

## Socialist Modernization of Agriculture: Projects and Implementation

V. Il'inykh

*Institute of History, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk, Russia*

*e-mail: agro\_iwa@mail.ru*

Received January 20, 2022; revised March 15, 2022; accepted March 15, 2022

**Abstract**—This article reconstructs the models of the socialist modernization of agriculture developed at the end of the 1920s and start of the 1930s: collective-farm-cooperative, state-farm-collective-farm, and agrarian-industrial. The characteristic of the agrarian system formed in the course of mass collectivization, which radically differs from the theoretical constructions accepted for implementation, is given. The grounds and content of the organizational and economic restructuring of the agrarian sector of the economy in the second half of the 1950s are analyzed. The representation developed in the mid-1960s by V.G. Venger of the project of reforming socialist agriculture is carried out and the factors why it was not implemented are determined.

**Keywords:** modernization, agriculture, agrarian policy of the Soviet state, peasantry, collectivization, collective farm system, projects of agrarian development

**DOI:** 10.1134/S1019331622090039

During the peasants' agrarian revolution of 1917–1918, the high-commodity landlord and peasant entrepreneurial farms were liquidated. The organizational and production base of the country's agriculture was the individual peasant farm, which was distinguished by a relatively low level of marketability. This model of the agrarian system did not correspond to the theoretical ideas of the Bolsheviks who came to power in Russia in 1917. They were convinced that the socialist modernization of the agrarian sector of the economy could only be carried out based on the organization of large agricultural enterprises, which, according to Marxist theorists, made it possible to widely introduce the latest technical achievements in agriculture, to transform agrarian labor into a variety of industrial labor and thereby sharply increase its productivity. An equally important factor in the growth of labor productivity in collective farms should be their liberation from exploitation.

The leaders of the Bolshevik regime tried to put their theoretical views into practice in the first years of their stay in power. The task of organizing large-scale socialist agriculture was put on the agenda of the agrarian policy of the ruling party in early 1919.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks considered the so-called Soviet farms (large socialist economies) and collective farms (voluntary unions of farmers for conducting a large common economy) as the main forms of socialist agriculture. At the same time, the state farm was considered

the most perfect (consistently socialist) type of agricultural enterprise.

However, the peasantry not only put an end to the landlord class but also, with its ever-increasing resistance, forced the Bolsheviks to abandon the military-communist experiment and move on to a new economic policy. After the transition to the NEP, the socialization of the agrarian sector of the economy was pushed back into the distant future. It was believed that the small peasant economy would continue to meet the goals of the progressive development of the country's economy for a long time. At the same time, the task was to unite peasant farms in various types of supply, credit, and production cooperatives. The collective farms that remained after the collapse of the first years of the NEP were transferred from the subordination of the bodies of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture to agricultural cooperatives and began to be considered as an integral part of the cooperative system.

In the mid-1920s, the so-called Leninist cooperative plan was formed as a long-term program of the Bolshevik Party in the agrarian sphere, according to which cooperation was proclaimed as the optimal way for the transition of the peasants to a socialist economy. The building of socialism in agriculture, which was to take a long time, was seen as the development of all types of cooperation and a gradual transition from its lower forms (consumer, credit and simple production cooperatives) to the higher ones (collective farms). Voluntariness was a prerequisite for this process. The peasants had to be convinced by their own experience of the advantages of a large-scale social

<sup>1</sup> The CPSU in resolutions and decisions of congresses, conferences, and plenums of the Central Committee. 9th ed. M., 1983. Vol. 2. P. 86.

economy. The resolution of the 13th Congress of the RCP(b) stated that “a cooperative peasant economy will inevitably lose its individual character, turning into a collective economy.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that collective farms were officially proclaimed the highest form of production cooperation, in the mid-1920s, they actually occupied a marginal place both in the structure of production and in the system of agricultural management. In the summer of 1927, they included 0.8% of the peasant farms of the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> The level of production in the collective farms was extremely low. The main reason for this was their incompatibility with the NEP (market) mechanism for the functioning of the agrarian sector of the economy. The cooperative unions, over which the collective farms were given control, paid little attention to them, since they had other priorities in their activities. After the transfer of collective farms to the cooperative system, the land authorities<sup>4</sup> also practically ceased to serve them. In addition to the formal reasons, there were also ideological reasons for such an approach. Leading specialists of the land agencies shared a critical attitude towards the collective farms of agricultural scientists representing the liberal and organizational-production directions of Russian economic thought.

The situation with state farms was different. First, they remained subordinate to the land authorities; second, their leaders and specialists gave state farms an important place in the dissemination of agricultural innovations among the peasantry. As a result, having occupied a meager place in the structure of gross production under the NEP, state farms nevertheless performed a number of important functions in the organization of agriculture: seed production, livestock breeding, and the introduction of the latest types of agricultural machinery and equipment. Moreover, according to a number of experts, the role of state farms in the country's agrarian economy should have been constantly increasing. The so-called state farms-combines were considered a promising form of the relationship between state farm production and the peasant economy.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The CPSU in resolutions and decisions of congresses, conferences, and plenums of the Central Committee. 9th ed. M., 1984. Vol. 3. P. 234.

<sup>3</sup> History of the Soviet peasantry. M., 1986. Vol. 1: The peasantry in the first decade of Soviet power. 1917–1927. P. 374.

<sup>4</sup> Until the beginning of 1946, the land authorities in Russia (former Soviet Union) adopted the name of state bodies which were responsible for the management of agriculture.

<sup>5</sup> State farms-combines, whose projects were created in the second half of the 1920s, were agroindustrial complexes specializing in the production and processing of industrial crops. They included a state farm with a processing enterprise located on its territory and individual peasant farms located in the district. The state farm, in addition to processing, was engaged in the seed business and growing seedlings, as well as providing agricultural, logistical and transport services for peasants.

The Russian peasants, who received economic freedom, quickly restored their sown areas and the number of productive livestock. However, the economic and political pressure applied by the Bolshevik regime to the wealthy strata of the countryside led to the conservation of small-scale peasant farming and a slowdown in the development of agriculture. Grain export from the Soviet Union, even in the most fruitful years, did not exceed a quarter of its prerevolutionary volume.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1920s the Stalinist majority in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (CPSU(b)) came to the conclusion that small-scale agricultural production had become an obstacle to the modernization of the country. The 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks set the task of “unifying and transforming small individual farms into large collectives” as the main goal of the party in the countryside.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it was not about an immediate transition to accelerated collective farm construction but about its acceleration. It was necessary to speed up the involvement of peasant farms in the simplest production cooperatives, which were considered as “the surest means of a gradual transition from cooperative marketing and supply to the socialization of the production of individual peasant farms.”<sup>8</sup>

An important role in the socialist transformation of the agrarian sector of the economy was assigned to state farms, which were supposed to turn into “exemplary large socialist-type farms,” and by the results of their work in practice proving to the peasants of nearby villages the advantages of large-scale socialized production. The task was to create a significant number of new large specialized farms. The July (1928) Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to organize new large grain state farms producing 100 million poods of marketable grain within 4–5 years.<sup>9</sup> One of their main tasks was to replace the bread produced by the so-called kulak farms, which had to be liquidated.

