

The Countryside

By Karl-Eugen Wädekin

In the fall of 1968 the Central Committee and Council of Ministers of the USSR held deliberations of considerable import for the future development of the Soviet countryside. Among other things, these talks produced a directive entitled "On Bringing Order Into Construction in Rural Areas,"¹ a document which sheds some authoritative light on a subject that has been under intense public discussion since the fall of 1967: rural reconstruction.

The directive designates as one of the country's "foremost tasks" the "gradual transformation" of agrarian communities

. . . into well-appointed settlements with good housing, cultural, and living conditions that satisfy the demands of the rural population, as well as appropriate produc-

tion units that will make it possible to create all the necessary conditions for high labor productivity . . . and an intensive development of agriculture

What is remarkable about this directive is its emphasis on gradualism and its avoidance of a concept that had played a considerable role in all previous discussions of this subject and which in fact was enshrined in the 1961 Party Program: namely, the notion of constructing *urban-type* "settlements" or "settlement centers" for habitation by agricultural workers. This concept was and remains closely related to that of the "agrotown" (*agrorod*), which has been cropping up for nearly twenty years and is most often associated with the name of Khrushchev.

Plans for the transformation of the Soviet village into a type of settlement which would fulfill the Communist ideal of applying an industrial style of working and living to agriculture—a transformation, that is, of the peasant, including the collectivized peasant, into an agricultural proletarian—have existed ever since collectivization was first introduced.² One such "agroproletarian" settlement

¹ *Pravda* (Moscow), Oct. 2, 1968.

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² The author wishes to thank M. Basile Kerblay, Paris, for informing him that the concept of "agrotowns" was alluded to in the remarks of a high-ranking Soviet planning official as early as 1930. See *L'URSS dans dix ans*, Paris, 1930, p. 120, and *La correspondance internationale* (Paris), March 5, 1930, p. 226.

containing large apartment houses was the "Gigant" sovkhos at Zernograd on the lower Don, which was built in the 1930's.³ More recent initiatives toward proletarianizing the countryside have been in evidence since 1948.⁴ Indeed, they attracted considerable attention both at home and abroad when, in 1951, Khrushchev gave them a forthright endorsement—only to be repudiated by Stalin. Several years ago, the American economist Luba O. Richter compiled a comprehensive report on these earlier developments and briefly described similar tendencies since the mid-1950's.⁵ The present author has also dealt elsewhere with developments in this area during the Khrushchev era,⁶ hence, it suffices here to outline in brief the background of recent discussions bearing on the transformation of the Soviet countryside.

Khrushchev and the Agrotown

The term "agrotown" has proven to be very infectious and has been widely employed in reference to various plans for radical rural reconstruction. Yet even Khrushchev used it only on rare occasions. In fact, even when he first mentioned the expression in his speech of January 18, 1951 (printed in *Pravda*, March 4), he went so far as to caution against its use. (It was well that he added this caveat, because in its next issue *Pravda* carried an editorial note indicating that his pronouncements were not to be taken as authoritative.) What Khrushchev specifically had in mind was the construction in rural areas of "well-appointed urban-type dwellings with all modern facilities," the creation of "new settlements and economic centers," and the resettlement of persons from "small, ill-appointed villages into well-appointed [communities]." ⁷ Even after becoming party First Secretary, he continued to avoid using the term "agrotown" in connection with these ideas, perhaps be-

cause it implied restrictions on private agriculture that were alarming to the peasantry. He preferred to speak of "urban-type settlement centers."

