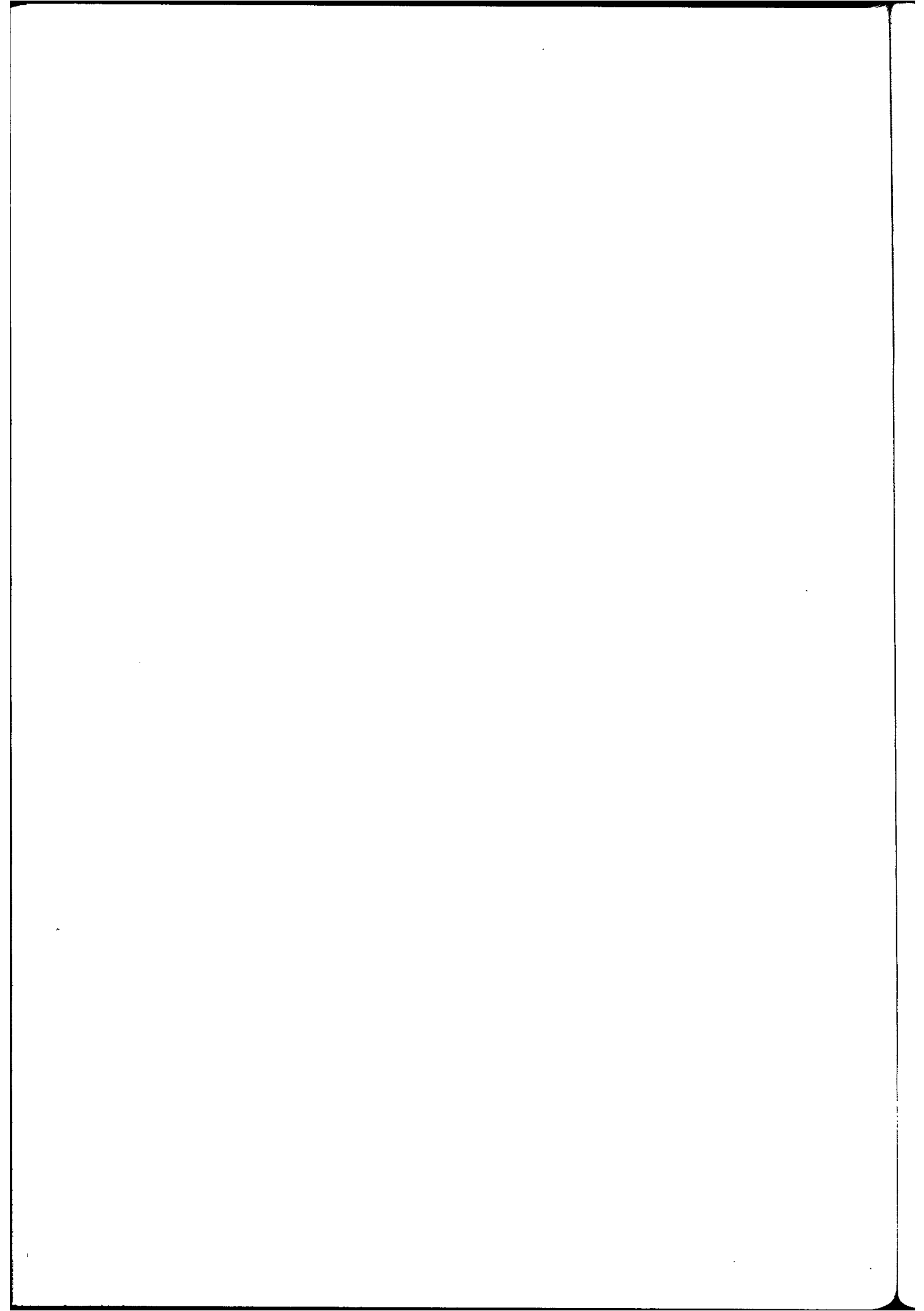


must have a desire for unceasing modernization, for economical consolidation, for practising an intensive agriculture.

There are some signs that such a farmer is emerging in Romanian agriculture, however he is far from being, at this time, the central figure in the world of the village, in rural life.

