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Stefan Hedlund

Stalin and the Peasantry: A Study in Red*

Relations between state and peasantry have always been problematic, in all societies and during all historical periods. Every economy, embarking on a path of development built on the division of labor, will rapidly find itself in a position where a shrinkingpart of the population produces food and a growing part produces other commodities. It then becomes a necessity for the latter group to trade with the former, i.e. the urban population must exchange goods for food in order to survive. In this relation the peasantry will have a form of veto power. By threats of withdrawal into subsistence it will have a stranglehold on the urban population, which does not have the same option.

That this very basic dilemma of unequal terms does not disappear with the elevation of the economy onto a higher level of development, is amply illustrated by the maze-like agricultural policies of the US as well as of the EEC.

In this article we shall dwell on the perhaps most spectacular example of such a conflict, that of the Soviet mass collectivization in 1929—32, when Stalin thought himself able to solve once and for all the Gordian Knot of relations to the peasantry.

In the Soviet case the basic conflict is further complicated by a political dimension. The peasant has always been an outsider in Marxian analysis, all the way from Marx's statement on 'the idiocy of rural life',[1] and it is also symptomàtic that the revolution in 1917 was considered to have arrived at the wrong point in time, before the peasantry had been turned into a proletariat. We shall not go futher into these questions[2] but rather start with the premise, that at the time of revolution, the Bolsheviks started building a new state without a clearly formulated program on agriculture, and maybe even without any clear understanding of agricultural matters proper. In spite of all the difficulties encountered in the relations with the peasantry, we cannot deduct any basic change in this attitude nor a serious wish to deal with the 'accursed problem'.

Apart from the absence of a clearly formulated policy or strategy on agriculture, our understanding of this highly important period is also complicated by major problems in the availability and quality of source materials. It is a fact

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that the 1920s were characterized by a very open, and sometimes intellectually highly advanced economic and political debate,[3] but after Stalin's personal ascension to power and the birth of the 'cult of personality' (*kult lichnosti*) in 1930, all doors were shut, and research was completely subordinated to party policy. Consequently, the history of mass collectivization came to be written against a background of fake statistics and biased interpretations, and unfortunately Western research as well has come to be riddled with the same problems.

The main ingredients of the Soviet interpretation are, (a) that the Soviet Union was forced to achieve rapid industrialization, largely by its own means, (b) that the needs for investment in industry were substantial, (c) that a massive transfer of resources from agriculture to industry was consequently necessary, and (d) that mass collectivization of the peasantry was the only way to achieve this. Collectivization is thus presented as a necessary evil. Admitted, sufferings were great and many excesses were committed, but all was necessary for the survival of the Revolution and the Union in the face of the threat of military intervention by foreign imperialists.

Our endeavor here shall be to challenge all of these postulates. Departing from recent research and recently available Soviet archive materials, we shall instead present a picture where personal power and political restrictions enter as main explanatory variables, and where mass collectivization is seen as a tragic and unnecessary consequence of Stalinism. This is obviously a tall order, and our argumentation will necessarily be somewhat long. To clarify matters we shall divide it into four parts. First we shall set the stage by presenting an outline of the main events and thus supply the building blocks for our analysis. We will then deal with the ideological dimension, to see how class analysis was used as a smoke screen to cover up actions that were motivated by the desire of political leaders to stay in power. While this part attempts to explain how and why collectivization came about, the third part will attempt to show that the traditional belief, that a large scale transfer of resources out of agriculture took place in order to fuel the industrialization drive, might be a myth. It is even possible to construct a case for the opposite, i.e. that mass collectivization led to a situation where agriculture was actually a burden to industrialization, rather than an engine of growth. The final part of the article will then be used to draw conclusions on the importance and transferability of the Soviet experience of collectivization in this new light.

Red Tractors Over Russia

Not only Soviet, but also tsarist Russian agricultural development deviates sharply from that of other nations. While, in the nineteenth century, other European nations had progressed far in the development and restructuring of agriculture,[4] the Russian scene was still dominated by serfdom, and according to some writers even by serfdom that had still not fully matured.[5] We shall thus

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take the emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861 as a starting point for our account of how the Bolshevik agricultural inheritance emerged, and then show how their policy finally led to the dire consequences in 1929—32.

Russian Peasants

The origins of Russian serfdom are shrouded in uncertainty, and we shall not attempt to penetrate that veil here.[6] What is important for our purposes, is on the one hand its large extent, and on the other the fierce resistance to its abolition from the landed classes. It should be pointed out that far from all peasants were serfs. At the 1858 census the agricultural population was divided into four categories. There were about 20 million private serfs, another 2 million imperial serfs, and about 1 million engaged in various forms of mining and factory work, with mixed ownership. Furthermore, there were 18 million 'state peasants', who were formally free. In reality the tsar could make a gift of their persons, thus converting them into serfs. While their freedom was thus partly an illusion, there still was a major difference between them and true serfs.[7]

The most important group was the private, or manorial, serfs. They had the harshest conditions, and also accounted for the most disturbances. Apart from pure domestic serfs, completely lacking land, there were two forms of such subjection. Most common was pure day-labor, *barschina,* which in 1861 accounted for almost three-fourths of all private serfs.[8] These serfs had their 'own' land,[9] and apart from the labor services performed on the manor (normally three days per week) they led their own life within the village community, the *mir*.

The other form of subjection, *obrok,* was most common in areas where yields from agriculture were low, and consisted of quitrents instead of labor services. To pay the rent, the serfs were frequently forced to seek employment elsewhere, such as in a nearby village, which benefited the squire, in terms of a higher income, and also the serfs, in terms of more freedom. Most important for our purposes is that this provided the first possibilities of beginning accumulation, and thus of economic differentiation of the peasantry.

Even if contemporary debates showed that serf labor was economically inferior to free labor, and that abolition of serfdom was a precondition for the development of Russian agriculture,[10] this opinion does not seem to have been shared *in toto* by the landed classes. They experienced the loss of serf labor or quitrents as a threat, and fought its abolition tooth and nail. When the emancipation legislation was actually passed, intense lobbying had watered it down so that many serfs actually ended up as free peasants but with less land.[11]

One consequence of the resistance from the landed classes, was that the situation of the newly freed peasantry rapidly deteriorated. Not only had their hopes for a land reform been frustrated and many also found themselves actually with less land, but to this also came high taxes and high redemption payments for the land that now was 'theirs'.[12] Towards the end of the century the

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situation had deteriorated so far that the previously largely passive Russian peasantry started getting violent. The twentieth century opened with peasant disturbances, and the abortive revolution of 1905 was largely a peasant uprising. The peasantry saw 'more land' as a panacea to all their troubles, and their growing land hunger would have very serious consequences.

