coexistence of "rich" communes and "backward" communes.

Further, the Russians argue that people must be prepared psychologically to work and to live in a Communist manner and that this will require considerable education and improvement in material conditions.

Viewed against the background of Soviet experience and theory the Chinese communalization program is almost certainly regarded by Moscow as "adventurist." Whereas Peiping has drastically reduced private ownership of livestock and poultry. Moscow continues to attack private ownership by envelopment tactics. Whereas Peiping has introduced a payment system incorporating elements of free-supply, Moscow insists that equalization of distribution cannot work until the very final stage of Communism.

Certain features of the Chinese communes program may be sufficiently modified to meet Soviet objections to those particular features. Some apparently important modifications have already taken place, although their extent is still in question. For example, there has been less emphasis in recent months on "free supply."

It is also possible that the Chinese peasantry will prove less resistant to communalization -- particularly when modified -- than Russian peasants have been. Thus, Mao's program may prove to be not so "adventurist" as it appears against the background of Soviet history.

The differences in the Soviet and Chinese approaches to the commune, however, seem to reflect a difference on the much larger issue of how fast the pace can be toward the final goal. Peiping, desirous of becoming a major industrial power in the near future, is willing to use radical means to achieve that goal, whether sanctioned by Soviet experience or not. Moscow, on the other hand, continues to follow a determined but cautious road in the countryside. This difference may continue to result in frictions such as arose and undoubtedly still exist with respect to the communes.

* * * * *

The Ultimate Goal

The total socialization of agriculture has remained one of the Soviet Communist party's major economic and social aims since 1917. Complete socialization is regarded as an ideological end in itself and as an essential device for controlling the populace, as well as a means to the increasingly important objective of increasing agricultural production. The expedient agrarian measures forced on the party during War Communism (1917-21) and the New Economic Policy (1921-27) by the need to consolidate power, feed the towns, and repair the country's shattered economy; the brutal, forced collectivization drive from 1929-36; the recently revived proposals for the creation of "agricultural cities" in the countryside; and Khrushchev's radical agrarian reform measures in recent years have all pointed toward the final goals of proletarianization of the peasantry, industrialization of agricultural work, and complete socialization of the land and all means of production.

The principal obstacle to the achievement of this final goal in the Soviet Union has been the Russian peasantry. In the years 1917-29 the peasants generally refused to join large-scale socialist cooperatives, and the party was neither willing nor able to use force. The history of the peasantry's bitter resistance during the period of forced collectivization is well known. In recent Soviet history the peasants, although forcibly collectivized, have continued to resist the party's increasing attempts to reduce and subsequently eliminate the significant measure of private ownership still tolerated in the countryside.

Communes in the Early Post-Revolutionary Period

Bolshevik agrarian policy could be written largely in terms of a series of greater or lesser compromises between the regime and the peasantry over this fundamental issue of private ownership of land and means of production. The agricultural commune--one of the experimental forms of socialist cooperation tried soon after the 1917 Revolution--was acknowledged by the party to be a resounding failure because it overstepped the limits of the compromise which the Russian peasantry was willing to make with the regime. In the communes, which totaled about 2,100 by mid-1919, all property was pooled and produce usually was divided up on egalitarian principles. Members lived in community dormitories, their food was cooked and served in community kitchens, and their childrens were cared

for in community nurseries. Thus there was some similarity to the communes now formed in China, although the Soviet communes did not extend to urban areas and were not organized along military lines. They were also much smaller than the present Chinese communes.

The Soviet Government voted 10,000,000 rubles in July 1918 to encourage agricultural communes. In December of that year, the first "All-Russian Congress of Land Sections, Committees of Poor Peasants, and Agricultural Communes" passed a resolution declaring that the chief aim of agrarian policy must be the consistent and unswerving pursuit of the organization of communes and Soviet Communist farms (state farms)." The latter were the forerunners of the present sovkhozy and--like the communes--were regarded as "model" farms. They were organized essentially as agricultural "factories," in which the peasants received regular wages.

In February 1919 the government issued a decree containing elaborate provisions for the constitution, prerogatives, and obligations of both state farms and agricultural communes. The same month a "model statute," breathing the spirit of pure Communism, was issued for the communes:

> He who wishes to enter a commune renounces in its favor all personal ownership of money, the means of production, cattle and, in general, of all property required for the conduct of a communist economy...Every member of the commune must give all his strength and all his capacities to the service of the commune...the commune takes from every member according to his strength and capacities and gives to him according to his real needs. (italics supplied)

The Bolsheviks themselves soon discovered the unacceptability of the commune to the peasantry and by 1920 they were actively encouraging two other forms of agricultural cooperatives, both of which allowed the peasants varying degrees of private ownership. The "lowest" form, the TOZ (Society for Joint Land Cultivation), was simply a production cooperative in which the peasants joined together at times to work their land and to buy and use expensive machinery. The means of production were socialized or used in common only during the time of field work. Each owner retained his rights to his own private property, to the harvest of his land, and to his own livestock and tools.