The level of collectivization of the countryside envisaged in the national plans in the late 1920s was constantly adjusted upwards. In the spring of 1928, the draft five-year plan (1928/29–1932/33) prepared by the People's Commissariat of the RSFSR and the Collective Farm Center of the RSFSR envisaged involving 4.4% of peasant households in collective

<sup>6</sup> *Il'inykh V.A.* Commerce on the grain front (state regulation of the grain market under the NEP. 1921–1927). Novosibirsk, 1992. P. 219.

<sup>7</sup> The CPSU in resolutions ... M., 1984. Vol. 4. P. 299.

<sup>8</sup> The CPSU in resolutions ... M., 1984. Vol. 4. P. 306.

<sup>9</sup> The CPSU in resolutions and decisions ... V. 4, pp. 354–355. In 1927/28, the total volume of commodity production of grain in the Soviet Union was about 800 million poods (*Il'inykh V.A.* Chronicles of the grain front (procurement campaigns of the late 1920s in Siberia). M., 2010. P. 169).

farms. The first five-year plan for the development of the national economy of the Soviet Union stipulated that 16–18% of the country's peasant farms should be united into collective farms by October 1, 1933.<sup>10</sup> Speaking at the November (1929) plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Chairman of the Collective Farm Center of the Soviet Union G.N. Kaminsky stated that “in the main grain and raw materials areas, within 1.5–2 years, the vast majority of the poor and middle peasants will be covered by collectivization.”<sup>11</sup> Plans for state farm construction were also expanded.

The promotion of the socialist modernization of the countryside to the current agenda actualized the problem of determining the optimal organizational scheme for radically restructuring agriculture, which also had to be solved at an accelerated pace. The result of the brainstorming was the emergence of a conceptual model of socialist agriculture, conventionally defined by us as a state farm-collective farm. The structural components of the model were state farms and collective farms, which completely displaced the individual peasant economy from the agrarian economy. Collective-farm production at the initial stage of the socialist reconstruction exceeded the state-farm production in volume. This ratio was to gradually change in favor of consistently socialist state farms. In the longer term, the cooperative form of ownership merged with the public (state), and the collective farms actually turned into state farms. Nevertheless, the state farm sector of the rural economy from the very beginning of the transformation was called upon to make a significant contribution to the gross and commercial production of agricultural products. Surpassing the collective farms in terms of mechanization, concentration of production, and labor productivity, state farms became the locomotives of the agrarian economy. At the same time, they were supposed to become not only the largest agricultural factories but also provide organizational and economic assistance to the surrounding collective farms.

A significant contribution to the development of issues of organizing state farm production was made by A.V. Chayanov.<sup>12</sup> Under these conditions, he was forced to compromise with the system of state collectivism. Skeptical about the prospects for collective farm construction, Chayanov considered state farms to be a more economically acceptable form of organizing agricultural production, which made it possible to

widely introduce mechanization and agricultural innovations. In the proposed organizational plans for state farms, the scientist included new ways of using equipment: tractor columns, the use of a conveyor system of machines (tractor, combine, truck), camp work, when agricultural equipment, sometimes with workers, remains overnight in the field, etc.

No such organizational and production schemes have been created for collective farms. This was partly due to the belief that they would soon also turn into highly mechanized large specialized agricultural enterprises, perhaps continuing to be smaller than state farms. The November (1929) plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks pointed out the need to build “large mechanized collective farms, which should use the experience of state farms in their technical organization, gradually turning into genuine socialist enterprises built based on modern machine technology and the latest scientific achievements.” The task of developing the construction of specialized collective farms was also set. As one of the ways to enlarge collective farm production, the resolution of the plenum called bush associations of collective farms or collective farm combines created “for the joint construction of enterprises, tractor columns, and large machine stations.”<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that independent machine and tractor stations (MTSs) were not considered by collectivization theorists as permanent structures, but were supposed to function only during a transitional period, serving small collective farms. After their consolidation, MTS equipment became an integral part of the material and technical base of collective farm production.

The specificity of the collective farm form of agricultural production was determined by its cooperative nature. Like any cooperative, collective farms were considered as amateur organizations that were an integral part of the cooperative system. Relationships between the state and the cooperatives, as well as within the cooperatives, were to be built on a contractual base. As the main method of these relationships and the basic form of organizing collective farm production, contracting was proposed, which was an agreement between the collective farm and the cooperative union (collective farm union). In accordance with the concluded contract, the contractors were obliged to produce the products specified in it in compliance with the obligatory agrotechnological and zootechnical methods and to deliver its agreed volume to the coop union. The latter assumed obligations to advance future deliveries or provide the material and technical resources necessary for its production (cash, seeds, tools, agronomic and zootechnical services, etc.) on credit. The cooperative union, in turn, entered into an agreement with the state on the supply of agri-

<sup>10</sup>History of the Soviet peasantry. M., 1986. Vol. 2: The Soviet peasantry in the period of the socialist reconstruction of the national economy. Late 1927–1937. P. 120.

<sup>11</sup>How the New Economic Policy was broken: transcripts of the plenums of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. 1928–1929 M., 2000. Vol. 5: Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks November 10–17, 1929, p. 287.

<sup>12</sup>*Nikulin A.* Chayanov's version of collectivization // *Otechestvennyye zapiski*. 2004. No. 1.

<sup>13</sup>The CPSU in resolutions ... M., 1984. Vol. 4. P. 32.

cultural products and the receipt of material, as well as technical and financial resources, to ensure the supply.

The theoretical constructions of Marxist agrarians and the specific plans for collective farm construction did not provide for the emergence of a personal sector of the rural economy. They only raised the problem of the degree of socialization of the property of the newly minted collective farmers, which depended on the form of the collective farm. The complete socialization of the means of production was assumed for communes, which were proclaimed the highest form of collective farming. Members of an agricultural artel could have a personal plot and small livestock. In land cultivation partnerships, working cattle could remain in private ownership. In the future, it was planned to form a single form of collective farm with the maximum degree of communalization. Personal subsidiary plots of state farm workers and other workers and employees were not mentioned.<sup>14</sup>

The organization of large agricultural enterprises, which was the goal and result of the socialist modernization of agriculture, made it possible to widely introduce the latest technical achievements in agriculture (tractors with an appropriate range of implements, combines and other harvesters, milking machines, feeders, incubators, etc.), apply agricultural innovations (including mineral fertilizers), and thereby dramatically increase productivity. The significant increase in gross and commercial agricultural production achieved should have led to a manifold increase in the volume and value of agricultural exports and thus provided the means for the accelerated development of heavy industry. The tasks of the collective farms and state farms included not only increasing exports but also meeting the country's internal needs to ensure an increase in the material well-being of the urban and rural population.

Awakened by the XV Congress of the CPSU(b), the flight of future-oriented thought was unstoppable. In the late 1920s, in parallel with the formulation of the main provisions of the state-farm-collective-farm model of the functioning of agriculture, a model of agroindustrial integration was developed, which involved the unification of agricultural enterprises of various forms and processing enterprises into single economic complexes. State farms were considered as organizational centers of such complexes. The November (1929) plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks recommended the creation of state farm-collective farm associations "under the general leadership" of state farms "with an agreed economic plan, with a common

technical base (tractor columns, repair shops, etc.), with common enterprises for processing agricultural products (butter, cheese and flax processing plants, mills, etc.)."<sup>15</sup>

The most promising form of an organizational and production complex in agriculture was recognized as an agroindustrial complex (AIC), which is an association of economic cells in the form of state farms, collective farms, and processing enterprises with joint management, energy, transport, and other infrastructure. The central place in the structure of the AIC was occupied by the head specialized state farm, which owned processing enterprises and basic infrastructure elements. The complex created around a large state-owned processing enterprise was defined as an industrial-agrarian combine (INAC). One of the goals of creating combines was to overcome the seasonality of agricultural production by temporarily redistributing workers between agricultural and industrial structures. The AICs also had to have a developed social, cultural, and everyday infrastructure, the main part of which was concentrated in the central settlement of the plant, which actually became an agro-town.

