

Collectivisation

Stalin proposes the modernisation of agriculture. (April 1928)

Agriculture is developing slowly, comrades. It should be developing with gigantic strides, grain should become cheaper and harvests bigger, fertilisers should be applied to the utmost and mechanised production of grain should be developed at high speed. But that is not the case, comrades, and will not come about quickly.

Why?

Because our agriculture is a small-peasant economy, which does not lend itself readily to substantial improvement... we have about twenty-five million individual peasant farms... It is the most insecure, the most primitive, the most under-developed form of economy...

Can we adopt the policy of encouraging privately owned, large capitalist farms in the countryside? Obviously we cannot. It follows then we must do our utmost to develop in the countryside large farms of the type of the collective farms and state farms and to convert them into grain factories for the country organised on a modern scientific basis...

Stalin attacks the kulaks and threatens their liquidation. (January 1928).

I have been sent to you here in Siberia for a short visit. I have been instructed to help you fulfil the plan for grain procurement. I have also been instructed to discuss with you the prospects for the development of agriculture, the plan for developing the formation of collective farms and state farms in your territory.

You are no doubt aware that this year our country's grain accounts show a shortage, a deficit, of more than 100,000,000 poods (1 pood = c. 16 kilogrammes)...

You know, of course, what the effect of the deficit may be if it is not made good. The effect will be that our towns and industrial centres, as well as our Red Army, will be in grave difficulties; they will be poorly supplied and will be threatened with hunger. Obviously, we cannot allow that...

I have made a tour of the districts of your territory and have had the opportunity to see for myself that your people are not seriously concerned to help our country emerge from the grain crisis. You have had a bumper harvest, one might say a record one. Your grain surpluses this year are bigger than ever before. Yet the plan for grain procurements is not being fulfilled. Why? What is the reason?.. Look at the kulak farms: their barns and sheds are crammed with grain; grain is lying in the open under pent roofs for lack of storage space...

You say that the kulaks are unwilling to deliver grain, that they are waiting for prices to rise, and prefer to engage in unbridled speculation. That is true. But the kulaks... are demanding an increase in prices to three times those fixed by the government...

But there is no guarantee that the kulaks will not again sabotage the grain procurements next year. More, it may be said with certainty that so long as there are kulaks, so long will there be sabotage of grain procurements.

A village reacts to the threat of collectivisation, as recorded in the Russian novel VIRGIN SOIL UPTURNED by M. Sholokhov.

Men began slaughtering their cattle every night at Gremyachy. As soon as it grew dusk, one could hear the muffled bleating of sheep, the death squeal of a pig piercing the stillness, the whimper of a calf. Both peasants who had joined the collective farm and the individual farmers killed off their stock. They slaughtered oxen, sheep, pigs, even cows; they even slaughtered their breed animals. In two nights the head of cattle in Gremyachy was halved. Dogs began to drag offal about the streets, the grocery stall sold nearly two hundred poods of salt that had been lying on the shelves for eighteen months. "Kill, it's not ours now!" "Kill, the state butchers will do it if we don't!" "Kill, they won't give you meat to eat in the collective farm!" The insidious rumours spread around. And the villagers killed. They ate until they could eat no more. Young and old had the bellyache. At dinner-time the peasants' tables sagged under their loads of boiled and roasted meat. At dinner-time all mouths glistened with fat and there was belching enough for a funeral feast; and in every eye there was an owlish expression of drunken satiety.

V. Serge describes some bad effects of collectivisation.

Trainloads of deported peasants left for the icy North, the forests, the steppes, the deserts. These were whole populations, denuded of everything; the old folk starved to death in mid-journey, new-born babes were buried on the banks of the roadside, and each wilderness had its crop of little crosses of boughs or white wood. Other populations, dragging all their mean possessions on wagons, rushed towards the frontiers of Poland, Rumania, and China and crossed them - by no means intact, to be sure - in spite of the machine-guns... Agricultural technicians and experts were brave in denouncing the blunders and excesses; they were arrested in thousands and made to appear in huge sabotage trials so that responsibility might be unloaded on somebody.

Questions :

- 1) What is Stalin's aim?
- 2) What does he dislike about kulaks?
- 3) How does the collective farm affect them?
- 4) How did the kulaks react?

THE SOVIET UNION UNDER STALIN

(Study Extracts A and B and the accompanying statistics and then answer questions (a) to (c) which follow.

SOURCE A (from the writings of Stalin)

line 5

'The characteristic feature in the work of the Party during the past year is that we, as a Party, as the Soviet power, have developed an offensive along the whole front against capitalist elements in the countryside. To launch an offensive against the Kulaks means that we must smash them, eliminate them as a class Today we have an adequate political base for us to strike, to break their resistance and to replace them by the output of the collective farms'

SOURCE B (from the writings of an opponent of Stalin)

line 10

'Will it ever be known how terrible was the disorganization of agriculture that resulted? Rather than hand over their livestock to the kolkhoz, the peasants slaughter the beasts, sell the meat and make boots out of the leather. Through the destruction of the livestock the country passes from poverty to famine . . . bread cards in the cities, black market . . . trainloads of deported peasants left for the icy North . . . in seven years 1929-36 over five million families disappeared'

SOURCE C

Agricultural Statistics

	<u>1928</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933</u>
Grain Harvest (millions of tons)	73.3	71.7	83.5	69.5	68.6	68.4
Grain taken by the state (millions of tons)	10.8	16.1	22.1	22.5	18.5	22.6
Livestock - cattle (million head)	70.5	67.1	52.5	47.9	40.7	38.9
pigs (million head)	26	20.4	3.6	14.4	13.6	12.1
sheep, goats (million head)	146.7	147.6	168.8	77.7	52.1	80.7

By 1931, 56% of all farms were collectivized.

By 1932, 62% of all farms were collectivized.

Industrial Statistics

	<u>1928</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1940</u>
Electric power (billion kwts.)	5.0	16.3	48.3
Crude oil (millions tons)	11.6	21.5	31.1
Coal (millions tons)	35.5	76.3	165.9
Steel (millions tons)	4.2	6.9	18.3
Locomotives (units)	479	948	928

THE SOVIET UNION UNDER STALIN

- (a) (i) Why was Stalin prepared to "smash and eliminate" the class to which he refers in line 4? (3)
- (ii) Stalin's use of the phrase "an adequate political base" in line 5 refers to his removal of possible political rivals. Who were his rivals for power following the death of Lenin and how did he deal with his main rival? (5)
- (iii) Write down the two words in Source A which are the key to Stalin's agricultural policies. What did this involve in practice? (1 + 3)
- (b) (i) How do you account for the "disorganisation" referred to in line 8? (2)
- (ii) How does the information provided in Source C support the description of this "disorganisation"? (5)
- (c) (i) What name is usually given to the system of improving Soviet industry during the years covered by the industrial statistics in Source C? (1) 7
- (ii) How do the statistics for industrial production shown in Source C illustrate (a) the priorities in Soviet industry and (b) the success it achieved? (2 + 4)
- (iii) Describe the methods used to encourage the growth of industry during this period. (4)

TOTAL: 30