The division of income took account of the amount of property held by each member. Thus the TOZ was still far from the Party's ideal of a completely socialized farm enterprise, but it was a compromise form of cooperative which the Party hoped would attract the peasantry.

The artel represented the mid-point of collectivization between the TOZ and the commune. In it, most production was carried on collectively and most means of production were owned by the artel; considerable private production was carried on separately in private garden plots by each member family, however, and each family owned some agricultural capital. Individual garden plots, dwellings, part of the cattle, small livestock, and poultry were not socialized. The peasant thus received both a collective and a private income. Thus, the artel, too, was not the Party's ideal. The artel was desirable in that private ownership of the chief means of production was eliminated and "class exploitation" was abolished. Nevertheless, the artel retained certain features of the peasant's former semi-individual enterprise and, consequently, did not entirely satisfy the Party's long-term objectives for the organization of agriculture. The artel, in effect, was to be a school in socialism, a school that was to prepare the peasants for passage to a still higher form of socialist enterprise--the commune.

All three forms of cooperatives were unacceptable to the peasantry. After the breakup of the large estates during the revolution, the small holding worked by the peasant and his family became the predominant unit in Russian agriculture. The 227,900 peasant households united in all three forms of agricultural cooperatives represented only about 1 percent of all peasant households by 1920. Of this 1 percent of the Russian peasantry who did join cooperatives, only a tiny minority chose the communes. Most of these were propertyless and had nothing to lose: they were poor peasants who had not benefited from the land partition, demobilized Red Army soldiers, or city workers forced back to the land as industry almost ceased during the Civil War. These people entered the communes not for ideological reasons but largely because the government was willing to give them aid provided they settled there. Party and Communist youth members also represented a large proportion of the communal memberships; they went or were sent to the communes as examples for the population.

The number of communes in the Russian countryside totaled about 2,100 by mid-1919 but began to decline soon thereafter, as the few potential members turned increasingly to the artel

and particularly to the TOZ, which involved the least degree of socialization. They chose these two lesser evils despite the fact that the party continued in the early 1920s to show favoritism to the communes by bunching them in areas of relatively more fertile land.

The NEP Weakens the Communes

The New Economic Policy, introduced in March 1921, sought to appease the peasantry by abandoning the ruthless requisitioning practiced during the years of War Communism (1917-21). It left the peasants free to sell part of their produce on the open market. Such substantial concessions to individual peasants further weakened the never significant cooperative movement--particularly the two "highest" forms, the commune and the artel. The communes had begun to decline in number as early as 1919; the artel began to decline in favor of the TOZ soon after inauguration of the New Economic Policy. From June 1920 to June 1927 the number of artels declined from 11,440 to 7,135, while the TOZ increased from 1,439 to 6,362. Although no absolute figures are available for the communes in that period, by June 1927 the communes represented only 9 percent of the total of all cooperatives, the artels 48.1 percent, and the TOZ 42.9 percent.

Because only the TOZ showed a tendency to increase in number, the government decided in March 1927, in a preliminary move to promote the expansion of the collectivized sector, to place special emphasis on the development of TOZ's. Stalin thought this to be the best way to implant a cooperative outlook in the countryside. Between June 1927 and June 1928, the number of collectivized households more than doubled and this increase in collectivization was almost completely accounted for by the increase of the number of TOZ's which by 1929 represented roughly 70 percent of the still meager collectivized sector.

Communes Virtually Abolished During Forced Collectivization

Dissatisfied with the pace of gradual collectivization, and faced with a growing grain crisis, Stalin launched the bitter forced collectivization drive in December 1929. The critical grain-growing regions in particular were plunged into a period of wholesale collectivization. A decree of 5 January 1930 provided that all the peasants in these and other areas would have to join collective farms by prescribed deadlines; they would all, moreover, be channeled into the type of

collective farm now formally approved by the party--namely the artel. The artel, the Central Committee ruled, would be the basic form of collective farm unit in the area slated for mass collectivization. The simple producers cooperatives (TOZ) would not even be permissible form of socialist enterprise in those areas. Heretofore the predominant form of collective, the TOZ would be allowed to exist "for a time" only in the non-grain-growing areas and in the national minority regions of the Soviet countryside where the collectivization movement was "feebly developed."