Agro-industrial combines were supposed to contribute not only to a multiple increase in gross and marketable agricultural products. They were called upon to make a significant contribution to the solution of the cornerstone socioeconomic tasks of communist construction: merging cooperative and state property, transforming agricultural labor into a variety of industrial labor, and overcoming the differences between towns and the villages. One of the theorists of agro-industrial integration, Ya.P. Nikulikhin, wrote: "In the future, of course, state farms and collective farms will not exist separately. We will have some new high form of enterprises, where industry and agriculture will merge into a strong unity. At the same time, "the line that separated a town from a village will recede into the past."<sup>16</sup>

By 1930, two leading centers for the development of theoretical and practical issues of agro-industrial combination had been formed: the Agrarian Institute of the Communist Academy in Moscow and a joint group of economists in Novosibirsk.<sup>17</sup> The research on the latter resulted in the General Plan for the development of the National Economy of the Siberian Territory, published in 1930, according to which the agriculture of the region by the beginning of the 1940s was represented by a system of agro-industrial combines.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>The CPSU in resolutions .... Vol. 4. P. 32.

<sup>16</sup>Cit. by *Figurovskaya N.K.* Agro-industrial plants in historical development // Problems of the history of the modern Soviet village. 1946–1973 M., 1975, pp. 207–208.

<sup>17</sup>Cit. by *Figurovskaya N.K.* Agro-industrial plants in historical development // Problems of the history of the modern Soviet village. 1946–1973. M., 1975. P. 207.

<sup>18</sup>Materials for the General Plan for the development of the national economy of the Siberian territory. Novosibirsk, 1930.

<sup>14</sup>The regulations on communal land management and on measures for the transition to communal agriculture adopted by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on February 14, 1919 stated that "none of the workers and employees [of state farms] have the right to keep their own animals, birds, or vegetable gardens on the farms" (Collection of laws RSFSR. 1919. No. 4. Art. 43).

In total, 173 AICs were supposed to be created in the region. Each plant had a specialization, in general, corresponding to the specialization of the agricultural region in whose territory it was located. At the same time, the AIC was defined not as the sum of its cells but as a single production complex (“a single type of factory enterprise, where agriculture and industry merge into a strong unity”).<sup>19</sup>

By the middle of the 1930s, the specialists of the agricultural section of the Sibplan had developed several detailed designs of agro-industrial combines, which were considered as the standard ones. Thus, the leading specialization of the Shipunovsky AIC (Rubtsovsky District) was to be the production of wheat. Poultry farming was based on its waste. Soybean was introduced into the crop rotation as a tilled crop. Waste of its processing, seeded grasses, cultivated hayfields, and natural pastures created a fodder base for breeding beef cattle. Wool and meat sheep breeding developed on less productive pastures. Organizationally, the AIC consisted of a basic grain state farm, two large collective farms, and poultry and sheep farms. On the central estate of the state farm, located at the railway station, there was a large mill, a granary, an oil processing (soybean) plant, a refrigerator unit, a power plant, and a repair plant (separate workshops were also built on collective farms). The initially projected land area of the plant was 200 000 hectares. Subsequently, it was planned to increase it to 700 000–800 000 hectares, and the number of collective farms included in the AIC, up to 7. Projects were also created for the Maslyaninsky Flax and Dairy Plant (Novosibirsk District), the Elan Dairy Plant (Barabinsky District), the Prokopyevsk suburban Vegetable and Dairy Plant (Kuzbass) AICs, and the state farm and collective farm combine specializing in the production of meat and wool in Gorny Altai.<sup>20</sup>

These plants were to begin construction in 1930/31 and reach their design capacity by the end of the five-year plan. At the first stage of their creation, the head state farm was formed. In parallel with it, the collectivization of the future territory of the AIC was carried out. This was followed by the phased construction of the processing enterprises, as well as the transport, energy infrastructure, social, and cultural facilities. Due to the fact that grain farming could give a faster

return than animal husbandry, in the second phase (in 1931/32), it was planned to start organizing the Isil-Kul, Moskalenovsky, Rubtsovsky, and Zavyalovsky grain combines.<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning of 1930, a decision was made to speed up the pace of collectivization. On January 5, 1930, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks set the task of completing it mainly in the main grain-growing regions (the North Caucasus, the Lower and Middle Volga regions) “in the autumn of 1930 or, in any case, in the spring of 1931”; in other grain-growing regions (including Siberia), in the fall of 1931 or in the spring of 1932; and in nongrain regions, by the spring of 1933.<sup>22</sup> In the regions, with the approval of the center, they decided to speed up this process even more. Thus, on February 2, 1930, the Sibkrai Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, on the initiative of its first secretary R.I. Eikhe put forward the task of completing collectivization in the spring of 1930.<sup>23</sup>

Forcing collectivization was directly related to the plans for industrial construction. The famous agricultural scientist V.V. Kondrashin noted that in the event of a slowdown in the “locomotive of industrialization,” which has gained momentum, the state would be forced to freeze the main industrial construction projects, dismiss workers, specialists, including foreign ones, etc. To prevent this, foreign currency was required to purchase equipment in Western countries. Get them, according to I.V. According to Stalin and his supporters in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, it was possible to get this only through the export of bread, a significant increase in the production of which should be provided by large commercial socialist agricultural enterprises.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of the winter of 1930, the pace of collectivization corresponded to the most daring assumptions. At the beginning of March, 56% of peasant farms were registered in collective farms in the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> Not only was the pace of collective farm construction accelerated but also the degree of socialization of the property of peasants. The emphasis was placed on establishing communes. Collective-farm combines and giant collective farms were created, which included dozens of villages scattered over a vast territory, with thousands of households. The newly created state farms were distinguished by their gigantic size. Some of them were located on the territory of

<sup>19</sup>Agro-industrial combines of Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1930. Ch. I: On the issue of organizing agro-industrial combines.

<sup>20</sup>The AIC projects were not included directly in the General Plan. They were published in separate brochures (Agro-industrial combines of Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1930. Ch. II: Maslyaninsky AIC (Maslyaninsky district of Novosibirsk region); Agro-industrial combines of Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1930. Ch. 4: Shipunovsky AIC (Shipunovsky district of the Rubtsovsky district); Agro-industrial combines of Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1930. Ch. 5: Prokopyevsky agro-industrial plant (Prokopyevsky region of Kuznetsk district); Agro-industrial combines of Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1930. Ch. 6: Ongudai State Farm-Collective Farm Combine (Ongudai Aimak, Oiroi Region)).

<sup>21</sup>Materials for the five-year plan ... P. 75.

<sup>22</sup>CPSU in resolutions ... M., 1985. Vol. 5. P. 73.