Another trend that would also have serious consequences, was the beginning economic differentiation amongst the peasantry. What had started with *obrok*, and grown somewhat after emancipation, in spite of the economic hardships, would now really accelerate. The measures that were taken after 1905 led to substantially widening income differentials. The Stolypin program meant 'a wager, not on the needy and drunken, but on the sturdy and strong'.[13] Provisions in the law made it possible for single households to leave the village community, the mir, to get hereditary possession of their land, and to get credits for expansion. During the period 1906—15, 2.6 million households out of a total of 12 million broke loose from the mir, and established themselves as free peasants.[14]

The impact of this program is debated, and statistics on actual development have been challenged. It is questioned whether it would have had any important long run effects, had it not been interrupted by the revolution in 1917.[15] What is of importance for our purposes, however, is that the reform resulted in a sharpening of the economic differentiation amongst the peasantry. The 'Stolypin peasants' set themselves up as agrarian capitalists, renting land and hiring labor, and buying out their less successful neighbors. Thus precisely that process of differentiation was started, which the emancipation legislators half a century earlier had wished to avoid. Efficient peasants were accumulating and less efficient ones were turned into a rural proletariat.

When the revolution of 1917 was drawing near, the agricultural scene was dominated by two important trends. On the one hand there was the growing hunger for more land, and on the other there was the growing economic differentiation. Obviously, this was a highly inflammable mixture, with the poorer peasants resenting not only the landlords and the government, but also their better-off neighbors. In February 1917 the mixture exploded, and even if it is hardly correct to call it a peasant revolution, the peasant element was certainly important. In Lewin's words it was a 'proletarian revolution flanked by a peasant war.'[16] Yet, in the eyes of the peasantry, the revolution failed to deliver. The large estates remained, and peasant holdings were unchanged. Once again the hopes for a land reform had been frustrated. This, however, would be the last time.

Peasant discontent was skilfully exploited by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Already in May, Lenin wrote in *Pravda* that the entire 'agrarian question' was all about 'whether the peasants on the spot should at once seize all the land without paying the landlords any rent and without waiting for the Constituent Assembly (which was to be convened in November) or whether they should not.[17] This policy proved to be a great success in the short run. Support for the Bolsheviks

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amongst the predominantly rural population grew rapidly, and by October they were ready to take over. The Great October Revolution was a relatively smooth and virtually bloodless affair.

Soviet Peasants

One of the very first things done by the Bolsheviks after the revolution was the nationalization of all land and declaration of the principle of *trudopolzovanie,* i.e. that the occupier of the land should also be the tiller, all to prevent the renting of land and the hiring of labor. The price for previous support had to be paid, however, and the peasants immediately started a land reform of their own, forcefully evicting the landlords and sharing between themselves not only land but also whatever buildings and capital equipment that was not burnt. Bolshevik agricultural policy was reduced to *ex post* legalization of peasant actions.

A first step toward the creation of an explicit policy was taken in 1918. Under the pressures of Civil War and foreign intervention, food supply for the army and the cities threatened to break down completely and a system of forceful requisitions, the so called *prodrazverstka,* was introduced.[18] In the short run the situation improved, but the peasants resisted fiercely — by reducing sowings and by concealing grain — and in 1921 the entire system was on the verge of a total collapse. Policy was reversed and the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced.[19]

The events during these three years of 'War Communism' are of crucial importance for future development. The previous basis for relations with the peasantry had been Lenin's priciple of *smychka,* an alliance between workers and peasants. Together they should overthrow landlords and capitalists. During the first years of War Communism this alliance had to be broken, and was replaced by an alleged alliance between workers and poor peasants, directed against the better-off peasants who were said to conceal grain on a large scale, in order to 'starve the revolution'. Indications, however, are that it was an unholy alliance, with the poor peasants taking the opportunity to loot their neighbors, for personal gain rather than out of devotion to the Bolshevik cause. We shall return to this below.

For the Bolsheviks, NEP meant an almost total about-face. Stimulated by the liberalizations, or rather by the break-down of state control, the peasants strengthened their position. Agricultural production increased substantially, but so did peasant consumption and the food situation for the army and the cities did not improve markedly. Worst of all, capitalist modes of production started to spread in rural areas. The better-off peasants — the *kulaks* — expanded, and private traders, the so called NEP-men, dominated trade, making large profits.

NEP reached its peak in 1925, after which time relations between the peasants and the Bolsheviks deteriorated rapidly. In 1927 there was a major

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crisis in food supply, and the policy of forceful extractions was reintroduced. Peasant resistance was again fierce, but this time there was to be no retreat. Stalin had determined once and for all to break the peasants' stranglehold. Requisitions were repeated in 1928, and in 1929 they culminated in the campaign for mass collectivization.[20] On July 30, 1930 the old village community — the *mir* — was dissolved, and the *kolkhoz*, the Collective Farm, declared as the only acceptable form of agricultural production, alongside with the State Farm, the *sovkhoz*. The debate over the role of the peasantry in the Soviet economy was closed.

Necessary?

Were there then no alternatives? Was forced collectivization and all that went with it a necessary consequence of the October revolution? Or, perhaps more controversially, was Stalin and Stalinism a necessary basis for Soviet development?

As we have hinted above, we shall argue that this was not the case, that there were alternatives, but that a tubborn adherence to inconsistent and politically determined goals, rapidly exhausted available alternatives, and in the end *made* collectivization necessary. What we shall be mainly concerned with here are arguments of the type *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. The fact that NEP followed upon War Communism does not necessarily mean that there is any form of causality between these two policies. Any attempt to explain the various events of the 1920s as elements of a consistent Soviet development strategy, can only serve to confuse the picture and complicate our understanding of this important decade. Yet, it is to a large extent precisely this type of reasoning that has formed the basis for much of Western writings on the subject.