But whatever the terminology used by Khrushchev, the first "kolkhoz agrotown" was indeed completed in the Ukraine in 1958.⁸ Soon afterward, the term "agrotown" made its reappearance in the press, indicating that official thinking on the subject of rural reconstruction—at least among Khrushchev's closest supporters—had its roots in his radical proposals of 1951.⁹ The First Secretary himself was again speaking of bringing scattered segments of the rural population together into settlements with multi-storied buildings; on December 25, 1959, he mentioned two huge apartment houses (with several thousand occupants) on the outskirts of Moscow as good examples of what he had in mind. Clearly, he was not simply thinking of rural settlements, but of genuine urban-type communities, i.e., "agrotowns"; but still he continued to shun the term, presumably because of actual or potential resistance within the party leadership.¹⁰ After 1961, Khrushchev's efforts to establish real "agrotowns" shifted mainly to the sovkhoses, and during the last years of his regime, relatively little was said about urbanizing the countryside. In fact, it became clear that the construction of ordinary farm buildings had taken investment priority over housing projects and other more radical forms of rural reconstruction.

Since Khrushchev's fall, discussion on the general subject of rural reconstruction has not subsided completely inasmuch as his successors have also been aware of the need to modernize sparsely-populated and/or ill-equipped agrarian communities. The issues at stake in the discussions of recent years have centered around the form of reconstruction and the pace at which it is to be carried out. But before examining these discussions, it would be well to take a brief look at the areas being considered for reconstruction.

Rural Life Today

In Russian villages (as in the villages of the major non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union), peasants have traditionally lived in dwellings with

³ O. Shiller, *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* (Frankfurt-am-Main), April 1963, p. 95.

⁴ A regulation of October 5, 1948, required that new village buildings had to be erected in accordance with countrywide construction plans that were to be worked out over the next two to three years; but at that time sufficient funds for such an ambitious undertaking were hardly available.

⁵ Luba O. Richter, "Plans to Urbanize the Countryside 1950-61," in Jane Degras and Alec Nove (eds.), *Soviet Planning: Essays in Honor of Naum Jasny*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1964, pp. 32-45.

⁶ K.-E. Wädekin, *Sowjetstudien* (Munich), No. 22, 1967, pp. 57-63.

⁷ L. O. Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 37.

⁸ I. Vinnichenko, *Duma o kommunizme*, Moscow, Molodaia gvardiia, 1959, p. 3.

⁹ See L. O. Richter, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ For further details, see K.-E. Wädekin, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

attached plots of land, ranging from one-half to a whole acre, on which garden vegetables, fruit, potatoes and other crops are raised for family consumption, while the fields belonging to the kolkhoz or sovkhoz as such are situated outside the villages. This arrangement has produced widely spread-out settlements, usually consisting of rows of houses along a road, with long, narrow plots behind the houses.

The technical amenities of modern civilization are scarce: many villages are still without electricity, and running water, sewage systems, and piped gas are rarely to be found. Even in certain districts of Russian cities, it is still customary to find garden plots of up to one-third of an acre adjoining the dwellings, and sometimes even livestock. Such "urban" districts, with their primitive one and two-story houses, cover larger areas than is commonly thought (especially in small and medium-sized towns and where erstwhile villages have been incorporated into expanding metropolises). But facilities in these areas are quite rustic by Western standards: water must often be fetched by hand from wells or hydrants placed at intervals in the street, and sewage systems are usually non-existent. Up to now, electric light is the one utility that can be found in nearly all such districts, and gas lines are also being introduced on an increasing scale.

What does the proposed transformation of rural communities into "urban-type settlements" entail? Is it to involve the resettlement of thousands of peasants into vast apartment complexes equipped

with all the communal services and amenities usually found in a modern city? If so, today's private plots, which make such an important contribution to overall agricultural production, will most likely give way to ornamental flower beds surrounding apartment houses. Or will the regime opt instead to encourage the construction of traditional one and two-family houses, with the proviso that they be built more closely together than has thus far been the case in many villages and suburbs? This would reduce but not eliminate the private plots, and it would also obviate the necessity for massive resettlement programs. Communal services (such as gas, running water, and sewage disposal) could be gradually introduced into existing agrarian communities—in other words, these communities would be modernized, rather than "urbanized."

The Debate Since Khrushchev

Thus, in following the debate¹¹ in the Soviet press regarding rural reconstruction, it is helpful to look at certain key indicators as a means of distinguishing between extreme and moderate approaches. These indicators include the type of dwellings, the size of private plots, and the number

¹¹ A detailed account of recent discussions, with numerous sources which need not be repeated here, was given by this author in *Osteuropa* (Stuttgart), No. 8/9, 1968, pp. 602-627, and in *Sowjetstudien*, No. 24, 1968, pp. 3-33.