<sup>23</sup>Collectivization of the Siberian village. January–May 1930: collection of documents. Novosibirsk, 2009, pp. 6–7.

<sup>24</sup>Kondrashin V.V. Grain procurement policy in the USSR during the first five-year plan and its results // *Humanities in Siberia*. 2013. No. 4. P. 35.

<sup>25</sup>History of the Soviet peasantry. Vol. 2. P. 155.

several administrative regions. The creation of AICs began. The Endovishchensky agro-industrial plant was formed in the Usmansky district of the Central Black Earth region by the decision of the VI plenum of the regional executive committee of January 4, 1930. It included 48 villages (59000 people), 6 state farms and industrial enterprises, 2 factories of for the production of refractory clay for the entire country, 2 brick factories, 11 mechanical factories, 13 watermills, and several dozen windmills. For the successful functioning of an AIC, it was assumed that an investment of about 3.5 billion rubles was required for the construction of grain and vegetable stores, outbuildings for agricultural equipment, tractors, cars, service premises (offices), residential buildings, roads, etc.<sup>26</sup>

The result of the Bolshevik onslaught on the countryside was a sharp drop in the productive forces of agricultural production, especially noticeable in animal husbandry. In order not to completely destroy the agricultural sector of the economy, the authorities adjusted their policy towards the countryside. Violent methods of collectivization were officially disavowed. And the peasants began to leave the collective farms en masse. The level of collectivization in the Soviet Union dropped to 21%.<sup>27</sup> The first AICs also collapsed without having time to organize themselves.

The retreat of the regime was tactical in nature. At the beginning of 1931, mass collectivization resumed. The question of the need to create state-farm-collective-farm and agro-industrial combines was again put on the agenda. On February 22, 1931, speaking at the I Congress of Soviets of the West Siberian Territory, the head of the regional land administration N.P. Yalukhin said: "We have begun organizing the highest form of agricultural production: agro-industrial combines." Informing the congress delegates that the projects of five plants have been developed, he said that the construction of the Maslyaninsky AIC has already begun.<sup>28</sup>

However, at the VI Congress of Soviets of the USSR, held in March 1931, this practice was condemned. At the same time, the material, technical, and political impossibility of uniting agriculture and the processing industry in the concrete historical conditions through the creation of combines received an ideological explanation. The resolution of the congress "On state farm construction" pointed out "the enormous difference between state farms and collective farms at the given stage of development. State farms are state enterprises where the state is the complete owner .... Collective farms, on the other hand, are enterprises founded by peasants who have volun-

tarily communalized their means of production .... At the same time, the collective farmers are the owners of the collective farm." Based on such theses, the congress defined as "anti-Leninist" and "grossly violating the policy of the Soviet government" "all sorts of attempts to identify state farms and collective farms, to create overnight state farm-collective farm combines, and even more so to subordinate collective farms to state farms."<sup>29</sup> The planning of AICs after the issuance of this resolution was called nothing more than "wrecking" and "anti-Party" activities, as "enemy maneuvers" with the aim of eliminating collective farms and state farms.<sup>30</sup>

After the refusal to create AICs and state-farm-collective-farm associations, the task of implementing the state-farm-collective farm model of the socialist modernization of agriculture was put on the agenda. At the same time, the agricultural artel was proclaimed the main form of collective farming at the "current stage" of collective farm construction, and its optimal size was correlated with a separate rural settlement (artel-village). The transition to the commune as the highest form of the collective farm movement was to take place in accordance with "an increase in the technical base, the growth of collective farm personnel and the cultural level of collective farmers."<sup>31</sup> It was planned to develop state farm production at a faster pace. Combined into large specialized trusts, state farms were to occupy an ever-increasing share in the agrarian sector of the economy.

By the end of 1931, 60% of the country's peasant households joined the collective farms. Thus, during 1931, the agrarian economy of Russia ceased to be a peasant economy, and the peasant economy ceased to be its basic production cell. The 80% level of collectivization, which was defined as its "completion for the most part," was achieved in the country at the beginning of 1935.<sup>32</sup> Intensive state farm construction continued. In the Soviet Union, the area under crops in state farms increased from 1929 to 1932 by a factor of 22; the number of cattle, by a factor of 16; sheep, by a factor of 6; and pigs, by a factor of 18.<sup>33</sup>

However, despite the visible successes of collective farm and state farm construction, grandiose plans to increase agricultural production failed. Collectivization not only did not contribute to the rise of agriculture, but, on the contrary, led to a decline in productive forces in the short term, especially deep in animal

<sup>26</sup>The tragedy of the Soviet village. Collectivization and dispossession. 1927–1939: documents and materials. M., 2000. Vol. 2: November 1929–December 1930. P. 831.

<sup>27</sup>History of the Soviet peasantry. Vol. 2. P. 169.

<sup>28</sup>Soviet Siberia. 1931. 24 Feb.

<sup>29</sup>Decisions of the party and government on economic issues. M., 1967. Vol. 2. 1929–1940 pp. 280–281.

<sup>30</sup>Historiography of the peasantry of Soviet Siberia. Novosibirsk, 1976, pp. 143–144.

<sup>31</sup>CPSU in resolutions ... M., 1985. Vol. 5. P. 162.

<sup>32</sup>History of the Soviet peasantry. Vol. 2, pp. 196, 314.

<sup>33</sup>Socialist construction of the USSR: stat. yearbook. M., 1935, pp. 328, 377; National economy of the USSR: stat. directory. 1932. M., 1932. P. 189.

husbandry. In the medium term, by the end of the 1930s, the acreage and gross harvest increased in comparison with the end of the 1920s. It was not possible to restore the number of livestock. In addition, forced collectivization led to a deterioration in the quality indicators of production (yields, productivity).

At the same time, the agrarian system formed in the process of forced collectivization was radically different from the theoretical structures adopted for implementation. It was distinguished by noneconomic coercion, used as the main method of withdrawing land rent, and the refeudalization of the village taxation system, which consisted in returning to estate taxation, its natural and labor-based forms.<sup>34</sup> The increased level of alienation of agricultural products in comparison with the precollective farm village was ensured by strict noneconomic coercion (forced marketability). The excessive withdrawal of food resources in the countryside led to latent, focal, or mass starvation, which accompanied the agrarian system of Stalinist socialism throughout its existence.

The organizational and production base of the new model of the agrarian system was the collective farms, which lost their original cooperative core. On the one hand, the collective farms were under the strict administrative, financial, and technological dictates of the state, and on the other hand, they functioned on the principles of self-sufficiency, carried out in conditions of an absolutely nonequivalent and forced exchange. Members of the collective farms were actually attached to them, and their work on the “public” fields and farms acquired the character of a labor service.

Collective farms possessed only simple horse and hand equipment. Sophisticated agricultural machines were in the MTSs, which, on a reimbursable base, collected in the form of payment in kind, were engaged in the production and technical maintenance of collective farms. In addition to performing mechanized work, the MTS was entrusted with the implementation of the so-called organizational assistance to collective farms. They controlled almost all aspects of collective farm life: production, labor records, and income distribution, and they determined agricultural technology in a directive manner.

Both in terms of their size and the level of mechanization, the collective farms did not become factories of grain, meat, or milk. In terms of yield and productivity of livestock, they were inferior to individual peasant farms. Collective farm production was mismanaged at an unprecedented level compared to the precollective farm village. Labor discipline and the quality of work performed were extremely low. Crop losses reached significant proportions. Low productivity and a high percentage of animal mortality were

the result of a lack of feed, livestock facilities, and poor livestock care.