The 'traditional' explanation of mass collectivization starts with the premise that the Soviet Union was seriously threatened by foreign intervention. A war with the imperialists — aiming to crush the revolution — was imminent. Consequently a policy of rapid industrialization, with priority for heavy industry, was necessary. Only thus could sufficient military power be achieved to guarantee survival as a nation. From this follows in turn that a massive capital formation in industry was necessary, and the only way to achieve this was by a radical restructuring of agriculture, in order to bring about the necessary transfer of resources.

Against this background, the process that led to collectivization can be seen as a 'systematic sequence of choices',[21] all forming logical components in a Soviet development strategy. To bring about the called-for transfer of resources, it was imperative to force the peasantry into accepting disadvantageous terms of trade between agriculture and industry. This implied (a) state control over trade in agricultural produce (requisitions), (b) state control over the production of agricultural produce (to prevent peasants from withdrawing into subsistence), and (c) joining the peasants together in collectives in order, on the one hand to

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bring down the number of units to control, and on the other to create a collective responsibility for fulfilling delivery obligations, much in the same way as with redemption payments in the old *mir*.

On the face of it, this chain of arguments is logically flawless, and thus forms a highly appealing explanation for the events that took place. Collectivization becomes necessary for the survival of the Soviet Union, and the only remaining controversy becomes whether or not it was worth the lives of the 5—10 million people that perished in the process.

More recent research, however, has seriously questioned *all* the components of this explanation,[22] from the imminent risk of armed conflict,[23] to the necessity of massive capital formation in industry[24] and the necessity of centralizing *production* in agriculture.[25] Above all, the wisdom generally of applying massive force to the peasantry has been questioned.[26]

Well aware of the fact that we cannot possibly make full justice to this considerable debate on these few pages,[27] our ambition shall be to present the main focus of criticism, and against this background to present a picture of mass collectivization as a 'sudden, desperate lunge to extricate the leadership from a deep economic and political crisis, a crisis which was largely of its own making.'[28]

Our argumentation will be presented in two steps. First we shall study the ideological dimension, and argue that while early Bolshevik policy on the relations with the peasantry lacked all logic and consistency, it gradually developed into one that systematically aimed at breaking peasant political power, i.e. peasant control over food supply. We shall argue that the ideological debate was based more on political strife amongst the leadership over the policy of industrialization, than on a serious debate over the role of the peasantry as *producers* in a future Soviet society.

Next, we shall turn to the economic dimension, and here we will deal with two problems. First we shall argue that all attempts to present collectivization as a way to increase productivity in agriculture can be dismissed out of hand. Secondly, and our case is less solid at this point, we shall question the traditional view of agriculture as the engine of industrial growth. Much evidence points in the direction that the transfer of resources out of agriculture was far less than commonly believed, and maybe even negative.

Finally, we shall summarize our arguments and see what conclusions can be drawn, on the one hand regarding the interpretation of this important period, and on the other regarding the transferability of the Soviet experience for today's emerging nations, that might have inclinations toward collectivization.

Ideology and the Peasantry

As we have seen above, the Bolshevik heritage in agriculture chiefly consisted of two components, on the one hand an ever growing demand for land reform —

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i.e. more land for the peasants, and on the other a growing economic differentiation amongst the peasantry, above all as a result of the Stolypin program. The first of these caused the Bolsheviks to lose control over the course of development right after the revolution, while the other created problems for the very basis of policy toward the peasantry. In this part we shall examine more closely what role class analysis and ideological arguments had in the development of Soviet agricultural policy.

Differentiation

As a background for the coming discussion, we shall start by defining some of the concepts that were frequently used in the contemporary debate on the class status of the peasantry, and on their role in a future Soviet society.

At the bottom of the scale[29] we find the poor peasants, the *bednyaks,* who, although the majority of them did have some land, are best classified as semi-proletarians, dependent on part-time work for wages. Sometimes there was also an absolute bottom layer consisting of laborers, the *batraks,* but the distinction between the two was never very clear, and we shall not return to it here.

The next category was the middle peasants, the *serednyaks,* who made up the bulk of the peasantry. At the same time they also constituted a strategic group, as they bordered on both the 'rich', who were the class enemies, and the 'poor', who were the support of the revolution. Consequently the middle peasants were to play an important role.

As a producer, the serednyak was weak. He was frequently illiterate, but at the same time also frequently hired labor. A clear picture of this group is hard to produce, and their heterogeneity is also reflected in the subdivisions of *malomochnye* (weak), *zazhitochnye* (better off) and *krepkie* (strong). Lenin's own stand was equally ambivalent. In one article he describes the serednyak simultaneously as a 'worker', a 'shark' and a 'speculator'.[30]

In 1927 there were 14.7 million serednyak households, who together with the poor peasants accounted for 85 percent of the grain harvest, and for 75 percent of all marketed grain. They were also considered to be in possession of the largest reserves of grain, from which follows the numerous attempts to single out the more prosperous, in order to group them with the enemy — the *kulaks.*[31]

The *kulak,* finally, was the real culprit, and consequently the subject for most discussion. The word 'kulak' literally means 'first', and it is obvious that this term was highly emotionally charged. 'Kulak' brings out the image of an exploiter, an oppressor and a usurer, and it is symptomatic that proponents of a more accomodating policy toward the kulaks preferred designations like 'better-off' or 'strong'.

The kulak was a hard working and frequently very able peasant, versed in both reading and writing. He was prosperous enough to have certain reserves, permitting him to hold out for the best time to sell (normally spring, when stocks were depleted). Furthermore, he would frequently lease land, and also

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sometimes rent out tools and equipment to his neighbors.[32] In this sense the picture of an agrarian capitalist is correct. The extent, however, is exaggerated. Even if some kulaks could reach considerable economic power, it was less than one percent of *all* farms that hired more than one worker.[33] It is also important to note the attitude of other peasants to success. In relating a speech by Kalinin, Lewin says: 'What Kalinin said, in effect, was that the bednyak often felt that the government only promised to lend at a favorable rate of interest, and then in fact gave nothing, whereas Tikhon Ivanovich would indeed advance a loan in springtime, even if in autumn one had to pay through the nose.'[34] Traditionally, the Russian *muzhik* regards failure and misery as something directly related to idleness and incompetence, and the attitude of the poor peasants toward the kulaks was therefore more often one of respect, than one of class hatred. Let us see what the Bolsheviks made out of this.