— Товарищ директор, к нам в общежитие медведь забрался!
— Хорошо, хорошо, как-нибудь и я загляну...

Рисунок Ю. УЗБЕКОВА

JOYS OF THE COUNTRY

—"Comrade Director, a bear tore into our dormitory!"
—"Alright, alright, I'll look into it somehow."

—From *Krokodil* (Moscow), No. 3, January 1968.

of inhabitants proposed for future agrarian communities.

In the period immediately following Khrushchev's overthrow, some critics objected to the construction of large apartment houses of up to four or five stories as a means of concentrating a dispersed rural population.¹² It soon became clear, moreover, that the plans for establishing such large settlements had undergone substantial modification since their initiation in 1959-60. The objective now was a less radical reduction in the number of existing villages by means of consolidation (*sselenie*). In Moscow oblast, the number of villages earmarked to be expanded into such prospective settlements was now almost three times as large as in the older plans, with the result that fewer existing villages would be condemned to extinction.¹³ In the Ukraine, there was talk of permitting the population of villages to range from 500 to 3,000, but 79 percent of the Ukrainian population was in any case already living in villages of over 500 population as of 1959.¹⁴ In Lithuania, where over one-half of all rural settlements had less than 50 inhabitants in 1959, the revised plans called for the preservation and expansion of 4,700 villages, which would only bring the average village population to between 300 to 350.¹⁵

In 1967, however, the rate of resettlement was stepped up. In Lithuania, for instance, only 276 hamlets and individual farms had been resettled in 1966, but by the end of 1967, their number had risen to 1,829.¹⁶ This acceleration of the tempo of resettlement was symptomatic of a resurgence of pressure in favor of radical rural reconstruction,¹⁷ for which the USSR State Committee for Construction (Gosstroï) and the agricultural journal *Selskaia zhizn* appear to have been chiefly responsible.

¹² E.g., "Obzor statei i pisem," *Voprosy ekonomiki* (Moscow), No. 3, 1966; V. Sinitsyn, *Kommunist* (Moscow), No. 3, 1965; P. Ignatovsky, *Pravda*, Aug. 15, 1966, p. 3.

¹³ By summer 1968, the Moscow oblast soviet was permitting rural construction cooperatives to build traditional one and two-family houses. See P. Vainshtein, *Selskaia zhizn* (Moscow), June 5, 1968, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Selskaia zhizn*, Dec. 1, 1966, p. 1; I. Loboda, *Ekonomika sovetskoi Ukrainy* (Kiev), No. 8, 1967, p. 79. Distribution of settlements in the Ukraine 1959: *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda*, Moscow, Gosstatizdat, Table 9.

¹⁵ *Itogi vsesoiuznoi . . . , Litovskaia SSR*, Moscow, Gosstatizdat, 1962, Table 9.

¹⁶ *Selskaia zhizn*, June 15, 1968, p. 2.

¹⁷ In Belorussia, for example, the authorities drew up strict rules governing private house-building and limiting private plots near one-family houses to two-fifths of an acre; any other privately-used land was to be located outside the village. See N. Divakov, *Selskaia zhizn*, June 9, 1968, p. 2.

Opposing voices counseling moderation also found expression, especially in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, which published a series of articles on the subject of rural reconstruction in the fall and winter of 1967-68.

In one of these articles, the Soviet writer Boris Mozhaev directly opposed the consolidation of small villages unless it was undertaken at the express wish of the rural population itself. He urged instead an expansion of the network of rural roads, which would be less costly and would make a large part of the resettlement program unnecessary.¹⁸

But the radicals continued to press their case. In 1968, in a volume of essays by diverse authors, the "agrotown" was once again put forward as the goal of the future but was defined in such a way as to leave open the question of just how "urban" it should be ("a complex of beautiful living quarters possessing architectural significance, with abundant green areas and sunlight . . . , the economic and cultural center of an agrarian-industrial community").¹⁹

By the summer of 1968, it was clear that an authoritative statement was needed from Moscow, but no such statement was forthcoming. To begin with, there was no such thing as a central agency responsible for coordinating rural construction. Nor did any binding statement emerge from a "conference-seminar" on rural reconstruction held in Minsk in early July, at which three ministers presented their views.