Private homesteads (PHSs) were an integral part of the collective farm system. Despite their meager size, they were the main source of livelihood for the owners. In addition, a significant part of the PHSs’ resources was spent on covering the in-kind monetary obligations of peasants to the state. Ownership of a personal plot was conditional on membership in the collective farm. It had to be taken away from a peasant who left or was expelled from the collective farm. An important role in the food supply of their owners was also played by personal subsidiary plots of rural workers and employees. The so-called collective gardening of urban residents, who were allocated significant tracts of land in the countryside to grow potatoes, was a mass phenomenon.

State farms, which were part of specialized trusts, were distinguished by a relatively high level of mechanization and significantly exceeded the size of collective farms. However, they did not become, as planned, the leading organizational and production form of agriculture, but turned into an auxiliary appendage of the collective farm economy. In addition to trusted state farms, a large number of state farms functioned in the country, which were subsidiary agricultural enterprises of the departments of labor procurement (ORS) of ministries and large enterprises. As a rule, they were small and mainly specialized in pig breeding, as well as growing potatoes and vegetables. Ancillary enterprises, whose creation was also not envisaged by the plans for socialist construction, were actually of a consumer nature, since their products were intended to supply workers in the main production.

A distinctive feature of the agrarian economy of Stalinist socialism was its diversity. At the same time, the task of replacing the small-scale farming system with a large-scale socialist one, which had been set in the late 1920s, had not been fully resolved. The agricultural enterprises of the socialist sector of the agrarian economy (collective farms and state farms) produced the vast majority of grain, fodder, and industrial crops. The PHSs of rural residents, the size and marketability of which were inferior even to the poor households of the precollective farm village, were the main producer of potatoes and milk. The PHSs also produced a significant portion of meat products and vegetables.

Thus, in the course of continuous collectivization in the agrarian sector in the Soviet Union, a system was formed, which some publicists and even researchers define as an “agrogulag.” In relation to this, the question arises whether the depictions in various planned developments of the late 1920s and, in particular, in the above-mentioned Master Plan for the development of the economy of the Siberian territory were used as a diversionary PR campaign to cover up Stalin’s real plans. It seems to us that Stalin and his

<sup>34</sup> *Ilinykh V.A.* Taxation of the Siberian village. Late 1920s to the early 1950s, Novosibirsk, 2004. P. 160.

entourage, when starting forced collectivization, nevertheless believed in the beneficial effect of mass collective-farm and state-farm construction on agriculture. Moreover, the task of industrialization through the robbery of the countryside, and even more so the Holodomor, was not originally intended.

However, not only theorists and practitioners of the Bolshevik regime but also the villagers themselves had high expectations from collectivization. From the very beginning of the establishment of Soviet power, official propaganda constantly portrayed the advantages of a large-scale socialist economy, which would allow the peasants to overcome their centuries-long poverty, increase their material well-being, and with the help of machines and mechanisms, significantly facilitate their work, turning it into a kind of industrial labor. The peasants were convinced that when they joined the collective farms, they, like the workers, would work for 8 hours a day and earn 12 full “harvests” (salaries) per annum. At the same time, they believed that the state would provide them with the necessary material and financial resources to improve their material well-being without any especially strenuous efforts on their behalf. The widespread distribution of communes at the beginning of 1930 was related, among other things, to the conviction of the peasants that communes, unlike agricultural farms, would be fully supported by the state. The secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks L.M. Kaganovich drew attention to this in March–April 1930, when he visited the Central Black Earth region, the Volga region, and Siberia to check the implementation of the resolution of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party of March 10, 1930 “On the fight against distortions of the party line in the collective farm movement.”<sup>35</sup>

However, the state, confident in the high production potential of collective farms, intended to get more agricultural products from the collective farm village than it received before the start of mass collectivization. At the same time, the failure to fulfill the procurement plans was perceived as a manifestation of the “kulak sabotage” and was suppressed by administrative and repressive measures. The collective farms did not produce the quantity of products necessary for the state and were forced to fulfill the procurement plans through their seed, fodder, insurance and consumer funds.

Since the state seized virtually all the products produced, the collective farms did not have the resources to pay their members. The collective farmers, who received practically nothing for their work, actually staged an “Italian” or work-to-rule strike on public fields and farms.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the strike, there was

widespread flight from the countryside. The theft of collective farm property, especially grain, became widespread. At the same time, the massive nature of theft in the early 1930s became a derivative not only and not so much of the traditional peasant mentality, but was an attempt by the peasants to save themselves and their families from the famine that really threatened them. The regime responded by carrying out mass repressions, passing a law on protecting the property of state enterprises, collective farms and cooperatives, and introducing a passport system.

The final rejection of the rudiments of the Lenin’s cooperative plan can be considered as an indication of the revision of the positions of part of the ruling elite and Stalin personally on the prospects and methods of socialist modernization of the countryside. At the beginning of 1932, agricultural cooperation was abolished, and the function of procurement previously assigned to it was transferred to state procurement organizations. The Kolkhoz (communal farm) Center and the all-union specialized, regional, and district collective farm unions were liquidated in December 1932. The same fate befell the All-Union MTS Center, owned by state bodies, agricultural cooperatives, and the Kolkhoz Center. The management of the collective farms and the MTS was transferred into the hands of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR and its bodies. At the end of 1932 and beginning of 1933, the contract system was abolished. Instead of it, mandatory deliveries of the main types of agricultural products, having a tax character, were introduced. Thus, the agrarian system of the Soviet Union was nationalized.

The views on the prospects of the state farm sector of the agrarian economy were also corrected. The state of affairs on the state farms, which were called upon to demonstrate to the peasants the advantages of large-scale socialist production, was no better than on the collective farms. They also did not comply with elementary agrotechnical and zootechnical rules; and the yield and productivity of animals were relatively low. At the same time, the cost of agricultural production on state farms was an order of magnitude higher than on collective farms. The state was forced to spend significant funds on material, technical, and financial support of state farms. Their workers, unlike collective farmers, received guaranteed wages. A particularly unpleasant surprise for the Stalinist leadership was the non-fulfillment in 1930–1932 by the overwhelming majority of state farms of in the Soviet Union of the grain procurement plans given to them. In the materials of the special commission created in 1931 at the initiative of Stalin to inspect the economic activities of state farms, it was stated that they were a burden on the state.<sup>37</sup> In relation to this, the program for expanding the state farm sector of the rural economy was cur-

<sup>35</sup>Collectivization of the Siberian village. P. 299.

<sup>36</sup>*Kondrashin V.V.* The famine of 1932 and 1933: the tragedy of the Russian village. M., 2008, pp. 131–134.

<sup>37</sup>*Kondrashin V.V.* The grain procurement policy in the Soviet Union during the first five-year plan .... P. 36.

tailed. The creation of new farms had practically ceased. Part of the state farm land was transferred to the collective farms.