Class Analysis

The first stage in Bolshevik analysis of the role of the peasantry in development was characterized by Lenin's thesis on *smychka,* the worker-peasant alliance. Workers and peasants acting together would overthrow landlords and capitalists.

Economic differentiation amongst the peasantry, coupled with the pressures of War Communism, led to a reinterpretation of this thesis, into an alliance between the workers and the poor peasants, directed against the rich peasants. The struggle against the kulaks would be waged with active support from the bednyaks and with passive support from the serednyaks through this new 'alliance'. According to Stalin, the aim of this policy was 'the threefold task (*triedinaya zadacha*) of winning the support of the poor peasants in order to combat the rich, while at the same time seeking alliance with the middle peasants.'[35]

It is thus obvious that the separation of the peasantry into different classes was of major importance for the ideological foundations of economic policy. Yet Lewin writes that:

(1) The alliance formula at this stage gave no clear indication of the policy which should be followed, or of the real attitude of the régime.

(2) Treatment of the serednyak, who was in principle the indispensable 'ally' of the formula, was in fact inconsistent; he was alternately favored, subject to pressure, or merely tolerated.[36]

The connection between theoretical analysis and practical policy was broken already with the introduction of NEP. Stimulated by the liberalizations, or rather by the break-down of the previous tight policy, kulaks and serednyaks rapidly improved their positions, economically as well as politically, and at the height of NEP *Pravda* wrote that: 'It is not a question now of preventing the better-off

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peasants from becoming richer, but of getting the serednyaks to co-operate, and the batraks to unite.'[37]

The situation was that which characterized NEP in general. In the gulf between words and action, the stronger elements in society were given an opportunity to expand and strengthen their positions, at the expense of the weaker elements.

The bednyaks were exploited in the propaganda, while in practice they were discriminated against economically, as the government failed to convert words into action.

Even if the debate did not lead to the formulation of a practical policy[38] it did continue in party circles — it was exclusively an internal party debate — and very vigorously so. Gradually a very basic conflict became more and more evident. If free exchange with the peasantry was to lead to the necessary surplus production of food supplies, the upper strata must be permitted to expand, quite simply because they were the most efficient food producers. In 1927 Kondratief summarized the situation: 'If you want a higher rate of accumulation ... then the stronger elements of the village must be allowed to exploit (the weaker)', or in other words that the kulaks must be allowed to expand and employ landless laborers.[39]

After 1925 matters gradually changed. Legislation was tightened with the point aimed at the kulaks, and forceful measures were taken to introduce bednyaks into the local soviets, where during the heyday of NEP, kulaks and serednyaks had achieved great influence. As a consequence, many of the latter were quite simply deprived of suffrage. The peak of this development came with the reintroduction of forceful requisitions in 1927,[40] and with Stalin's declaration in 1930 of the 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class'.[41]

Policy and Reality

Was there then any contact between the ever tighter policy that was pursued — allegedly against the hostile upper strata of the peasantry — and the Bolshevik conception of the situation in real life? The answer to this question must be a categoric no. One very reliable Soviet source — the historian Lyashenko — frankly admits that: '... we have no statistical data, however incomplete or approximate, on the evolution of class structure in the Soviet village over any given period of years.'[42] This is not quite true, since there are various fragments, presented amongst others by Lyashenko himself, but it is an important admission, above all against the background of the great role that class divisions would play in the process leading up to mass collectivization.

Bolshevik policy against the peasantry was formed in the seclusion of party offices, and the lack of a documented picture of the true nature of the problem runs through the entire debate. Above all this is so with respect to the kulaks. Who really was a kulak, and how large this element of the population was, has never been quite settled.[43] In 1927 Larin writes that the 'strictly capitalist'

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segment, which permanently hires labor, constitutes about 2 percent of all households, or about 450,000.[44] At the 15th party congress toward the end of the same year, Molotov presents a figure of 3.7 percent. In the control figures for 1928—29 the Commissariat of Agriculture states 4.2 percent, and in the materials that were produced for the first five-year plan, Gosplan reckons with 3.9 percent. The situation is summarized by Milyutin at the 15th party congress: 'What is a kulak? Hitherto, at bottom, no clear, exact definition has been given of a kulak in respect of this differentiation which is taking place.' This view is also shared by Kritsman, another authority on agricultural matters. He argues that whoever is acquainted with the real situation 'knows full well that one cannot reach the kulak directly, one can't get hold of him, one can't establish by direct methods that he is in fact a capitalist.' This ambivalence characterizes the entire agrarian question.

In 1929 Strumilin writes: 'Even the fundamental question of criteria for distinguishing a kulak from a serednyak and a serednyak from a bednyak has not yet found an authoritative solution.'[45]

Given the major importance of the agrarian question in Soviet development, however, it was of paramount importance to find such criteria, and a number of suggestions were put forth.

An attempt to use sown area was rejected when it was discovered that poor families frequently could have more land than true capitalists operating on a small scale, and other indicators using the possession of horses and livestock were rejected for the same reason. A more straightforward sign of a capitalist mode of production would be the use of hired labor. The problem with such an indicator, however, was that while there existed fairly reliable data concerning sown area and possession of livestock, it was very hard to measure the extent of hired labor. This would frequently pass in the form of 'help' from friends and relatives, for example, and with the increasing pressure against the kulaks, such data would not become easier to find.

A further attempt to differentiate on the basis of renting means of production to other peasants was likewize rejected, partly on the same grounds as above, but also on ideological grounds. Class analysis must build on the exploitation of the labor of others. A final attept to use the possession of capital assets was dismissed after sharp criticism from the proponents of other criteria.[46]

The basic problem remained, however, and the only solution available would be to use a combination of different criteria. In 1927, a commission was appointed to investigate, and according to their guidelines it would be sufficient to meet *one* of the following criteria to be classified as a kulak:[47]

1) the use of at least two temporarily employed batraks
2) sown area exceeding 10 desyatinas
3) possession of at least three draft animals
4) possession of some form of processing enterprise

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5) possession of some form of trading enterprise, even without employees
6) possession of some form of expensive machine, like a tractor, or of a number or good quality implements.