The "Conference-Seminar"

S. D. Khitrov, USSR Minister of Rural Construction, did not go into the complex problems of rural reconstruction as a whole, confining himself to pointing out the shortages of manpower and materials in the construction industry,²⁰ which would naturally be aggravated by a more rapid rate of rural reconstruction. V. V. Matskevich, the Minister of Agriculture, counseled more openly against too precipitous an approach to rural reconstruction, stressing that plans for such reconstruction were

¹⁸ *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Moscow), No. 8, 1968, p. 10. The same position was also taken by O. G. Tunkareli, Chairman of the Georgian Gosstroï, according to N. Chetunova, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, No. 34, 1968, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Problemy izmeneniia sotsialnoi struktury sovetskovo obshchestva*, Moscow, Nauka, 1968, p. 202.

²⁰ *Stroitelnaia gazeta* (Moscow), July 3, 1968, pp. 2-3.

contingent upon completing long-range plans for agricultural development, including plans for regional specialization and the economic organization of individual enterprises.²¹ This implied that any rural reconstruction undertaken while the long-range plans for agricultural development were still in the drafting stage—and they still are—might result in major misapplications and losses of investment.

I. T. Novikov, Chairman of Gosstro, took a more radical stand. He proposed an altogether unrealistic deadline of 1970-71 for the completion of long-range agricultural development plans, voicing the conviction that the “successful reconstruction of rural localities was dependent on it.”²² Moreover, he insisted that all rural reconstruction plans must be ready by 1973-75, and that those for completely new villages must be drawn up even earlier. The radical nature of his position was further underscored when he stated:

If rural people prefer . . . to live in multi-storied buildings . . ., no restrictions should be imposed on anyone in such cases. However, everything must be done to restrain and even prohibit any autonomous, spontaneous construction activity . . . Mistakes committed in past years confirm that a mechanical application of urban construction to the countryside is not acceptable. This, however, does not mean that we have to return to the traditional old-style peasant dwelling, with an individual residence and private plot nearby, circumscribing the whole existence of the peasant family. Unfortunately, in several regions, such a tendency exists.²³

By contrast, in a report on the Minsk discussions, the journalist N. Chetunova claimed that many of the participants had favored “one-story, one family houses with garden plots next to the houses,” while others had advocated two-story, two-family houses, likewise with adjoining garden plots.²⁴ She made no mention whatever of any advocates of multi-storied dwellings, and it would appear that, apart from Novikov, this idea was favored by only a small minority at best. Furthermore, Chetunova strongly emphasized the disparity between the requirements of agricultural planning and the short construction deadlines demanded by Novikov, remarking:

One would assume that such hasty work could hardly ensure a thoroughgoing analysis of all the factors of economics, climate, nationality, improved living con-

ditions, demography, etc., bearing on the development of the respective districts.²⁵

A Moderate Solution

The issue remained unresolved until October 1968, when the joint Central Committee and Council of Ministers directive referred to at the outset finally supplied authoritative guidelines for the future development of the countryside. Following upon the earlier controversies and the extreme demands of Gosstro chief Novikov, this directive must be viewed as a clearcut victory for the advocates of moderate rural reconstruction: it contained no rigid prescriptions, left room for continued experimentation, avoided the term “urban-type settlements,” and set longer time limits than those urged by Novikov.