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New People — the Awkward Class in Russian Agriculture

The socio-economic transformations in Russian agriculture have given rise to the questions of family and farmer systems, of organization, of production and labour in that sector of the national economy. In the Russian agrarian theories and economic practice a similar phenomenon was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century, with P.A. Stolypin's attempted reform of agriculture due to introduction therein of farmer-type holdings. And though the reform was not completed and its results were assessed in many different ways, the interest in it has not abated until this day. In one of the interviews concerning his activities, A. Ruckoy, Vice-President of Russia, has said: 'By an irony of fate, I am carrying on the reform begun by P.A. Stolypin.' This refers directly to A. Ruckoy's book (*The Agrarian Reform in Russia*). The problem of an independent peasant farm operating on the basis of a family and farmer organization of labour was handled and evolved, in its theoretical aspect, by the Russian specialists in agricultural economics grouped in the school of such organizers of production as Tchelincev, Tchayanov, Makarov and others. In spite of the world-wide recognition for the achievements and works of the school, in Russia as such they were declared — in the twenties and thirties — as harmful from both ideological and practical point of view. The authors of the dissertations concerned were victimized together along with other specialists in the theory of agriculture, of anti-Stalinist orientation.

The crisis in the Russian economy has made the problem of development roads in agriculture reappear like a phoenix rising from, it would seem, cold ashes. The repeated experiments — whose object was the Russian peasant — deprived him of the ability to run his holding, and also of his enterprising attitude and initiative. According to the calculations of A. Vyepriyev, expert in practical aspects of kolkhoz and sovkhov economy, agriculture was subject — in the period of Soviet rule — to 27 minor or major reorganizations. Peasantry — that 'awkward class' causing dissonance in the programmes and schemes of the bureaucratic structures of the Soviet state

— were converted, in the course of decades, into hired labour absolutely indifferent to the results of their work and its social significance.

And so, what roads have been taken to mould, in the rural areas in Russia, a new social stratum capable of restoring agriculture? The basis of the most diverse concepts is the key problem of land ownership — the number one problem in whole of Russia's history. The transformations initiated in 1990, by the reform of agrarian relations, with a limited sale of land, and the restoration of the Institute for Private Land Ownership, offered an incentive to the development of farmer's movements orientated on reinstating the peasant as owner and manager, thus making him responsible for the results of his work and means of production.

The term 'awkward class' was applied to peasants by Karl Marx and Teodor Shanin, Professor of the University of Manchester, a contemporary specialist in rural sociology and author of the book *The Awkward Class*, devoted to Russian peasantry in the years 1910–1925¹.

Now, what new qualities are being contributed to the socio-economic life by the 'new people' mentioned above? Farmers who have achieved economic self-dependence put an end to the situation in which the results of one's work were detached from the ownership of the means of production. The previously observed lack of interest in the effects of one's labour is waning, while care in one's own farm is being restored and so is the initiative and enterprising attitude toward one's occupation. The right to land ownership is changing the visage of the agricultural worker, formerly a landless one. Farms are conducive to evolution of a specific rural way of living in which production, everyday life and participation in culture form a harmonious whole. A peasant (farmer) holding creates special conditions of life, aims and interests bringing together all its members. In the opinions of farmers as such, the status of the peasant family is rising. A tendency is manifest to revival of the institution of patrimony. What is to be noted as well is the beginning of a revival of 'family nests' — making a characteristic trait of the Russian countryside. The title deed acquired, the new farmers are shaping their social status once annihilated as a result of liquidation of the Institute of Private Land Ownership and of collectivization of agriculture.

A discriminant of the new legal status is the position of the owner of land. Its basis is ownership of both the means of production and of the product. This is a factor of great significance to the Russian peasant because it was precisely lack orientation in matters concerning ownership rights that was at the roots of the attitude of the Russian people toward property. Infringement of the rights of the community (a kolkhoz) was regarded as condemnable whereas less respect was shown for personal property. Today,

¹Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class. Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910–1925*, Oxford 1972, The Clarendon Press.

as well, cases are rather frequently recorded of treading down and grazing farmers' crops, damaging production buildings and stealing away products from peasant farmsteads, all that being done under the demagogic slogan of struggle against the return of the kulak (farmer). The consciousness of the peasant — taught for centuries past that land belonged to God and not to people, what used to be confirmed by numerous Russian thinkers (to mention but Lyev Tolstoy who shared that opinion and sharply criticised Stolypin on that ground) — was transformed under the Soviet rule in such a manner that God was substituted therein by the state. That mentality makes an essential obstacle on the road to the development of a farmer-type economy in the rural communities. Moreover, it exerts an essential impact on assessment of the farmers' movement.