After the mass famine of 1931–1933, in order to prevent its recurrence, the leaders of the state decided to strengthen PHSs. The local authorities had to eliminate their rules of not allowing cows on the farms by assisting the collective farmers in acquiring and raising young animals. Collective farms, in turn, should have organized the sale of livestock to their members. In 1935, a new Model Charter of the agricultural *artel* was adopted, which provided higher marginal norms for private farming than the old one.<sup>38</sup>

The failure of the program of socialist modernization of agriculture formulated in the late 1920s was not officially recognized. Moreover, in official documents, and then in Soviet historiography, it was concluded that collectivization in the Soviet Union took place in accordance with the basic principles of the “Leninist cooperative plan.” Minor deviations from it at the first stages of collective-farm development, by left-wing and right-wing opportunists were corrected. In the post-Soviet historiography identical views on Stalin’s position on the issue of the prospects for collectivization is adhered to by adherents of the theories of modernization and totalitarianism. Adherents of totalitarianism are absolutely sure that he initially counted on the construction of an *agrogulag*. Supporters of the concept of modernization believe that Stalin was clearly aware of the need to create a collective farm system as a tool for the noneconomic transfer of resources from the agrarian sector to the industrial one. Neither the leader nor the country had any other choice. The fundamental difference between these two positions lies in the formulation of Stalin’s ultimate goals: world domination or the preservation of the country’s sovereignty in a hostile environment.

It should be noted that some of the high-ranking representatives of the Bolshevik political elite of the 1930s perceived the agrarian system formed in the course of forced collectivization as a forced temporary retreat from the ideal socialist model. N.S. Khrushchev also held this view (see below). In contrast, Stalin, in our opinion, perceived the agrarian system formed in the course of mass collectivization as established “in earnest and for a long time,” since, in his opinion, in relation to Russian conditions, it was the optimal solution of the geostrategic tasks facing the country.

The collective farm system, which became an integral part of the economic mobilization, fulfilled the tasks assigned to it of the total transfer of resources from the countryside for superindustrialization in the 1930s, victory in the Great Patriotic War, and maintaining military-strategic parity with the United States

<sup>38</sup>See the agrarian policy of the Soviet state and the agriculture of Siberia in the 1930s. Novosibirsk, 2011, pp. 481, 542.

in the postwar years; however, at the same time, due to the inefficiency of forced labor, it was distinguished by a low level of development of productive forces.

In the early 1950s, the crisis in agriculture began to grow. The volume of production and procurement did not meet the needs of the country. The grain problem in the Soviet Union was never solved. The grain yield remained low and unstable. There was a food shortage in the country.<sup>39</sup> The livestock crisis was even deeper. In relation to this, it became clear to an increasing number of representatives of the party and state elite that the further development of the industry on the old principles was impossible.

In order to improve the situation in agriculture in the early 1950s, a number of proposals were formulated to reform the organizational structure and the mechanism of its functioning. Some representatives of the party and state elite believed that the progressive development of collective farms was holding back their relatively small size, which hindered the effective use of technology and the increase in social production. To fully reveal the potential of the collective farm system, according to the supporters of this point of view, was possible only through the consolidation of farms. Khrushchev, who served as First Secretary of the Moscow Regional Committee of the CPSU, strongly believed in this. In January 1950, the plenum of the regional committee decided to begin the “unification of small collective farms into larger and more powerful collective farms” in the region. In March 1950, the Ministry of Agriculture of the USSR prepared a “Note on the need to unite excessively small collective farms,” and on May 30, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks adopted a resolution “On the consolidation of small collective farms and the tasks of party organizations in this matter.”<sup>40</sup>

In the summer of 1950, a campaign was started to enlarge the collective farms. After its completion in the main agricultural regions of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev proposed to return to the implementation of the idea of *agro-cities*.<sup>41</sup> He was convinced that the urbanization of the village was the only possible manifestation of the pattern of overcoming the opposition between the city and the countryside. However, progress towards this goal was hampered by the “presence of small collective farms,” which did not have sufficient forces and means for the construction of modern social and cultural facilities, as well as comfortable housing. The amalgamation of collective farms created favorable conditions for the expansion of construction and improvement. A prerequisite for this was

<sup>39</sup>Agriculture in Siberia in the 20th century: problems of development and crises. Novosibirsk, 2012, pp. 137–138.

<sup>40</sup>The Soviet countryside in the first post-war years: 1946–1950 M., 1978, pp. 307–308.

<sup>41</sup>Pravda. 1951. March 4th.

“the resettlement of small villages, as well as the construction of new collective farm villages and towns.”

The most massive construction project in the countryside was to be the residential houses of collective farmers. At the same time, Khrushchev questioned the point of view of those architects who considered the most correct development of settlements with individual residential buildings. He believed that in collective farm settlements it was necessary to build not only one-story single-apartment houses but also one-story two-apartment and two-story houses for two or four apartments.

“When creating new settlements, as well as during the restructuring of old villages,” in his opinion, “one should not cut a large household plot near the house, since in this case the village will occupy a large area, the length of the power lines and water supply will increase, and therefore all improvements will cost more.” The optimal plot for an individual home is a small garden plot of 10 to 15 acres. “This is quite enough to build a residential building and the necessary utility rooms, including a garden of 15–20 trees, as well as a small garden for growing vegetables.” The rest of the land area for private farming, within the limits of the norms of the Charter of the agricultural artel should be allocated outside the village in a specially allocated area adjacent directly to the village. A feature of the new settlements was also to be the removal of the production zone (“the economic yard of the artel”) outside its boundaries. “By rebuilding their villages, the collective farms will thereby accomplish tremendous cultural transformations, and they will take a big step forward along the road to communism.”

In 1951, as part of the economic discussion initiated by Stalin, V.G. Venzher, a researcher at the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and A.V. Sanin, an associate professor at Moscow State University, proposed to transfer the equipment of the MTSs to collective farms.<sup>42</sup> In 1952, in order to overcome the crisis in animal husbandry, a commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU was created, which included A.A. Andreev, N.I. Ignatov, A.I. Mikoyan, and Khrushchev. At the end of the year, the members of the commission agreed on a draft resolution “On measures for the further development of animal husbandry on collective farms and state farms,” which provided for a significant increase in procurement prices for livestock products and an easing of the burden of taxation of collective farms.<sup>43</sup>

At the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, the issue of reorganization of the state farm sector of the agrarian economy was actively discussed. Most

state farms were unprofitable. Their negative profitability was determined by relatively high production costs combined with extremely low delivery prices for the agricultural products produced. However, their losses were compensated by state subsidies. Experts from the Ministry of State Farms of the USSR proposed increasing the profitability of production by significantly increasing state product prices. The Ministry of Finance believed that the main method of reducing costs should be the minimization of production costs by mobilizing internal reserves.<sup>44</sup>

I.V. Stalin, who led the country through “manual control,” agreed only to the enlargement of the collective farms. The rest of the proposals were rejected. The Secretary General criticized the proposals of V.G. Venzher and A.V. Sanina on MTS<sup>45</sup> and N.S. Khrushchev’s proposal about agricultural cities<sup>46</sup> and postponed consideration of the issue of stimulating the development of animal husbandry. In 1952, Stalin raised the question of liquidating unprofitable state farms and transferring their land to collective farms.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, at the beginning of 1953, Stalin proposed to raise taxes on collective farms and personal farms of rural residents by 40 billion rubles, since “peasants are rich.”<sup>48</sup> Naturally, this statement did not correspond to reality at all. In the early 1950s, collective farmers in most regions of Russia eked out a miserable existence, and in the main agricultural regions of Siberia, due to a series of crop failures, they were generally on the verge of starvation. Attempts to modernize the agrarian system were made only after his death.