The directive stipulated that only central villages of kolkhozes and sovkhoses whose production specialization has already been determined will be required to complete their construction plans within the next five years. This not only substantially reduces the number of individual construction plans to be completed by 1973, but also takes account of the Agriculture Minister's contention that the long-range plans for agriculture—which cannot be drawn up from one year to the next—should take precedence over construction plans. Another modest requirement was that one or two modern demonstration villages should be built in every oblast or autonomous republic during 1969-75 so as to provide the experimental basis on which the reconstruction of other villages might proceed. This, obviously, is a far cry from Novikov's 1973-75 deadline for the completion of all construction plans.

The directive also specified that due consideration should be given to the “varying local conditions of agricultural production” and “the national peculiarities of the population,” as well as to “local natural and climatic conditions and the specific characteristics of the work and life of the rural population.” It further stressed the participation of local organizations in the preparation of construction plans. These reservations were by no means new, but they had often been ignored in the past in favor of mechanical prescription by Moscow. The directive recommended further that kolkhozes con-

²¹ *Selskaia zhizn*, July 6, 1968, p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, July 2, 1968, p. 2.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Literaturnaia gazeta*, No. 34, 1968, p. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

tribute their own cash or credit resources toward financing construction, and that they try to attract private funds by granting special concessions for individual and cooperative housing construction. This sort of financing is also hardly novel,²⁶ but it had never before been generally and officially recommended for the countryside.

Although the directive did not specify what size or type of rural housing should be built, and whether or not private plots should be attached, the reference to enlisting private funds would suggest that construction of a large number of one-family homes will be permitted, because this is the type of house for which private savings can most readily be mobilized. Nor could it have been mere coincidence that on October 3, the day after the directive was published, *Selskaia zhizn* carried a report about a village in the Transcarpathian oblast stressing the advantages, in rural areas, of modern one-family houses adapted to the traditional mode of living. What the journal had in mind seemed to resemble for the most part the type of dwellings—not overly modern, but with adjoining garages—found in many parts of Central and Western Europe. The Transcarpathian village was lauded in these terms:

The construction of the village of Sredne-Vodianoe shows how the manifold demands of modern life can be successfully harmonized with good local traditions and the rich heritage of national architecture. That is exactly what the directive of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers concerning the regulation of rural construction seeks to encourage.

On October 5, the same newspaper told of a village which had built one-half of its new houses as one-family homes and the other half as two-story row houses, all having directly adjoining private plots. On October 9, again in *Selskaia zhizn*, the president of the architects' association of Uzbekistan gave an account of the fiasco that had resulted from earlier planning efforts in the new sovkhov villiages of the recently irrigated Central Asiatic wasteland. There, big apartment houses had been unimaginatively constructed on the pattern of urban dwellings, providing only small garden plots of 200 square meters each, and the buildings were situated in open areas without any shade. "Everything seemingly had been planned with a view to

making the central villages of sovkhovs the model for the transformation of rural life," said the article. "And yet they never became such a model." The plans had been later modified, and one-family and two-family houses were built with garden plots of 800 square meters each.

However, the press reports that came out in the wake of the directive did not present an entirely uniform picture. For instance, there was a report of a Ukrainian village which spoke only of the construction of two-story buildings containing 12-18 dwelling units each.²⁷ There have also been reports of a somewhat more radical kind of planning for a typical Central Russian district, envisaging the consolidation of over 300 existing villages, most of them having a population of not more than 20 to 30, into only 48 villages with a population of 500 each by 1980. However, these settlements would still be relatively small and are to retain one-family dwellings, thus preserving their rural character.²⁸

It would no doubt be erroneous to interpret the regime's unmistakable shift toward a more moderate line on rural reconstruction as a modification of ideology *per se*. Still, there has definitely been a modification in the long-term concept of rural living, for whatever is built now and over the next few years along the lines of the directive cannot be undone at a moment's notice. At a plenary session of the USSR Association of Architects in mid-October 1968, its secretary, G. M. Orlov, declared:

Our current practical activity is shaping the design and appearance of the Communist village of the future. The lifespan of modern buildings is a hundred years or more. This means that today's mistakes may cause great damage and in some instances may be practically beyond repair.²⁹

That even the latest, more moderate forms of rural reconstruction will bring country life closer to urban patterns cannot be ruled out, just as villages in the highly industrialized countries of Central and Western Europe have acquired a form which is fully urban by Soviet standards. But it is on the already existing suburban zones of one-family and two-family houses that new Soviet villages are now being patterned, and not on the rural prole-

²⁶ See, e.g., *Ekonomicheskie zakonomernosti pererastaniia sotsializma v kommunizm*, Moscow, Nauka, 1967, p. 212.