According to this list, 3.9 percent of all peasant households were classified as kulaks, and in 1929 some further criteria were added regarding renting means of production and lending money. Given the prevalence above all of these latter activities, a measuring rod had been produced according to which a large part of the peasantry could be classified as kulaks, should need be. To the question 'Who was the kulak?', Lewin laconically replies: 'It is, in the first place, he who is declared to be such by the authorities.'[48] The vagueness of these formulations would be of decisive importance for the future of the Soviet peasantry.

At the central committee plenum in November 1929 Stalin decided the issue. 5 percent of the Soviet peasantry were kulaks, and it was against these that the attack was launched.[49] How Stalin arrived at this figure, which was the highest that far, is unknown, and likewize there is no concensus of opinion regarding the economic role of this part of the peasant population.

Peasant Policy

The common denominator of Soviet policy toward the peasantry in the 1920s is an almost total lack of principles with a correspondence to reality. The dilemma of the leadership was that on the one hand they needed the support of the middle peasants, and consequently these had to be given certain concessions. On the other hand, precisely these concessions turned the serednyaks into kulaks, thus expanding the ranks of the enemy.

From this dilemma there was no real escape. The basis for policy was the perceived need to squeeze as much resources as possible out of agriculture to support the industrialization drive, and thus a certain element of confiscation must be part of that policy. Here the ideological struggle against the kulaks fits in well. The kulaks, however, constituted only a small minority of the Soviet peasantry. The bulk of grain reserves were in the hands of the middle peasants, and consequently these too had to be affected by the anti-kulak policy, in spite of all talk about an 'alliance' between them and the workers in order to crush the common enemy — the kulak. From that moment when anti-kulak propaganda was followed by practical measures, class analysis lost its content. Carr writes that '... it was no longer true that the class analysis determined policy. Policy determined what form of class analysis was appropriate to the given situation.'[50]

This fact is brought home rather forcefully by a study of the actual process of collectivization.[51] The key word was speed. A process of transformation that was originally planned to take 10—15 years, should according to Stalin's directives be carried out in 3—4 months, during the winter of 1929—30. Committees of three, so called *troikas,* consisting of representatives for respectively, the

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local soviet, the local party committee and the local department of the secret police, made up lists of kulaks, with a ranking according to 'dangerousness'. The most dangerous elements would then be deported, others resettled or kept under observation.

This campaign to 'dekulakize' the Soviet peasantry was a necessary ingredient in the collectivization campaign. Early attempts at promoting collective farming had demonstrated that collectives were highly attractive for the poorer peasants, anticipating a 'free lunch', but not for those who were better off. To build a collective sector in agriculture without the participation of those peasants who were most able and productive was hardly possible, however, and in some way the serednyaks must be induced to join. To do so by material incentives was not possible, since the whole idea behind collectivization was to facilitate extraction. Thus the serednyaks are central to the issue. They are a large group, with high productivity and large surpluses. They must form part of the kolkhozes but they cannot be induced to join voluntarily. They must be forced.

Here the campaign for 'dekulakization' fits in logically. The peasants are given a vivid illustration of the alternative to membership in the new collectives. Millions are deported, and from the archives it is obvious that deportations did not by far occur according to present criteria of class. Categories like 'ideological kulak' and 'almost kulak' (*podkulachny*) indicate that the campaign was built on pure terror against everyone opposing collectivization. The examples of violence and excesses are numerous.

In its own, the campaign for collectivization was a great success. In a brief time the bulk of the Soviet peasantry was brought into the kolkhozes. In a wider sense, however, it was nothing short of a disaster. Increasing terror from both sides brought the economy to the verge of a total collapse, and finally Stalin himself had to apply the brakes. In a famous article in *Pravda*[52] he places the full blame squarely on the shoulders of local officials. They had become 'Dizzy with Success' and thus gone to excess. Following this 'Dolchstoss', the entire campaign lost momentum, but only temporarily so. Soon it picked up speed again, and in 1935 it was officially terminated. By then virtually all Soviet peasants were members of state or collective farms, and Soviet agriculture had in all important respects assumed the shape that it still has. The question remains whether these events were a necessary ingredient in Soviet industrialization, as commonly believed.

An Alternative Explanation

As an alternative explanation, we shall argue that mass collectivization in 1929—32 was the peak of a political struggle for power over the future course of Soviet economic development. The main dilemma of the 1920s was, in the words of Arthur Wright: 'Can the interests of the ruling political group and the dominant economic group be reconciled to their mutual satisfaction?'[53] The

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actual course of events suggests a negative answer to this question.

The main political adversaries were the 'left opposition', headed by Trotsky, and the 'right opposition', headed by Bukharin.[54] Consensus between the two camps existed on two important points. Firstly, given the circumstances, it was necessary for the Soviet state to build a considerable industrial sector, and secondly, it was necessary to let the peasantry carry the brunt of the burden of industrialization. The focus of the debate was, on the one hand, on how industrialization should be carried out, and on the other, on how the peasantry should be forced to accept its role.

We have seen above that relations between the state and the peasantry were strained throughout. Lenin's famed *smychka,* the worker-peasant alliance, was broken already during War Communism, and it is doubtful whether one can speak of an alliance between Bolsheviks and poor peasants in the struggle against the kulaks. The behavior of the *kombedy* rather indicates that the poor peasants took the opportunity to loot their neighbors for personal gain. There was indeed an alliance in that the Bolsheviks were helped with grain requisitions (by sharing the loot) and with breaking resisting kulak households. There is little evidence, however, that there should have been any widespread support for Bolshevik *policy* amongst the poor peasants. Consequently, it was obvious that it would be difficult to incorporate the peasantry in the industrialization process.

The left wing wanted to force the issue, thereby on the one hand finding out how big the problem really was, and on the other getting it over with quickly. The right wing warned that the consequences of such a policy might be disastrous, and instead argued that one must tread gently. Perhaps a careful policy might even lead to a lessening of the conflict with the peasantry over time.[55] That Bukharin's warnings were to come true with a vengeance, is a well known fact. What is more interesting is whether his own prescriptions would have been possible, i.e. if there was an alternative path to take.