Significantly, Stalin did not attempt to establish the commune in the countryside. He was well aware that the difficulties in herding the peasantry into artels would only have been compounded if he had attempted to drive them into communes. Thus, the artel, the halfway point between the TOZ and the commune, was made the standard--almost the exclusive--form of cooperative. Throughout the decisive period of mass collectivization--December 1929 to February 1930--the party warned against premature formation of communes. A regional party secretary wrote in Pravda, for example, at the very height of the collectivization drive on January 15, 1930 that

> in the present stage, you cannot move all at once from individual (farming) to the highest form of collective farming, the commune. We shall reach that stage in which the house, plot, etc. are collectivized at a later time.

In some parts of the USSR, however, it was clear that peasants were being forced into communes either as a result of ambiguous policy or as a calculated experiment. In his famous article of 2 March 1930, entitled "Dizzy With Success," and in another Pravda article one month later, Stalin called a halt to this. In criticizing excesses committed in the first three months of the collectivization drive, he included violations of Lenin's principle that it was impermissable to skip over uncompleted stages of development. The artel was a necessary stage of cooperation through which the peasantry must pass before going over to the commune. Stalin severely criticized local party and komsomol organizations who, in their enthusiasm to collectivize agriculture, skipped the artel stage of organization and erected communes. To Stalin, the artel was a simpler affair and one more easily understood by the broad masses of peasants. By skipping the artel, he said, the zealous party and komsomel members were running ahead of the development of the masses and were becoming "divorced from them instead of moving together with the masses while impelling them forward."

In a decision of March 15, 1930, the party central committee prohibited the conversion of artels into communes without the approval of the regional kolkhoz organization. In April, Stalin warned again that those who would hastily replace the rules of the artels with the rules of the commune would only repel peasants from the collectivization movement.

How critical the situation became, because of these and other excesses admittedly committed in the course of the collectivization drive, was indicated in the resolution of the 16th party congress in June-July 1930:

> In a number of districts these mistakes gave rise not merely to anti-collective farm demonstrations, but in some cases to anti-Soviet demonstrations...if these mistakes had not been corrected in time by the Central Committee of the Party, there would have been a danger of the entire fabric of agricultural collectivization collapsing, and the very basis of the Soviet state--the alliance of the working class and the peasantry--exploding.

The Party, meanwhile, changed the few scattered communes that survived forced collectivization so that they differed little from the artels. The 16th party congress prohibited collectivization of anything but production in the communes. Housing and eating facilities had to be on an individual basis.

By 1932, with mass collectivization virtually complete, the artels constituted 95.9 percent of the total number of cooperatives and the communes but 2 percent. In many areas of the USSR there remained no kolkhozy except artels. The party continued, moreover, to take measures which diluted the structure even of these few remaining communes. By a government order of 20 June 1933, the members of the communes--like those in artels--were permitted the private ownership of one cow, some small livestock, and poultry. Likewise, increasing emphasis was put on piecework--payment according to individual output--as opposed to the egalitarian distribution of the communes.

Stalin's Report to the 17th Congress

Stalin's only major pronouncement on the communes occurred in his report to the 17th party congress in 1934. He ascribed their failure to three factors: underdeveloped technology, a shortage of products, and a premature practicing of egalitarianism. This forced levelling he attributed directly to the first two factors:

> The present agricultural commune arose on the basis of an underdeveloped technology and a shortage of products. This really explains why it practiced equalitarianism and showed little concern for the individual, every-day interests of its members--as a result of which it is now being compelled to assume the status of the artel, in which the individual and public interests of the collective farmers are rationally combined...Practice has shown that the communes would certainly have been doomed had they not abandoned equalitarianism...

The Marxist concept of equality, Stalin argued, had nothing in common with the concept of equality in all spheres of individual life--this was a "piece of reactionary petit-bourgeois absurdity worthy of a primitive sect of ascetics." Individual tastes and requirements were not and could not be considered identical in quality or in quantity "either in the period of socialism or in the period of Communism." Quoting Engels, he said that the real content of proletarian equality was the demand for the abolition of classes; "any demand for equality which goes beyond that of necessity passes into absurdity."