From the end of 1953, Khrushchev began to determine the Soviet Union’s agrarian policy, pushing aside and then eliminating his political rivals from

<sup>44</sup>Zelenin I.E. Agricultural policy N.S. Khrushchev and agriculture. M., 2001. P. 51.

<sup>45</sup>Stalin wrote: “What does it mean <...> to demand that the MTSs be sold to the collective farms? This means causing great losses and ruining the collective farms, undermining the mechanization of agriculture, and reducing the rate of collective farm production. Hence, the conclusion, Sanina and Venzher, by proposing the sale of MTSs to collective farms, are taking a backward step and trying to turn back the wheel of history.” (*Stalin I.V. Works*. Vol. 16. P. 221).

<sup>46</sup>In the closed letter of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks “On the tasks of collective farm construction in relation to the enlargement of small collective farms,” drawn up at the initiative of Stalin, dated April 2, 1951, it was indicated that the mistake of “some” party and Soviet workers, including Khrushchev, “consists of the fact that they forget about the main, productive tasks of the collective farms and bring to the forefront the consumer tasks derived from them, the tasks of household arrangement in the collective farms, and housing construction in the countryside.” The proposal to reduce the size of household plots in the rebuilt settlements was also criticized (*Otechestvennye archives*. 1994. No. 1. P. 46).

<sup>47</sup>Zelenin I.E. Agricultural policy N.S. Khrushchev .... P. 51.

<sup>48</sup>Zelenin I.E. Agricultural policy N.S. Khrushchev .... P. 52.

<sup>42</sup>Stalin I.V. Works. M., 1997. Vol. 16, pp. 220–221.

<sup>43</sup>Zelenin I.E. Agricultural policy N.S. Khrushchev and agriculture. M., 2001. P. 52.

power. In modern historiography, Khrushchev's name, as a rule, is related to the implementation of three main superprograms (projects) for the development of the country's agriculture: virgin lands, corn, and livestock. However, these programs were of a sectoral, generally nonideological nature and did not lead to a change in agrarian relations. The organizational and economic restructuring of agriculture carried out under his leadership, which ultimately led to the formation of a new model of the country's agrarian system, had the scale of a real superprogram.

In his activities to reform agriculture, Khrushchev was based on his own convictions, which were formed at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. During this time he studied at the Industrial Academy in Moscow. His course did not involve a detailed study of agrarian issues. However, Khrushchev was aware of this topic, being one of the central topics of internal party and expert discussions. The state-farm-collective-farm model of the socialist reconstruction of agriculture, formulated in these years, had a significant influence on his theoretical ideas.

Khrushchev's views on the way to solve the agrarian issue, based on the doctrinal postulates of Marxism and the main provisions of the state farm-collective farm model, boiled down to the following theses: (1) A large public economy with a strong technical base has advantages over a small one. (2) The organizational and production structure of socialist agriculture should consist of two types of enterprises: state farms and collective farms based on cooperative ownership. (3) The leading role in the socialist reconstruction of the agrarian economy belongs to the state farms, which, unlike the collective farms, are "consistently socialist" enterprises. (4) After building socialism, cooperative ownership will begin to merge with the public (state), and collective farms will actually turn into state farms. (5) The construction of socialism, which will be completed in the communist vision, will be accompanied by the differences between towns and the countryside being gradually overcome.

However, the agrarian system formed in the process of forced collectivization radically differed from the theoretical constructions. Khrushchev was particularly repulsed by the following distinguishing features: (a) the absolute predominance of the collective-farm form of production; (b) the small size of collective farms; (c) deprivation of the collective farms of complex agricultural machinery concentrated in the MTSs; (d) the natural nature of the alienation of agricultural products; and (e) the significant scale of development of the personal sector of the rural economy. The elimination of these "deviations" from the Marxist-Leninist principles of the functioning of socialist agriculture was the main substance of Khrushchev's superprogram to reform of the agricultural sector. This program was not fixed in any document, but existed only in the form of conceptual orientations of the reformer, the implementation of which was of a situa-

tional nature. Khrushchev was opposed by adherents of the conservative transformation of the agrarian system, who did not support dismantling but for improving the collective farm system that had developed in the country in the previous period.

The creation of conditions for reforming the organizational and production structure of agriculture, according to Khrushchev, should have contributed to the solution of the grain problem, which was aggravated in the early 1950s. To this end, he proposed in a short time to expand the area under crops through the massive plowing of virgin and fallow lands. The interim success of the virgin land campaign and the defeat of the conservative (antiparty) group allowed Khrushchev to realize his plans for the reorganization of agriculture. The enlargement of collective farms, which began in 1950, continued, the MTSs were reorganized, and their equipment was transferred to collective farms, taxes in kind were abolished, a campaign was launched to limit PHSs, and a campaign was launched to eliminate "failed" villages. The consequence of the mass creation of state farms of the rural economy was the transformation of the collective farm model of agriculture into a state farm-collective farm.

At the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, Khrushchev, who considered that the stage of creating a socialist economy had been completed, decided to start building communism. This course was enshrined in the Third Program of the CPSU adopted in 1961, which set the goal of creating the material and technical base of communism within twenty years. In the agrarian sector, the following tasks were set: the transformation of agricultural labor "into a kind of industrial labor"; minimizing the dependence of agriculture "on the elements of nature"; achieving "an abundance of high-quality food for the population and raw materials for industry"; the economic "elimination" of private subsidiary farming; the creation of conditions for "merging collective-farm property with public property into a single communal property"; and eliminating, "on the whole" differences between towns and the countryside.<sup>49</sup>

Khrushchev's colleagues, having removed him from power in October 1964, abandoned the immediate building of communism and criticized his "voluntarism." The campaign to limit private subsidiary farms was also deemed unreasonable. The March (1965) plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU recognized the need to improve the economic relationships between the state and agricultural enterprises.

As part of the implementation of the March plenum, one of the leaders of the group of Soviet market economists, Venzher, developed a project for reforming socialist agriculture based on its transition to a market mechanism of functioning and regulation. Venzher believed that at this stage of the country's agrarian development, the optimal organizational and

<sup>49</sup>The CPSU in resolutions .... M., 1986. Vol. 10, pp. 128, 135–142.

production structure of agricultural production for the introduction of market principles were collective farms, which were legally based on cooperative (group) ownership of the means of production. It was only necessary to free them from the administrative dictates of the state. In relation to this, Venzher criticized the mass state farming as a manifestation of distrust in the cooperative form of farming. Moreover, he put forward the thesis on the “optional mass creation of state forms of agricultural enterprises” in the process of the socialist reconstruction of agriculture.<sup>50</sup>

Cooperative property, according to Venzher, determines two basic principles for the functioning of the collective farm economy: (1) the complete independence of collective farms-cooperatives in their production activities; (2) equivalence in commodity relations with the socialist industry. Independence of production implies the complete independence of the planning and sales of manufactured products. The provision that all economic relations of collective farms with the state and other contractors are carried out based only on commodity-money relations, through purchase and sale, follows from the principle of equivalence. The equivalence of exchange can only be observed if both the seller and the buyer have complete freedom to dispose of their goods and money. If a collective farm is obliged to sell something in accordance with an order from above at prices that are established in a noneconomic way, then the foundations of commodity circulation are violated, which, in turn, adversely affects the collective farm economy. Compliance with these principles of the functioning of the collective farm economy will make it possible to achieve an accelerated and sustainable increase in production volumes.<sup>51</sup>

However, these principles were not respected in the real Soviet economy. In relation to this, a restructuring of the economic mechanism was required, the rejection of administrative methods of managing collective farms, and a transition to a system of “influencing the economy of collective farms through the systematic use of cost levers and the comprehensive development of commodity-money relations.” At the same time, Venzher believed that the simultaneous replacement of one economic mechanism by another is economically risky, and in relation to this, he proposed transitional measures.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Venzher V.G. Features of the collective farm economy and problems of its development // Production, accumulation, consumption / Venzher V.G., Kvasha Ya.B., Notkin A.I., Pervushin S.P., Heinman S.A. M., 1965, pp. 261, 263.