If we start with the premise that the introduction as well as the abolition of War Communism was forced upon the Bolshevik leadership by events outside their control, then their experiences of NEP become of crucial importance for explaining the future development, and in three important respects these experiences are unequivocal.

Firstly, agricultural production increased, secondly, the marketed share of production fell, and thirdly, an increasing share of the trade in agricultural produce fell into private hands. For the Bolsheviks, NEP thus represented a very tangible dilemma. It proved that it was possible to increase agricultural production, but only at the price of giving the peasants a stronger position, and thus also increased power over the future course of development.

It would thus appear that there were alternatives. Developments in the first half of the 1920s showed that peasants responded strongly to price incentives and a more consistent price policy might have prevented the crises toward the end of the decade. Furthermore, there are no indications that there did exist an

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explicit *stategy*. Policy would seem to lend itself better to explanation in terms of a series of *ad hoc* responses to unforseen events. While Stalin's policy of mass collectivization thus cannot be seen as an integral part of a long run strategy, with the onset of the procurement crises in 1927/28 and 1928/29, potential policy options were rapidly exhausted. According to Wright: 'Mass collectivization grew out of the procurement crises and the frantic responses to them'[56] Stalin's reintroduction of the *prodrazverstka* led to a definite break with the peasantry, and all that remained was a full scale war. Erlich writes that 'The alternative to such retreats (concessions to the peasantry) and maneuvres leading to the gradual erosion of the dictatorial system was clearly a massive counterattack which would have broken once and for all the peasants' veto power over the basic decisions on economic policy.'[57]

A major cause of the troubles is the complete lack of realism in setting goals for economic policy. Jasny refers to the emergence of the first plan as 'Baccanalian planning',[58] and if we accept this refusal to adjust economic policy to what was actually possible, then all the other pieces in the puzzle fall into their respective places. Bukharin's gradual policy becomes impossible, and force on a large scale must be used against the peasantry. Mass collectivization emerges as a political means, aiming at a definite break of peasant resistance. Dekulakization becomes a necessary ingredient in collectivization, showing reluctant peasants the alternative to joining the kolkhoz. Ideological arguments were used simply as a smoke screen to cover up a policy that was aimed at breaking the political and economic power of the peasantry.

The main ambition of the Bolshevik leadership was to remain in power. According to Karcz, their top priorities were: '(1) we remain in the Politburo and thus in power within the Party; (2) the Party remains in power; and (3) the machinery of the state and the national economy must function in a tolerable manner (defined as just avoiding stagnation or actual collapse).'[59]

This interpretation of the causes of mass collectivization surely lend no credence to the hypothesis that it was a logical part of a Soviet development strategy, nor that it was in any sense a necessary consequence of early Bolshevik policy. What remains to be shown, then, is what impact the collectivization actually *did* have, irrespective of its causes and motives. To this problem we shall now turn.

The Results of Collectivization

So far we have concentrated on studying collectivization *ex ante,* arguing that it should be seen, not as a part of a long run development strategy,[60] but rather as a desperate, unplanned and politically motivated break with previous policy. Now we shall turn to studying it *ex post,* i.e. to an evaluation of its actual impact on Soviet agriculture, irrespective of the causes and motivations for its introduction. Here we shall venture onto highly controversial ground by

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arguing that collectivization was more of a burden than a help to the industialization process. Let us start by looking at its impact on agriculture proper.

Collectivized Agriculture

One area where there is a considerable consensus of opinion, is in the realm of the impact of collectivization on future agricultural production. The losses that occured in 1929—32 were quite tremendous, and it would be a quarter of a century until Soviet agriculture was restored to *status quo ante*.[61]

Livestock holdings in 1953 were still below 1928 levels. Major crop yields in 1949—53 were also below 1928 levels. Farm income fell by 30 percent in the period 1928—52, and peasants were forced to depend on their private plots for survival. Millions of peasants — largely the most productive ones — perished,[62] there was a wholesale slaughter of livestock, and considerable losses of property due to arson.[63]

To argue — against this background — that collectivization had a positive influence on agricultural *production*, is at best absurd. In the words of Lewin (writing in 1974): 'Soviet agriculture has not yet managed to effect a real technological revolution similar to the one which took place some time ago in other developed countries. Agriculture is still rather primitive and a great problem; and there is no doubt that the consequences of the first quarter of a century of *kolkhoz* history still weigh heavily and are far from having been definitely overcome.'[64]

A slightly more subtle query is whether it would have been possible to carry out collectivization without Stalin's terror, i.e. whether the basic principle was sound, but the actual implementation less successful.[65] Here we are obviously reduced to circumstantial evidence. Most important is that there did not appear to exist a basic principle.[66] The entire period of the 1920s exhibits one long row of experiments with different forms of rural organization, all on a small scale and with heavy government support. Even in the last moments before Stalin decided the issue, different state organs had their own favorites for continued experimentation. Furthermore, the entire previous section of this article has been devoted to showing that collectivization emerged suddenly, and out of political chaos. Thus, if we want to advocate the Soviet model for other countries, our only possible frame of reference must be the model that actually emerged, and the introduction of this model — as we have seen — depended crucially on the use of force, maybe even to the extent of a 'dekulakization' campaign. This prescription is hardly palatable, and if we make any important changes in the model, then we are no longer discussing Soviet experience.

An Engine of Growth?

An area where there is considerably more conflict, is in the realm of agriculture's contribution to Soviet industrialization. That very high growth figures

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were achieved and that there was a very rapid capital accumulation is beyond doubt.[67] The question is where the resources came from.

As we have seen above, the traditional view is that resources came out of agriculture, and against this background collectivization is judged as regrettable but necessary. Only thus could enough resources be transfered to industry. It is this last 'excuse' for Stalinist policy that we shall now venture to expose.

The role of agriculture in general as an engine of growth can be summarized under five different headings:[68]

1) to satisfy the food requirements of a growing urban population,
2) to satisfy the need for increased agricultural export, in order to increase imports for industry,
3) to release labor for a growing industrial sector,
4) to contribute toward capital accumulation in industry, by accepting a deterioration in the terms of trade, and
5) to create a market for industrial output by increasing farm incomes.