The failure of the communes because of underdeveloped technology and a shortage of products did not, however, mean--according to Stalin--that the commune no longer represented a "higher form of the collective farm movement." Only the "present commune" was a failure. The "commune of the future" would arise on the basis of a more developed technology and an abundance of products. It would evolve slowly out of the artel only when all collective-farm members recognized that such a transition was to their advantage. Stalin wrote:

> The future communes will arise out of developed and prosperous artels. The future agricultural commune will arise when the fields and farms of the artel are replete with grain, with cattle, with poultry, with vegetables, and all other produce; when the artels have mechanized laundries, modern dining rooms, mechanized bakeries, etc; when the collective farmer sees that it is more to his advantage to receive his meat and milk from the collective farm's meat and dairy department than to keep his own cow and small livestock; when the woman collective farmer sees that it is more to her advantage to take her meals in the dining room, to get her bread from the

> public bakery, and to get her linen washed in the public laundry, than to do all these things herself. The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technology and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products. When will that be? Not soon, of course. But be it will. It would be criminal to accelerate artificially the process of transition from the artel to the future commune. That would confuse the whole issue and would facilitate the work of our enemies. The transition from the artel to the future commune must proceed gradually, to the extent that all the collective farmers become convinced that such a transition is necessary. (italics in original)

The party has continued to this day to reject the rural commune until the far-off time when the greatly increased prosperity and production of the cooperatives would lead to a radical change in the peasantry's attitude toward communal living. Any proposals to transform the artels into communes in Stalin's lifetime--and there apparently were such proposals--were quickly vetoed. Even during the late 1930s after Stalin had proclaimed that the USSR had entered into the era of the gradual transition from socialism to Communism, it was the party's position that the artel would for the foreseeable future continue to be the principal form of cooperative in the countryside. Molotov told the 18th party congress in March 1939 that the entry into the transition period had "caused confusion" in the minds of some overzealous party members who wanted right then and there to begin again setting up model communes--a move which he warned would "lead us astray."

> During the pre-Congress discussion the opinion was expressed that we now should set about organizing model communes. A suitable reply was given to the sponsor of this proposal, indicating that he was on the wrong track. The agricultural artel will still be our main form of collective-farm husbandry in the period of the Third Five-Year Plan. We are still far from using the full potential strength of this form of collective farming for the advancement of agriculture, for the promotion of the prosperity of the collective farm peasantry. Hence, to stress communes at the present time--or worse still, to shift the center of gravity from the agricultural artel to the commune--would be an error of policy and lead us astray.

Attitude Toward Communes After World War II

The reconsolidation of the artel occupied the party's thinking and planning in the period immediately after World War II, and no top leader even mentioned the commune. The short-lived "agrogorod" proposal identified with Khrushchev in 1950-51 clearly had as one of its goals the reduction of the size and eventual elimination of the peasant's private plot and livestock. The main aim, however, was to urbanize the countryside by creating "agricultural cities" and eliminate the difference between town and country--a long-cherished Bolshevik project.

Stalin's last theoretical testament to the party, published on the eve of the 19th party congress in October 1952, was the essay Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR. In his extensive discussion of the problems connected with the gradual transition to communism Stalin did not refer directly to the agricultural commune, but his remarks clearly implied that he continued to regard the egalitarian commune as a far distant prospect at best. Decrying any "simple" solutions to reach Communism and thus to realize the principle of distribution according to need, Stalin argued that it would be necessary to go through "a number of stages of economic and cultural re-education of society, during which work develops in the eyes of society from merely a means of supporting life to a prime, vital need, and communal property becomes a secure and inviolable basis of society's existence."

To prepare the transition to Communism, Stalin set forth three goals: the constant growth of production, the "elevation of collective farm property to the level of property of the public as a whole," and a vast improvement in the cultural and educational development of society. To achieve this latter goal it would be necessary to reduce the workday to six and then to five hours, to improve "housing conditions radically," and to raise the real wages of workers a "minimum of 100 percent." Only after the attainment of "all these preliminary conditions taken together," said Stalin, would it be possible to change from the socialist form of distribution according to labor to the Communist form of distribution according to need (italics in original). Although Stalin did not say so, these grandiose prerequisites for Communism appeared to continue the tradition of relegating the agricultural commune to the far distant future.

Furthermore, Stalin seemed to interpose a step between the artel and the commune--the state farm. Although Bolshevik ideologists had always considered the state farm to be a higher form of rural organization than the artel, it was never clear what direction either the sovkhoz or the artel would take during the transition to Communism. Stalin seemed to envision some sort of merger. Earlier in his essay he suggested two ways in which the collective farm sector of the economy could be united with the state farms in a single state sector: either through absorption of the collective farm by the state farm--a possibility which he regarded as unlikely--or through the creation of a single state economic agency possessing the right to distribute the entire agricultural output. Such questions, he said, required "separate consideration." Whatever precise proposals, if any, were in Stalin's mind regarding the future of Soviet agricultural organization, it was clear that he was not prepared to launch any immiment drives for the switchover from the artel to the commune; however, he said nothing to indicate that he did not continue to regard the commune as the ultimate goal.