²⁷ *Selskaia zhizn*, Oct. 17, 1968, p. 2.

²⁸ See the full page description of this district planning in *Selskaia zhizn*, Nov. 16, 1968, p. 3.

²⁹ See the report by P. Vainshtein, *Selskaia zhizn*, Oct. 24, 1968, p. 2.

tarian concepts that Marx and Lenin had in mind. To be sure, small, two story buildings containing a dozen or so dwelling units will also play an important role in the new variant of "urbanization."

Practical Considerations

We can be certain that the decisions of the Soviet leadership were dictated by practical considerations. These can be divided into four categories, as follows:

1) The existence of shortages of money, construction materials, and construction workers is one critical factor which is so well documented that there is no need to go into detailed discussion of it here.³⁰ It may be useful, however, to form some idea of the dimensions of the financial requirements which rapid and radical rural reconstruction would have entailed. This writer has already presented elsewhere an estimate of the amounts which would have been involved, calculated on the basis of the minimum cost per square meter of living space.³¹

Another method of computation yields much bigger sums. In the case of two Ukrainian villages, the overall costs of reconstruction were recently given as 12 million rubles for one and 20 million for the other.³² However, villages in the Ukraine are generally larger than the overall average for the Soviet Union and not all of them are to be completely rebuilt. If, making due allowance for these factors, we take just 5 million rubles as the average cost per village and figure on the reconstruction of only the approximately 50,000 central villages of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, we arrive at an aggregate cost of 250 billion rubles! (Actually, the number of the villages to be reconstructed is larger: I. T. Novikov estimated it at 110,000,³³ including secondary villages of smaller size.) If, instead, we base our computation on the estimated cost of reconstructing the Furmanovsky oblast of Ivanovo, we arrive at a smaller but still huge sum in state allocations alone.³⁴ In either case, even

if the kolkhozes and their individual members were to supply one-half of the required total funds—a very optimistic assumption—the extra burden on the national budget would still exceed the total budget for 1967.

2) Both the organization of individual agricultural units (kolkhozes and sovkhozes) and production planning would have been seriously disrupted by a radical and rapid program of rural reconstruction. The number of villages in 1959, exclusive of non-agricultural settlements and settlements with less than eleven inhabitants, was about 350,000.³⁵ If these were to be consolidated into only 110,000 expanded villages, each kolkhoz or sovkhoz would, on average, contain only two villages instead of seven as at present. (The kolkhozes comprise an average productive area of about 7,410 acres, and the sovkhozes, about 19,760 acres. If one includes woodlands and other areas, they are, of course, much larger.) Such consolidation would therefore greatly extend the distance between home and place of work and would thus require the rapid construction of a comprehensive network of roads within the operating areas. But since this work has hardly begun in the Soviet Union, the cost of precipitous resettlement would be a reduction in operational efficiency, since the time lost in transporting workers to and from the fields would only aggravate the shortage of agricultural manpower in large parts of the country. By the same token, rural transport equipment and facilities, which are inadequate even for present purposes, would have to be multiplied several times over. There is also reason to fear that the elimination of some 240,000 small and medium-sized villages would result in some reduction in the area of land under cultivation.

Obviously, so drastic a change in the structure of rural settlements would have to be brought into line with plans for long-range agricultural development. But even assuming that detailed plans for such development could be successfully completed within the next few years, they would surely have to be adjusted to meet new and changing realities, and such modifications could in turn upset some of the plans for rural reconstruction and render the investments connected with them useless. The more rapid and drastic the rural reconstruction, the greater the chances that this might occur.