Of these different factors, numbers 2 and 3 are least controversial in the Soviet case. On both these counts there were some increases.[69] Point number 5 does not apply, on the one hand since industry was not allowed to produce consumer goods, and thus did not need the rural market, and on the other because farm incomes were not allowed to rise, rather the contrary. What remains then, are points 1 and 4, i.e. the contribution toward urban food supply and the contribution toward capital accumulation in industry. On both these counts recent research has led to important reinterpretations, chiefly due to the publication of Soviet archive materials.[70]

Three variables are of importance here. Firstly, the development of total agricultural production. Secondly, the development of the marketed share of total production, and thirdly, the development of the relationship between agricultural production and its consumption of inputs from industry. The first two variables are of importance for our point 1 above, since they determine the extent to which agriculture contributed to the subsistence of a growing urban population. The third variable is relevant for our point 4 above, since it determines the net flow of resources between agriculture and industry. The latter is also the most controversial point, and we shall thus start with the former.

Production and Marketings

The traditional view of the development of production and marketing of agricultural produce during the NEP-period, is that on the one hand production did increase substantially, but also that on the other, on-farm consumption increased as well, leading to a recurrence of food shortages in the cities.[71] This development was taken as a ground for a tighter policy against the peasantry, and in 1928 Stalin presented a table to back up his case.

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In the table, which was produced by the well-known statistician Nemchinov, it was shown clearly that the peasantry in general, and above all the kulaks, were increasing their consumption at the expense of the urban population.[72] The peasantry's stranglehold on the urban population was tightening.

Later research has shown these data to be seriously biased, and clearly intended to support Stalin's attack on the peasantry. Exactly how large the errors are, is still disputed, and we shall not go further into that debate here,[73] than to quote one of those involved; 'the calculation, as published by Stalin and reproduced by Nemchinov, is completely misleading, and provides an exceedingly distorted picture of the relation between 1913 and 1926/27 grain marketings.'[74] It is also important to note the great influence of these data on Western research[75] as well as on the formation of the Soviet view.

The crucial issue is thus the relationship between total production and the marketed share. It was the deterioration in this relationship, *inter alia,* that collectivization was intended come to terms with. Did it succeed?

We shall start by noting the causes of the crisis, and here price policy looms large. Continous reductions in procurement prices for grains caused the peasants to reduce sowings or shift into other crops.[76] At the 15th party congress in 1927 Molotov refered to this policy as 'a series of colossal stupidities'.[77] At the same time the situation was aggravated by administrative chaos. Originally 16 different organs were involved in procurements, which by 1926/27 had been brought down to 3, controlling 86 percent of the trade in grain.[78]

In brief, the dominant features of price policy were reductions in grain prices and increases in livestock prices. Consequently, the peasants reacted by reducing the production of bread grains and increasing that of feed grains, in order to expand livestock production. Stalin's interpretation was that the peasants were eating better, and this was taken as a ground for a tighter policy. Whether or not he actually believed it himself will probably never be known, nor is it relevant for our discussion. Our conclusion, however, must be that the procurement crises, that in turn led to collectivization, were largely caused by an ill-devised price policy.

Let us now turn to study the extent to which collectivization contributed to a solution of this problem, i.e. our point 1 above, the supply of food for the urban population. If it was successful we should expect to find increasing figures for production as well as for the marketed share.

On the first count our answer must be negative. From Table 1 below, we cannot discern any increasing trend in the all-important grain production following collectivization.

Of greater interest, however, is the influence on the *marketed share*[79] of total production, and from the same table below a number of important conclusions can be drawn.

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Table 1: Agricultural Production and Marketing

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
1. Grain harvest:	73.1	71.7	77.2	69.5	69.6
2. Marketings (gross):	15.7	19.5	22.6	23.7	19.4
of which procurements:	10.8	16.1	22.1	22.8	18.5
3. Marketings (net):[a]	8.3	10.2	17.9	18.8	13.7
of which exports:	0.1	0.3	4.8	5.1	1.7
4. Imports:	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2
5. Urban supply:[b]	8.5	10.0	13.2	13.7	12.2
6. Urban supply per worker:[c]	0.88	0.95	1.0	0.79	0.58
7. Retained harvest:[d]	64.8	61.5	59.3	50.7	55.4

a. after deductions of grain that is used as input into agriculture
b. 3 + 4 — exports
c. 5 divided by the number of workers
d. 1—3

Source: Ellman (1975), p 847.

From row 2 we can see that procurements increased drastically, both as a share of total marketings and as a share of total production, and in this sense collectivization appears as a success.

The key to this success is found entirely in forceful extraction. From row 7 we can see that agriculture was reduced to the status of residual claim, absorbing natural fluctuations.[80] In spite of the harvest failure in 1931, procurements increased somewhat. It is also interesting to note that the entire increase in procurements, which in the period 1928—32 was on the average 20 percent higher than in 1925—27, can be accounted for by the reduced feed requirements following the mass slaughters of livestock.[81] Agriculture was thus squeezed of its last reserves, and the peasants were left nothing to substitute for the loss of animal produce. In spite of this, however, we can see from rows 5 and 6 that there was only a temporary improvement in the urban supply of food. By 1931, per capita food supply in the cities (row 6), was already below that in 1928, and falling sharply. The fall in urban real wages was so substantial that it is possible to view the dekulakization campaign as a means to scare peasans into the cities, simply by making them flee for their lives. This is in spite of the fact that there existed at the time 4 million landless peasants, who should have constituted a highly mobile group.[82]

Part of the reason for the food crisis is found in the chaotic processes of procurement. It is estimated that around 4 million tons of grain was lost in procurement and centralized storage (excluding distribution) in the period 1928—32.[83] The dominant cause, however, must lie in the failure of policy to achieve an increase in *production*.