Soviet theoretical journals meanwhile continued to write of this ultimate goal. According to the December 1951 issue of the Soviet Communist party theoretical journal, Bolshevik:

> The time will come when all the needs of the collective farmer--social as well as personal, material as well as cultural--will be fully satisfied by communal production. This will occur when the agricultural artel is transformed into a commune as the highest form of the collective farm movement.

The journal then quoted the famous passage from Stalin's 1934 congress speech in which he predicted:

> The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technology, a more developed artel, on the basis of a surplus of products. When will that be? Not soon, of course, but it will be.

From Stalin's Death to 1958

In the years from Stalin's death until 1958, Soviet references to the agricultural commune were rare and perfunctory, but they continued to pay lip-service to the idea that the commune, as the highest form of the collective farm, would

arise in the unspecified future on the basis of a highly developed technology and an abundance of products. The Large Soviet Encyclopedia, Vol. 22--signed for the press on 9 September 1953, six months after Stalin's death--devoted only two paragraphs to the subject. The encyclopedia wrote that the commune was one of the forms of an agricultural cooperative of a socialist type. It differed from the artel, the encyclopedia went on, in that all means of production were socialized. In the first years of Soviet power the commune was an outstanding agricultural form, the encyclopedia concluded, but the development of the kolkhoz movement showed that the agricultural commune--as long as it was based on underdeveloped technology and a limited number of products--was "a less vital form" than the artel.

The Political Economy textbook, published by the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1954 and revised in 1955, reiterated the belief expressed by both Stalin and Molotov in the 1930s that the agricultural commune, "the highest form of the collective farm movement," would be created gradually on the foundations laid by the further consolidation and development of the physical-production base of collective farm production." The textbook quoted Stalin's statement to the 17th party congress that communes would arise on the foundation of a more highly developed technology and an abundance of products. The textbook concluded:

> The process of transforming the artel into a commune will proceed in proportion to the creation of the necessary material prerequisites and to the degree to which the collective farm members themselves become cognizant of the necessity of such a transformation.

The textbook also stressed that the artel, which combined private and collective interests, still had a vast potential for increasing the productivity of Soviet agriculture, an increase which was absolutely essential for transformation of the artel into the commune:

> The agricultural artel is the basic form of the collective farm during the period of gradual transition from socialism to Communism. The agricultural artel, in combining the collectivized economy--the main force of the collective farm--with the personal

> subsidiary economy of the collective farm members, to the highest degree answers the interests of the state, the collective farm, and the collective farm members. It contains enormous, as yet incompletely utilized reserves for increasing labor productivity. The collective farms...are the basis for the creation of an abundance of agricultural products.

Not only did the textbook thus clearly indicate that the artel would continue to be the basic form of agricultural organization in the USSR for some time to come, but it also implied that--based on Soviet experience--the artel was the only conceivable form of agricultural organization for the entire bloc. In a chapter on the collectivization of agriculture during the period of building socialism, a stage in which all bloc members except the USSR were placed at that time, the textbook said:

> The experience of building the collective farms in the USSR showed that, of all forms of collective farms, the agricultural artel ensures the development of the productive forces of socialist agriculture to the greatest extent. The agricultural artel properly conjoins the personal everyday interests of the collective farmers and the over-all interests of the collective farm as a whole. The artel successfull adopts personal and collective interests, and thus facilitates the education of the erstwhile private farmers in the spirit of collectivism.

Recent Soviet Statements on the Commune

Since Khrushchev's radical MTS reform in early 1958, when the MTS were sold to the kolkhozy, there has been increasing discussion in the Soviet press of the future of the kolkhoz artel, its relation to the state farm, and the form it will take as Soviet society moves closer toward Communism. This discussion has been accelerated particularly since the 21st party congress.