What is also worth noting are the other positive elements of farm agriculture namely: the growth of self-dependence in the activities carried on, realization by farmers of responsibility for their holdings, departure from orientation on extensive farming (thinking not in terms of tracts of land but in terms of maximum increase in yields per hectare), and the already noticeable growth of competitive power of farms with regard to sovkhozes and kolkhozes. And this should result — in the long run — in enhanced elasticity and competitiveness of the new form of farming.

The development dynamics of the farmers movement in Russia is manifest in the clear-cut increase in the number of farms. Suffice it to mention that while the number of those farmer-type holdings registered in Russia amounted to 231 as of April 1st, 1990, the corresponding figure for January 1st, 1991 was 4,433 and for January 1st, 1992 already 50,000 to rise to 160,000 by December 1st of the 1992.

The regions with the biggest increase in the number of farms are the following: the Krasnodar territory (krai) 10,000; the districts (okrughi) of Rostov, Saratov, Volgograd 4,000–6,000; those of Novosibirsk, Moscow and the Altai territory — more than 3,000 (and some 800 in the district of Ivanovo).

The acreage of the farms vary from 60 to 90 hectares in the district of Astrakhan, Volgograd, Orenburg and the Altai territory. The corresponding figures for Buryat, Kalmuck and the Chitenskiy district is 100 hectares or more (mainly seasonal pastures); and in the areas beyond the black earth (chernozem) the average is around 20 hectares.

Legal and ownership relations (on the basis of statistical data as per mid-1992):

- land making a property 25 per cent;
- land in perpetual usufruct 58 per cent;
- leased land 17 per cent.

The share of farms in the global agricultural production exceeded 4.6 per cent in 1991 and amounted to 10 per cent in 1992 (estimate data).

According to relevant forecasts, the number of the farms discussed is to range from 250,000 to 300,000 in the immediate future to grow to 3,000,000 in the more distant one.

Many of the farmers are but on their way to well-being. Moreover, in the greater parts of the regions theirs are not the specialized farms. Their production is of seasonal character and the degree to which they are provided with technical equipment — insufficient (with an average of 48 tractors, 25 motorcars and 5 combine harvesters per 100 farms).

The rise and development of farmer holdings. The problem of the development roads of that type of agriculture calls for answering of a few questions and, first and foremost that: Who becomes a farmer? The social image of the Russian farmer is differentiated. In consonance with Russian legislation a town dweller may become a farmer like an inhabitant of the rural areas. The difference consists in that a kolkhoz or sovkhov worker, who withdraws from it, can start farming on his own, having first been apportioned land and adequate assets in money. The average area of apportioned land varies in Russia from 13 hectares to 15 hectares and in the Ivanovo district from 5.5 to 8 hectares. That area can be enlarged by way of lease or purchase of additional land.

Now a town dweller who has declared willingness to run a farm, and has submitted a relevant economic programme to the Regional Council which exercises control over land, obtains it from the Regional Land Apportionment Fund.

In each of the above mentioned cases the land concerned should be conveyed in a consolidated form. That requirement causes numerous disputes and complications between the new farmer and the workers who have remained in the kolkhoz or sovkhov and often leads to lawsuits.

The development of farmer holdings is connected with the process of privatization of agriculture. Privatization of kolkhozes and sovkhoves which has already been undertaken is orientated on their conversion into collective enterprises with assets in kind or into associations of a comparative character. The worker may, however, leave the newly organized structure and receive in such a case land and assets in money.

The possessor of the assets ought to notify the committee for privatization about the intended way of utilization. There are a few possibilities in that respect: the assets may be used for running the peasant farm; they may be contributed as well as initial capital of a limited liability company, a stock company or a cooperative and, finally, may be sold to other workers or to the council administering the area concerned and regulating land ownership relations therein.