<sup>51</sup>Venzher V.G. Features of the collective farm economy and problems of its development // Production, accumulation, consumption / Venzher V.G., Kvasha Ya.B., Notkin A.I., Pervushin S.P., Heinman S.A. M., 1965, pp. 270–276.

<sup>52</sup>Venzher V.G. Features of the collective farm economy and problems of its development // Production, accumulation, consumption / Venzher V.G., Kvasha Ya.B., Notkin A.I., Pervushin S.P., Heinman S.A. M., 1965. P. 278.

Venzher considered production contracting based on cost leverage and mutual benefit to be the main method of regulating the collective farm economy in the transition period, which would guarantee the state receiving the necessary volumes of agricultural products. Contracting each type of agricultural product as a method of its centralized procurement at state purchase prices should be used only in areas of the corresponding specialization. Outside these areas, this agricultural product could be sold at the discretion of the collective farm to other farms, cooperative or state trade and purchasing organizations, and processing enterprises. Prices were set by agreement between the parties. As the volume of agricultural production increased and economic imbalances were eliminated, the scope of contracting was to be narrowed, and the market sale of products should be expanded, becoming the only form of exchange in the future. By this time, state farms also had to switch to the market form of selling their products.

According to Venzher, the processes of interfarm cooperation should develop in parallel with the expansion of the sphere of commodity-money relations. He believed that the functions of the intercollective-farm associations being created should be transferred to (a) the organization of cooperative enterprises for processing agricultural products; (b) material, technical, and other supplies for collective farms; (c) carrying out operations for the sale of manufactured products. As a result, instead of the administrative bodies of collective farms, a cooperative system operating on a voluntary basis would be created. In turn, intercollective-farm production and marketing unions (encompassing one-and-a-half to two dozen or more collective farms within the same region or, perhaps, even on a larger scale) could in the future be combined with adjacent state farms and processing enterprises into agroindustrial complexes and combines.<sup>53</sup>

Improving industrial relations, according to Venzher, created a reliable foundation for the development of the material and technical base of the agricultural sector of the economy. At the same time, he was sure that modern agricultural production was feasible only through large-scale machine production. He wanted to complete the industrialization of agricultural labor and production and turn agriculture into a “special industrial sector.”<sup>54</sup>

Positively evaluating the process of concentration of agricultural production, Venzher believed that it would be accompanied by a concentration of a rural settlement network. In his opinion, the rural population should be concentrated in fairly large urban-type

<sup>53</sup>Venzher V.G. Features of the collective farm economy and problems of its development // Production, accumulation, consumption / Venzher V.G., Kvasha Ya.B., Notkin A.I., Pervushin S.P., Heinman S.A. M., 1965, pp. 298–300.

<sup>54</sup>Venzher V.G. Kolkhoz system at the present stage. M., 1966, pp. 291–292.

settlements with 10000–15000 or more inhabitants. “The creation of rural, comfortable urban-type settlements with all the necessary institutions of culture, as well as communal and consumer services” will change the idea of the village “as a certain set of small settlements with scattered, uncomfortable, or poorly equipped dwellings, with an insufficient network of cultural and medical institutions.”<sup>55</sup>

Venzher also analyzed the prospects for the development of household plots of rural residents. In his opinion, their existence was “due to the insufficient development of the social economy of the collective farms, and not the commitment of the collective farmers to small-scale production.” In his opinion, as the volume of social production increased, the need for personal farming would gradually decrease, and disappear.<sup>56</sup>

Analyzing Venzher’s project allows us to conclude that it contains elements of the models of socialist reconstruction of agriculture developed at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s, but which was not actually implemented in practice. The general stake was on the development of large-scale farming, the industrialization of agricultural labor and production, and the creation of agroindustrial associations based on collective farms and state farms. However, there were also fundamental differences: a market rather than an administrative mechanism for regulating the agrarian economy was proposed; and the engines for the reorganization of agriculture were not state farms but collective farms. Venzher’s project also included a number of provisions of the Leninist cooperative plan (contracting and uniting collective farms into production and marketing unions). It should be noted that Venger’s combining various conceptual models into a single whole were not eclectic but organic, and his works from the mid-1960s can justifiably be called the pinnacle of the Soviet Marxist-Leninist theory of the socialist development of agriculture.

However, the path to build a market model for the functioning of socialist agriculture was rejected. The economic reform begun after the March (1965) plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU was abandoned. The government then focused on the administrative intensification of agricultural production. The continuity of the new course of agrarian policy with the former one consisted of the continuation of the agricultural policy of creating state farms begun by Khrushchev.

As a result, in the 1970s, in the Soviet Union, the post-Stalinist model of the agrarian system was finally formed, which can be defined as a state farm. The characteristic features of its formation and functioning were the consolidation of production structures, as well as the industrialization of agricultural production

and labor. The organizational and production base of the new model consisted of large state-owned agricultural enterprises, which were transformed into collective farms. They differed from state farms only in formal legal terms. Legally, fixed and current assets of collective farms and manufactured products were in the collective (cooperative) ownership of their members; in fact, the ultimate owner, user, and manager, i.e., the owner of the collective farm property, was the state. The main stimulus for labor in state farms and collective farms was wages, which were constantly increasing. In relation to this, the role of PHSs in meeting the consumption needs of rural families has decreased to an auxiliary one. At the same time, the private sector of the agrarian economy was integrated with the state farm and collective farm production.

The industrialization of agricultural production, the transition to wages that do not depend on its final results, led to the growing alienation of agricultural workers from the land and other means of production and a decrease in the efficiency in the agricultural sector. In the vast subdivisions, which were difficult to manage, collective farmers and workers of state farms were not connected with the final result either organizationally or materially. The growing alienation from the means of production and the results of labor led to a weakening of labor and discipline (both executive and technological), as well as the irrational expenditure of raw materials, materials, and energy. The negative behavior of laborers became widespread: absenteeism; lack of punctuality; petty theft of fodder, spare parts, building materials, and finished products; the use of public equipment by employees for personal purposes; etc.

A consequence of the low productivity of agricultural labor was the growing food shortage in the country and the revival of rationing. Accelerated by food shortages, the radicalization of public consciousness in the early 1990s led to the rejection of the socialist model of agriculture.

#### OPEN ACCESS

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

<sup>55</sup>Venzher V.G. Kolkhoz system at the present stage. M., 1966, pp. 301, 302.

<sup>56</sup>Venzher V.G. Kolkhoz system at the present stage. M., 1966. P. 47.