In the course of this discussion on the future of the kolkhoz artel, some Soviet ideologists have attempted to deal directly with the question of whether the commune might be applicable for the USSR at some time in the future. On this question, there appears to be considerable equivocation and

confusion. The highest Soviet theoretical journal has said that only "life" itself can provide the answer. There is agreement, however, that the agricultural commune remains impractical for the foreseeable future. In March, April and May 1958, at the same time China was actively laying plans for communalization of its entire countryside, three authoritative articles in the specialized Soviet press seemed to reject the commune until "abundance" had been achieved. The dean of Soviet economists, Academican S. Strumulin, wrote two of these articles. The first appeared in Literary Gazette on 25 March 1958:

> To this day we do not regard the collective farm as the highest rung of socialist collectivization. It has been assumed that the collective farm is the closest transitional stage to the agricultural commune. Since the Communist principle of distribution presupposes inexhaustible sources of abundance, however, it would be the sheerest absurdity to begin applying this principle with the collective-farm countryside--i.e., the most backward sector of the socialist economy. Therefore transformation of the artel into a commune has been precluded in practice for an entirely indefinite period. (italics added)

Strumulin amplified his objections to the commune in a larger and more specialized article in Problems of Economics, no. 5, May 1958 on the subject of "Some Problems of the Further Development of the Kolkhoz Regime." Strumulin objected to the commune on three grounds: first, he repeated the objection he expressed in Literary Gazette that the Communist principle of distribution presupposed "inexhaustible sources of abundance" and that to try to realize it in the backward kolkhoz village would be "absurd." Such communes, he said without the ability to satisfy the "needs" of the members, would "be only a parody of real communism." Second, Strumulin pointed out that collective farms "now differ greatly in their economic strength and prosperity." This, he said, was inevitable for some time. To envision a situation "in which the rich leading communes compete with backward communes would be absurd."

> Collective farms with incomes counted in millions, having become communes, would continue to build for themselves new power stations, brick works and palaces of culture, becoming richer and richer, while backward communes would continue to stand still, their development being dependent upon the vagaries of weather, drought, etc. It is quite clear that Communism cannot be reconciled with conditions in which with equal expenditures of labor, one labor collective enjoys abundance and another remains far behind.

Finally, he objected to the decentralization and dispersal of communes as incompatible with the necessity of production being guided by one master, namely the state.

> Only in utopian anarcho-syndicalist imagination can Communism be built on a basis of isolated, dispersed labor communes which, as collective owners of the plants or farms, enter into contract relations with each other for the mutual exchange of products and service.
>
> Let us note that in the USSR there are hundreds of thousands of enterprises. It is clear that the very raising of the question shows its absurdity: we would have to build Communism by uniting industrial enterprises and agricultural communes on the basis of the natural exchange of products and services of all kinds. Such an idea is fantastic and moreover is a reactionary utopia. Communist social production can exist, develop, and function smoothly as a clock, only if it is guided as a unit by one master. And such a master of all the means of production can be only the whole national collective.

It is important to note that all three of these considerations which would make impossible the early establishment of communes in the USSR, according to Strumulin, were at least equally--if not more--relevant to China.

I. Glotov, writing in Kommunist in April 1958, also speculated on the future of the Soviet countryside. He was also concerned whether the artel could and would be transformed into a commune--a question which, he said, "arises among many comrades." Glotov was equivocal in his answer.

He seemed to rule out the possibility that the commune could be established during the entire period of the transition from socialism to Communism, a period which--by Soviet definition--could conceivably last throughout the 20th century. On the other hand, he suggested that the answer to the question of the commune could "be given only by life itself."

> On the road to Communism, will the collective farms in their present form of agricultural artels grow over into communes? Is the process of raising collective property to the level of property belonging to the whole people, of Communist property, not connected with a stage of the artel's growing over into a commune? Such questions arise among many comrades.
>
> It must be said that the correct answer to these questions can be given only by life itself, by the practical experience of the millions of Soviet men and women building Communism. Marxists have never claimed that they know the road to Communism in its full concreteness and all its details. They have never said that they would adhere once and for all to any set forms, methods and ways in accomplishing the tasks of Communist construction...
>
> Does this mean that the collective farms will come to Communism in the form of agricultural artels, or will they grow over into communes--enterprises also based on group property but which apply the Communist principle "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." Evidently such a commune is an unlikely phenomenon under socialism, for the economic conditions at this stage differ from the economic conditions under Communism precisely in that they are not ripe as yet for the application of the Communist principle of distribution. And under Communism, a commune, as a collective of owners of group property, is obviously senseless. The commune proved to be unviable at the dawn of the collective farm system; it is also unsuitable during the period of the transition from socialism to Communism.