3) Internal migration and rural population shifts are another important factor which is vir-

³⁰ Compare the aforementioned speech by S. D. Khitrov; N. Verkhovsky, *Novyi mir* (Moscow), No. 7, 1968, pp. 251 f; and G. Radov, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, No. 41, 1968, p. 1.

³¹ *Sowjetstudien*, No. 24, 1968, p. 29.

³² *Selskaia zhizn*, Sept. 7, 1968, p. 4, and Oct. 17, 1968, p. 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1968, p. 2.

³⁴ 50 million rubles in the socialized sector, *Selskaia zhizn*, Nov. 16, 1968, p. 3. Multiplied by the total number of about 3,000 districts in the USSR, this would amount to 150 billion rubles.

³⁵ *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi . . .*, Table 9.

tually unpredictable. Serious Soviet research in this area has been in progress for less than ten years, and those involved are as yet unable to make accurate prognoses about these processes. If the retreat from the countryside in the areas north of the black-earth zone or in the Virgin Lands, for example, continues despite all official countermeasures, a large number of reconstruction plans will be invalidated. Instead of the projected large and urbanized central villages, there could eventually be "tiny and very sparsely scattered, though well-equipped settlements."³⁶ On the other hand, the rapid growth of the rural population in the south of Russia and the Asian republics could also invalidate reconstruction plans.

4) Drastic rural reconstruction would almost certainly have met with a negative response on the part of the population affected and would thereby have hurt production. Even the more moderate plans for rural reconstruction and resettlement show a distinct tendency to restrict private agricultural operations, or at least to render such operations more difficult by reason of the fact that private plots will no longer be directly adjacent to peasant dwellings but will be situated outside the villages. That the great majority of the rural population is opposed to such restrictions and encumbrances on private cultivation goes almost without saying. Furthermore, the probable drop in private agricultural production that would result would have undesirable consequences not only for the diet of the rural population but also for the supply of the "free" urban kolkhoz markets, which are still indispensable sources of food for the general public. On this score, the lesson of the Khrushchev era, during which severe restrictions were imposed on kolkhoz markets, is still fresh in Soviet memories.³⁷

Because of these and other disadvantages in living and working conditions which would be caused by radical rural resettlement, it is also quite possible that the end result might be an acceleration of the exodus from the countryside which has been gathering momentum since 1959. Family men and women, in particular, will dislike the idea of spending long periods of the summer in remote fields, where they would have to live in "field camps in the form of well-equipped hostels"³⁸ because it

³⁶ N. Verkhovsky, *Novyi mir*, No. 7, 1968, p. 209.

³⁷ See *Problems of Communism*, January-February 1968, pp. 22-30.

³⁸ *Ekonomika sel'skovo khoziaistva* (Moscow), No. 11, 1967, p. 14.



Пока не завезли кирпич...

Рисунок С. КУЗЬМИНА

BUILDING UP THE COUNTRYSIDE

Peasant construction workers stand idle, while building directors watch the "Production Schedule" blow away. Caption: "Bricks not yet delivered."

—From *Krokodil* (Moscow), No. 7, March 1966.

would take too long to transport them to and from their central villages. And even where field workers could be transported on a daily basis, they would be penalized by reason of the fact that the Soviet wage system does not take travel time into account. This was pointed out prior to the 1966-67 wave of propaganda in favor of resettlement by two Soviet authors, who observed:

... the population of these hamlets sometimes resists resettlement in large villages at all costs, because this automatically involves a big increase in working time by

lengthening the distance between home and place of work.³⁹

Clearly, at a time when the goals of the current agricultural five-year plan can be achieved only with great effort, if at all, the Soviet leadership can scarcely afford to provoke a sharply negative reaction on the part of the agricultural labor force.

Future Prospects

All these factors which influenced the October 1968 directive indicate that rural resettlement will be carried out only on a limited scale, at least for the present. There is no doubt that resettlement makes sense under certain conditions; for example, in depopulated or arid areas. In general, however, the development of an extensive year-round road system would do more to raise living standards in the villages. It would have the advantage not only of increasing the welfare of the rural population but also of providing an impetus to agriculture itself.

