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FROM : Ambassador, Bucharest

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WASHINGTON.

September 26, 1955

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SUBJECT: How One Peasant is Meeting His Quotas.

A peasant from the vicinity of Pagaras in Transylvania was in Bucharest last week to buy 100 kilograms of wheat. He said that he needed it to satisfy his collection quotas. Normally he would have bought the wheat in his own locality in case he could not meet quotas with his own production, but this year there is none to be had, since the whole district had a poor wheat crop. In the Bucharest peasant market the peasant will be able to get his wheat for 3.00 lei per kilo. This means an outlay for him of 300.00 lei, plus third-class train fare both ways amounting to about 60.00 lei; 360.00 lei in all. When he surrenders the wheat he should receive about 28.00 lei for the delivery, at 0.28 lei per kilogram. (See Despatch No. 56, August 31, 1955.) Out of this he will have to pay for transportation of the wheat to the receiving base. This will leave about 20 lei for him. The total cost of the transaction to him will be about 340 lei.

The peasant feels that he will be able to hold on to his land this year but is afraid that if next year's harvest is bad he will have to give up and join a collective or association. He reports that his mother, a widow with a tiny farm, is giving up the struggle this year and joining a collective. The pressure of agricultural taxes coming on top of quotas she could not meet was too much for her.

A local contact living in Bucharest reports that a peasant who delivers milk to her from his small farm outside Bucharest has asked her to pay her milk bill in advance this month because the agricultural tax is coming due and he needs an unusually large amount of money to pay it.

COMMENT

The ridiculousness of a system which compels the purchase and delivery of small amounts of grain from one part of the country to another merely to be collected and stored (and perhaps brought back eventually to Bucharest, where it was bought) is almost too monumental for comment. It is an illustration of the way that gradual collectivization is carried on. If the quotas do not

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defeat the peasant, the agricultural tax is there ready to overcome his already weakened resistance. The tax even causes difficulties for those "rich" peasants who can sell produce in Bucharest.

It is interesting to note the relationship between bad harvests and further socialization. In general, socialization, at least in Rumania, seems to mean an unproductive agriculture. Conversely, poor harvests increase the pressure on the peasants and speed up socialization. Insofar as the regime wants socialization it must want poor harvests, at least in the private sector. Except for brief crisis periods, such as that marked by the remissions of arrears in taxes and quotas in September 1953, the contradictory policies of trying at the same time both to socialize agriculture and increase production continue.

For the Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Thomas F. Hootor

Thomas F. Hootor
Second Secretary of Legation

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