The Soviet Economic Dictionary, signed for the press on 2 June 1958, was more favorably disposed toward the possibility of future communes in the USSR but indicated that they were possible only after an "abundance of products" had been achieved. In defining the term "agricultral commune," it wrote:

> ...in conditions of the growth of kolkhoz production and productivity of agricultural labor which fully guarantee the demands of the kolkhozniky--with an abundance of products, with the existence of social institutions which serve the needs of the kolkhoznik on the basis of an advanced technology (mechanized launderies, bakeries, dining halls, etc.)--the emergence of the agricultural commune is again possible.

In a recent article in Promyshlenno-Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta, on "The Road to Communism," Academician Strumulin appears to back away from a definite rejection of the commune, although he appears in this context to be projecting far into the future. Strumulin asks how distribution according to need might be reconciled with maintaining incentives. If everyone's needs are satisfied under Communism, he continues, what will make people work? His answer occurs in a context which suggests that he envisions the emergence of some form of a commune in a much later period of Soviet society.

> Of course, there is a black sheep in every flock. Sometimes even mockery will not act upon an idler. But if such an idler, receiving in a future commune a free livelihood, would decide simply to do nothing, he could be told politely that the commune, supplying all its members according to their needs, demands that they in turn recompense it by work according to their abilities. There is no room for idlers in the commune. (italics supplied)

Regardless of the differences in emphasis among the statements cited above as regards the possibility of ever establishing communes in the USSR, all seem to agree that they are inconceivable for the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, there has been no indication that the USSR would sanction communes for other less developed bloc countries in the foreseeable future. In June 1958, Khrushchev told the Bulgarian party congress:

> The experience of your party confirms once again that whatever the national features, there is no other way to enlist the broad peasant masses in socialism except by the tested Leninist cooperative plan. (italics supplied)

Five days after the publication of the Chinese commune resolution on 10 September, the third edition of the authoritative Soviet Political Economy textbook--caught by surprise--concluded its section on agricultural transformations in the bloc by saying:

> Once again it has been demonstrated that the Leninist cooperative plan...is an example not only for the Soviet Union but for all other countries of the world.

Khrushchev at the 21st Party Congress:

Although Khrushchev did not specifically discuss or even mention the commune issue at the 21st party congress, his lengthy discussion on "the new phase of Communist building" contained several indications that he continued to regard the egalitarian commune as a far distant prospect at best.

Khrushchev argued that it would be "premature" to switch over to distribution according to need, "when economic conditions for that have not been created, when an abundance of material wealth has not been achieved, and when people are not yet prepared to live and work in a Communist manner." To make the switchover, he said, "would mean doing damage to the building of Communism." Khrushchev denounced "egalitarian Communism" built on an insufficient material base. The only way to build up that base, he argued, was to increase the "material interest" of the workers in their labor. This meant a continuation of distribution according to work for the foreseeable future.

In one passage, Khrushchev seemed to suggest that distribution according to "need,"--which is a fundamental tenet of the commune--would be possible only when Communism had been fully and finally achieved.

> The necessity of regulating the distribution of products among members of society will disappear only under Communism, when productive forces will be developed so far that there will be plenty of all necessary consumer goods, and when everybody will, voluntarily and independently of the amount of material value received, work to his full capability, realizing that this is necessary for society. (italics supplied)

The Future of the Artel:

It might be objected that while Khrushchev and Soviet theoreticians deny that the agricultural commune is their immediate goal, Soviet agricultural policy is in fact moving in that direction. It is true that the present artel, now in process of being "raised" to a higher form of national or public property, is being gradually altered so that the balance between communal and private activity is changing in favor of the former.

By various economic means, Khrushchev intends to wipe out the still considerable private economic activity. He is pressing plans at the moment to transform the Soviet villages into "agricultural cities" which will contain communal bakeries, dining halls, schools, clubs, kindergartens, etc. This village urbanization scheme will entail a drastic reduction in the size of the private garden plots. It is also clearly anticipated that the expansion of production and of peasant incomes from the communal sector will gradually render uneconomic private livestock holdings. Furthermore, future expansion of capital investment in the kolkhoz economy is to be effected by increasing the share of collective farm income which is devoted to the "indivisible fund," that part of the collective farm's resources not subject to distribution among its members.

At the same time, there is increasing emphasis on large-scale interkolkhoz cooperation in industrial projects such as building electric power stations, producing construction materials, bricks, cement, etc projects which will aid in rural development or help the kolkhozy process their own farm products. In Uzbek, for example, collective farmers are now building cotton ginneries and will gin the cotton before selling it to the state. Such activity will be a major step toward the creation of a mixed industrial-agricultural economy in the countryside.