The relatively small scope of the experience gained in the course of organizing the farmer-type holdings has already given the grounds for the assumption that revival is possible of the farmers' (peasants') cooperatives

engaged in activities in the area of production, trade, repairs, services and building. Such possibilities also exist in respect of establishment companies in the case of which the assumption has been adopted of the distribution of profits and attainment of dividends according to the contributed assets brought in whether in land or in capital (livestock).

A phenomenon not encountered previously is the peasants' participation in joint stock companies (kolkhozes and sovkhoses can be converted into such bodies). Experience has shown that in the case of transformation of kolkhozes into joint stock companies, the controlling interest has 50–60 per cent of the shares, the remaining part of shares being distributed among workers with due consideration of their contribution and period of service (private joint stock companies) or sold outside the kolkhoz (public joint stock companies). Assessment of the contribution of work is effected with consideration of the average yearly remuneration of all workers in the past three years and the amount of the value of capital equipment per rouble of that remuneration. This index is compared with the mean yearly remuneration of the respective workers. On that route the original share is established, to be next, multiplied by the number of the years of service. This enables determination of the share of each of the workers in the value of capital equipment and, consequently, also the amount of adequate dividend the value of that share. The dividend is distributed among workers with no less than five-year period of service, if the profitability of the farm exceeds 30 per cent, but if the index of profitability is lower, or the balance shows a loss, no one receives a dividend. The right to achieve a profit proportional to the amount of his own shares is held by workers with no less than 20 years of service.

Who are those 'new people' in terms of their social status? Who becomes a farmer? Considering quantum indices, there are the grounds for the statement that the greater part of the persons concerned are the inhabitants of towns or workers' settlements who have family or material connections with the rural population. There are also among them persons with a rural background who have not become rooted in the urban environment. (Migration from town to the country embraced 840,000 persons in the year 1990 and 802,000 in 1991). The inhabitants of the rural areas call them 'townsfolk' and their attitude towards the latter is marked with reserve and in some cases even with hostility. The research carried out in numerous districts of Russia has shown that the inhabitants of the rural areas are often against conveyance of land to arrivals from town. Not infrequently the view is expressed that good intentions do not make a farmer. The correctness of such opinions is corroborated by the following data: According to the economists' calculations in 1992, ten per cent of all farmer-type holdings were likely to go to ruin, more than 3,000 farmers returned their land and in some regions of Russia cases were recorded of

farmers having being deprived of land though that was inconsistent with the binding legal regulations which stipulate that a farmer can be deprived of it, by the regional committee for the problems of agrarian reform but after three years of farming. The causes of that phenomenon are a shortage of labour, of means of production and equipment, of some farmers' failure to be granted credits, and management. In some instances farmers who had obtained credit preferences and tax reliefs for five year period gave up farming and got engaged in trade.

Now, as regards the attitude of the rural population to new farmers it is worth pointing out the extreme manifestation of intolerance, namely the theft of agricultural products and the damage done to farm buildings, that which makes the owner to protect his farmstead and property. Hence, for example, the farmers' of Orenburg district application to the authorities to be granted a license for possession of small arms for defence purposes and obtainment of it.

Apart from town dwellers readiness to run a farm is also declared by soldiers shifted over to the reserves because of reduction of the armed forces. Hence the resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation on assistance to soldiers released to the reserves, who want to establish peasant holdings of a farmer type and also allocation by the Government of 1,500,000,000 roubles for the development of such farms. Some military bodies were instructed to carry out building work on infrastructure and dwelling houses for the new farmsteads and the local authorities put under an obligation to expand the network of training courses and agricultural preparation schools for the former soldiers.

The third significant group, whose economic situation and conditions of life approximate those of farmers, makes that part of the rural population which has initiated this direction of transformations. The inhabitants of the rural areas have their homesteads, connections and infields and so taking up credits they risk less than new farmers. Organizing of a new farm is possible for them, due to their possessing assets in kind or money in a kolkhoz or sovkhoz. Moreover, they command of adequate skills, are familiar with the principle and technique of field-crop production and of zootechnics what allows them to engage in vegetable production or animal breeding. Particularly well suited for the job are the former leaseholders and persons who used to implement commissioned tasks and, in addition, have managerial abilities. Farm lease is liable to make a stage enabling transition to the new pattern.