Unless there is a sudden new shift in the political line in the near future, it would appear that the sheer weight of social and economic circumstances will continue to prevent the introduction of the *agrorod* in the old Khrushchevian sense. Rather, rural reconstruction will probably be pushed on a selective and localized basis, with regional variations of intensity. Accordingly, any large apartment developments in rural centers are likely to be predominantly inhabited by so-called specialists—managers, office workers, teachers, medical personnel, drivers, and so on. Actually, some of these people

no longer care to have private agricultural plots and livestock holdings, wanting at most perhaps small fruit and flower gardens. In many cases, young people who have completed their regular education, and perhaps even had specialized training, will probably move away of their own accord from the gradually dying peripheral villages and gravitate to the central villages—a movement that can already be observed in many areas. Another element to be considered is that non-agricultural operations and occupations are gaining importance in the villages, just as the non-agricultural population constitutes a relatively increasing segment of the decreasing rural population.⁴⁰

The Soviet state and party will encourage and hasten such processes, partly by mild pressure but probably without trying to impose forcible and precipitous changes. The previously mentioned plenary session of the Soviet Architects' Association reached the following unanimous conclusion as to the future of rural construction: "Public services and the cultural and general conditions of living should be of the urban type. But they should be complemented by the advantages of village life!"⁴¹

It must be borne in mind here that for the great bulk of the Soviet rural population, private agricultural production is one of the "advantages of village life." Their attitude might be defined as follows: "Modernization, yes—proletarianization, no." Apparently the Soviet state and party are prepared to take account of this attitude, perhaps because they do not want to create an added source of popular unrest at a time when they are already confronted by various urgent problems, both domestic and international.

³⁹ M. Tikhomirov and I. Chernov, *Ekonomika selskovo khoziaistva*, No. 1, 1966, p. 105.

⁴⁰ See N. Verkhovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 209, 212, and K.-E. Wädekin, *Osteuropa-Wirtschaft* (Stuttgart), No. 1, 1968, pp. 1-25.

⁴¹ P. Vainshtein, *Selskaia zhizn*, Oct. 24, 1968, p. 2.

Mao, Marx, and the Future Society

By Lloyd Eastman

Marxists have never been lavish in describing the features of the ultimate Communist society. For one thing, they have felt that to do so in great detail would not be in keeping with the “scientific” character of their ideology. For another, they have always been relatively preoccupied with more immediate and pressing considerations—philosophical problems (such as a “correct” analysis of the enemy, be it “capitalism” or “imperialism”) as well as strategic concerns (such as the seizure or maintenance of power). But since the attainment of a perfect society is central to the Marxist *Weltanschauung*, they have never been able to refrain entirely from speculating about its nature.

The compulsion to describe the realm of the future, however sketchily, has been as strong in Marx’s leading disciples as it was in the master himself. And if, for example, Lenin and Trotsky disagreed with each other—and differed even from Marx—on many questions, the visions of Communist society held by all three men were essen-

tially alike, for their ideas derived from similar cultural backgrounds and similar revolutionary goals. Not so, the ideas of Mao Tse-tung. A comparison of Mao’s vision of the future society with that of Marx clearly reveals significant differences. Whereas Marx, for instance, believed in the ultimate perfectibility of human nature, Mao does not. And whereas Marx envisioned the disappearance of political authority in Communist society, Mao believes that the need for a dominant political leadership is inexorable in human society, whatever the degree of its advancement. The purpose of this paper is to describe the views of Marx and Mao regarding human nature and authority in a Communist society, and to demonstrate that their disparate nature derives precisely from the differences between the backgrounds of the two men and the goals they set out to attain.

Karl Marx’s initial and abiding preoccupation was the improvement of the human condition. He decried the degradation and dehumanization of mankind—he called it the “alienation” of man—that had been wrought by human greed and by man’s exploitation of man in capitalist society. Man seemed to have become something less than human; he was a mere commodity as a result

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