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Soviet Kolkhozes under New Economic Conditions of the Late 1950s - Early 1960s

Abstract

The article draws on the 1950s-1960s archival documents from the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History and from the State Archive of Contemporary History of the Lipetsk Region to study the early days of the Khrushchev agrarian reform implementation: reorganization of machine and tractor stations (MTS) and formation of new production infrastructure in the kolkhozes. The main emphasis is put on studying financial preparedness of kolkhozes to purchase tractors, combine harvesters, and other agricultural machinery for machine and tractor stations and to create material and technical base for their maintenance, operation, and repair. The archival data allows the author to conclude that kolkhozes in most

republics, territories, and regions of the RSFSR (with exception the Krasnodar, Stavropol, and Rostov regions) did not have the financial means to purchase the complex equipment. The reform of 1958 was mandatory for all regions without exception. The article presents the party regional committees' calculations on the financial situation of kolkhozes. In the Perm region only 13 kolkhozes out of 1167 (1.1%) had means to buy the MTS equipment. In many areas of the Center, the Volga region, the Urals and Siberia, kolkhozes took a wait-and-see position. In the Altai territory, only 200 kolkhozes out of 697 (28.7%) expressed a desire to buy equipment, in the Moscow region — 300 out of 1126 (26.6%), in the Smolensk region — 113 out of 955 (11.8%), in the Kalinin region — 108 out of 2350 (4.6%). The paper shows the method used to overcome the resistance kolkhozes to the reform: a powerful party propaganda campaign via organizing meetings proved very effective. The reform of 1958 was designed to offer new prospects and incentives for kolkhozes' development. The study reports some contrarius information: in many areas of the country, kolkhozes and newly formed repair and technical stations (RTS) flailed under new conditions. During the reform in the Leningrad region there were formed 25 RTS with 5 branches and 10 specialized stations. After a year of work only 3 RTS managed to break even. Regional leaders obtained government consent to create sovkhoses on the basis of the RTS and adjacent kolkhozes. The reform of 1958 is characterized as another attempt to transfer funds from kolkhozes to state budget. It worsened financial and economic indicators of most kolkhozes.

Keywords

Sources, agrarian policy of the Soviet state, Soviet village, agriculture in the USSR, kolkhozes, MTS, RTS, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, State Archive of Contemporary History of the Lipetsk Region.

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