Experience gained in farm lease in the districts of Pytlakov and Pskov has shown that the former leaseholders laid the foundations of the farmer system.

In the instances of reorganization of agricultural enterprises, the farm labourers participate more willingly in formation of agricultural compa-

nies and cooperative farms. In the district of Tula (Shtchekinskiy region), for example, a kolkhoz was dissolved in 1990 and its land and property distributed among its former personnel (each worker having obtained 11 hectares of land and shares in money of the value equivalent to 110,000 roubles). By virtue of shareholders' decision, the Pyrogovskaya farmers' company was set up. Having started its activities with 21 incorporated farms, in 1992 the company grouped 43 farms and 245 workers. A part of the kolkhoz property — covering the fleet of motor vehicles, workshops, building department and stores remained in the common pool making an agency engaged in services. Its operation, based on self-financing system, consists in rendering — against payment — services to farmers, supplying them with spare parts, fuels, lubricants, fertilizers and also in repairing agricultural machines and equipment. The current matters of the company are handled by management (director, three accountants, a farm adviser, an engineer and a physician) paid by the company. Their salaries amount to 10 per cent of its yearly income (5,000,000 roubles in 1992). Conscious of the problems connected with marketing of its products, the company took the decision to purchase a milk processing line, slaughter plant, a technological line for the production of goats and also to open a food store of its own. As early as 1992, the company repaid the credits taken up. The yields of field crops have almost doubled, meat production did not decrease whereas a threefold growth was recorded of the number of agricultural technical equipment. The inhabitants of the village started rejoining the former kolkhoz — a cooperative now.

Farmers' companies have also been rising at the regional level — at the Agricultural board. This is an important stage in the development of farmer-type holdings because they are in a position, at present, to resolve the general problems connected with the infrastructure of farms, e.g. road construction, providing of farmsteads with telephones, transport facilities, and those for storing of products, in consonance with the principles of cooperation. Those companies are liable to form a basis for the establishment of a credit bank which would deal not only with the granting of credits but also act as pledge of agricultural real property, what is tantamount to the development of relations in the area of mortgage. In the district of Ivanovo similar companies have been formed in the regions of Kyneshem, Rodnik, Komsomolsk and Shuysk. The companies are an essential support to the farmer holdings.

The economic transformations taking place in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses, and the rise of a new stratum in Russian agriculture have created conditions for political consolidation of the rural population which has established an organization bearing the character of a peasant party (The Peasant Party with Y. Chernyienko as its President). Moreover, a peasant grouping has also been formed in the Russian Parliament (Chairman:

M. Lapshin). Apart from that farmers have set up the Association of Peasant Farms (AKKOR) with V. Bashmachkov elected as its chairman. Periodical congresses are held of farmers' organizations. The year 1992 saw such events in Suzdal and Ivanovo and the farmers' congress in Moscow. Those assemblies turn to Parliament with demands for state protection of farmers' movement; for credits and supplies of production materials and technical equipment.

Now as far as the political programmes are concerned there is to be observed in the peasant movement lack of orientation concerning the choice of its conceivable political allies. The district unions of peasants occasionally organize pickets condemning the price policy pursued with regard to agricultural products and demanding maintenance of subsidies to the prices of staple crops. It is a kind of a paradox that peasants as such shun political contests and often do not participate in those actions. Another illustration of inconsistency on putting forward demands are the congresses of the Agricultural Union: The first Congress postulated for 100 per cent of agricultural production being covered by orders and for full safeguarding of the supplies of necessary production materials. The 2nd came out with requests for abolishment of the orders with simultaneous securing of the supplies of the said materials. And, finally, the All-Russian Congress of the Agrarian Union has decided to wage a consistent struggle for free prices in the agricultural produce market.

Now what should be taken into account when considering the process of the peasantry transformation into a political force is the fact that the successive transformations in agriculture have caused the peasants reserved attitude toward political movements and also their indifference to, or simply dislike of, further changes of that kind. And this is precisely one of the factors which should be eliminated if staking on the development of farmer holdings in Russia.