It is as a result of such changes in the artel economy that Khrushchev and Soviet theoreticians are now claiming that the artel will gradually be raised to the level of national--as opposed to its existing cooperative--ownership. Interkolkhoz production enterprises, it is claimed, belong not to the individual collectives but to groups of collectives and are therefore a "higher level of development." Similarly, the gradual abolition of the private sector on the artel is regarded also as a step toward national ownership.

Yet Khrushchev's agricultural policies remain evolutionary. The goals he is pursuing now are similar to the goals he was pursuing in 1951 and have always been recognized as the ultimate goals of Soviet agricultural organization. The major differences between Khrushchev's policies and those of Mao is that the Soviet village will not be transformed in the drastic manner of the Chinese village. The present artel and Soviet village will change only slowly as the increasing industrialization of agriculture and continued material incentives to the peasantry raise productivity, as the peasants themselves become convinced that their needs can be satisfied by the communal sector, and as the material and psychological prerequisities for village urbanization are achieved. No firm target date has been set for the completion of the village reconstruction program and there is exhortation against haste and haphazard planning. Although there is encouragement to the peasants to surrender private livestock to the artel -- there are also warnings against using force.

Most important, there is no indication that Moscow intends to implement any form of "free supply" or distribution according to "need" in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, Khrushchev's policies are heavily laced with material incentives designed to spur productivity which will preserve if not increase inequality in distribution.

It is their respective approaches to the distribution problem that perhaps most distinguishes Soviet and Chinese differences over the commune. Peiping, by introducing elements of "free-supply" into the communes, claims to be advancing closer to the final Communist stage when each individual will receive according to his "needs." Such egalitarian distribution is undoubtedly basic for a "Communist" society. Moscow, on the other hand, is increasing material incentives to the peasantry. Some Soviet theoreticians have tried to rationalize as a socialist "contradiction" this phenomenon of a society allegedly moving toward complete equality by utilizing incentives calculated to promote inequality. Judging from the Soviet press, the question has been raised in the USSR as to whether strengthening incentives will not lead to a regression toward "bourgeois" ways of thinking. Soviet economists advocating "wage-levelling" heresies have been denounced in the Soviet press as "demagogic." Equalization of distribution and "petit-bourgeios wage-levelling" are under heavy fire.

The Chinese adoption of elements of a "free-supply" system thus meets with Soviet objection on two grounds, one practical and the other ideological. First, Khrushchev appears convinced that productivity cannot be raised sufficiently unless incentives are increased. He is thus probably very skeptical of the viability of "free-supply." Secondly, the Chinese claim that they are introducing the seeds of Communist distribution exposes a raw nerve in the Soviet ideological corpus. For despite its 32-year head start over China, the USSR still finds it necessary to denounce "wage-levelling" heretics while Peiping is moving--theoretically at least--toward greater equality.

Moscow almost certainly regards Mao's commune program as "adventuristic." Whereas Peiping has virtually abolished the private plot, Moscow still moves cautiously against it, seeking to limit it by economic pressures rather than by proscription. Whereas Peiping has drastically reduced private ownership of livestock and poultry. Moscow continues to attack private ownership by envelopment tactics. Whereas Peiping has introduced a payment system incorporating the so-called free supply system, Moscow insists that equalization of distribution cannot work until the very final stage of Communism. Whereas Peiping pushes ahead its communes on the basis of labor intensity, Moscow continues to hold that the solution of the agricultural production problem will follow automatically from higher levels of industrialization, electrification, and automation.

Certain features of the Chinese communes program may be sufficiently modified to meet Soviet objections to those particular features. Some important modifications--the extent of which is under study--have apparently already taken place. For example, there has been less emphasis in recent months on "free supply." There has also been a concession in alloting private plots to peasants to raise hog feed and to guarantee them a profit on their hog-raising.

It is also possible that the Chinese peasantry will prove less resistant to communalization than Russian peasants have been. A Soviet diplomat has recently suggested that the Chinese peasantry might take to the commune system more easily than the Russian peasantry because the Chinese have less to give up, are less individualistic, and have gone through a longer period of war and social anarchy. This judgment may

be correct, and Mao's program may prove to be not so "adventurist" as it appears against the background of Soviet history.

The differences in the Soviet and Chinese approaches to the commune, however, seem to reflect more than a difference over forms of organization. They seem to reflect the much larger issue of how fast the pace can be toward the final goal. Peiping, desirous of becoming a major industrial power in the near future, is willing to use radical means to achieve that goal, whether sanctioned by Soviet experience or not. Moscow, on the other hand, charts a determined but cautious road. This difference may continue to result in frictions such as arose and undoubtedly still exist with respect to the communes.