In conclusion, we can state that collectivization was only temporarily successful on our count 1 above. The supply of basic produce (bread, potatoes and cabbage) increased. This, however, resulted not from higher production, but

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from a lower standard of living, from a reduction in other production, and — above all — from the application of wholesale violence in relations to the peasantry.[84]

The picture further darkens if we take a closer look at another of the successful points, the increases in exports. During 1928—32, total grain exports came to about 2.5 million tons per year (cf. Table 1 above). Before World War I the figure was over 10 million, and in 1925/26 and 1926/27 it came to 2.2 and 2.5 million tons, respectively. It would thus appear, on the one hand, that the rapid rise in exports following collectivization is a spurious consequence of the crisis in 1927/28, and on the other, that the average results achieved during the first plan in no way stand out from other years.[85]

Capital Accumulation

The problem of the contribution of agriculture toward the accumulation process in industry, is the area where the traditional view is perhaps most uniform, and also perhaps most erroneous. The reason for this is a combination of two factors; on the one hand the repeated statements regarding the necessity of letting the peasantry carry more than their fair share of the burden, and on the other the absence of reliable data on what actually took place. These two factors, together with the actually observed and substantial, sufferings of the peasantry during the period, made it easy to assume that what had been planned actually also did happen.[86]

Thanks to data recently published by the soviet scholar A. A. Barsov, however, it has been possible to fill the gap in our knowledge on the actual development, and the new picture that emerges stands at loggerheads with the traditional view. Much evidence points in the direction that agriculture, during the period 1929—32, actually was a *net recipient* of capital.[87]

Two factors are of crucial importance in the debate over this issue, which is still far from concluded. First, the definition of sectors, and second, the definition of price indices.

On the first count, proper (or improper) sectorization can bring about net flows of resources in virtually any direction desired, and we shall see that one major paradox can be explained in this way.[88] On the second count we have a classic problem. Any comparison of different resource flows must take place in value terms, and consequently prices must be used. As we shall see below, the choice of prices is of major importance.[89]

Let us, in order to create a background for our discussion, present some striking data. Table 2 below illustrates changes in the terms of trade between industry and agriculture during the period. If agriculture did contribute to industrialization, we should expect its terms of trade to deteriorate. We observe the opposite.

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Table 2: Terms of Trade Between Agriculture and Industry (1928 = 100)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
Agriculture/Industry	100	116	164	116	130

Source: Ellman (1975), p 849.

Furthermore, if agriculture did contribute toward industrialization, we would expect the flow of agricultural produce out of agriculture to exceed the flow of industrial products into agriculture. From Table 3 below we can see that the reverse was true.

Table 3: Intersectoral Resource Flows (Volume index)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
Outflow of agricultural produce:	100	110	128	132	102
Inflow of industrial products:	100	122	135	130	121
Relative resource flow (agriculture/industry)	100	90	95	100	84

Source: Ellman (1975), p 848.

In the above tables we can see first, that agricultural prices rose faster than industrial, and that agriculture consequently was favored during the first five year plan, i.e. that more industrial products were gotten for the same volume of agricultural produce. This striking fact is also borne out by the fact that the net resource flow (in volume terms) went from industry to agriculture, rather than the opposite. Both these facts thus point in the direction that agriculture, far from being an engine of growth, actually was a burden during industrialization. How is this possible?

The first step in our explanation lies in sectorization.[90] By removing the two-sector framework of industry and agriculture, and instead using a three-sector model, with a state sector, an agricultural sector and a non-agricultural sector, we can better explain the apparent paradox. In this model, the state exploits agriculture via forced deliveries at very low prices. This part agrees very well with the traditional view. On the other hand, however, agriculture is compensated via sales to the nonagricultural population at very high prices. At the free market — which until 1932 is illegal — prices increased so fast that agriculture was actually more than compensated.[91] Agriculture thus succeeded in shifting the burden of forced procurements onto the shoulders of the nonagricultural population.[92]

It is when we try to quantify these flows that things get difficult. Ellman suggests three different approaches of measuring agriculture's contribution:[93]

1) Direct trade surplus of agriculture against industry, i.e. visible flows of goods and services.

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2) Net agricultural surplus, i.e. agricultural resources used for investment in both sectors.
3) Net agricultural surplus used for industrial investment.

The first measure is not relevant for our purpose, since it does not consider the way in which resources are used, i.e. the contribution toward capital accumulation, and we shall thus use the latter two. The first of these measures agriculture's contribution to capital formation in the entire economy, whereas the second only measures that in industry. In Table 4 below we reproduce Barsov's estimates of agricultural surplus in the period 1928—32.

Table 4: Agricultural Surplus (billion rubles, 1913 prices)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
Both sectors:	3.2	2.3	2.8	3.2	2.3
Industry only:	2.0	2.2	2.6	2.9	2.1

Source: Ellman (1975), p 852.

According to these calculations, agriculture did produce a surplus during the entire period, and thus contributed toward industrialization, by increasing capital formation not only in agriculture but also in industry. Three things should be noted, however. First, there is no substantial increase after 1928, to indicate an impact of collectivization. Second, the surplus in comparable terms, was 35 percent larger in 1913, indicating that the Stolypin peasants contributed more toward industrialization than the kolkhozniks.[94] Third, and most importantly, the choice of prices is dubious.[95] 1913 prices are too distant to reflect the real situation in 1928—32. If we make the same calculations in 1928 prices, a completely different picture emerges.

Table 5: Agricultural Surplus (billion rubles, 1928 prices)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
Both sectors:	1.0	—0.5	—0.2	0.7	0.1
Industry only:	—0.2	—0.6	—0.4	0.4	—0.2

Source: Ellman (1975), p 853.

From this table we can see that the contribution of agriculture was negative throughout, with exception for the harvest failure of 1931, i.e. agriculture was a burden rather than a help. The main cause for this substantial difference is found in industrial prices. These were in 1928 considerably much higher than agricultural prices, compared to 1913 world market prices.

If we thus accept the calculations in table 5, we must conclude that agriculture failed to meet our condition 4 above (capital accumulation). Let us conclude this section by looking at the sources of the substantial accumulation that did take place. This will solve our final riddle.

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Table 6: Sources of Accumulation (%)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*	*1929—32*
1. Total capital accumulation:	2.3	2.0	3.8	5.1	6.6	17.5
2. Share of agricultural surplus:	—	—	22	54	−53	−31
3. Share of industry:*	—	—	78	46	153	131
4. Proportion of accumulation under (3) due to absorption of additional labor	—	—	17	31	27	30
5. Proportion of accumulation under (3) due to fall in real wages	—	—	61	15	126	101

*Including processing of agricultural produce, and contributions by freed peasant labor.

Source: Ellman (1975), p 856.

From table 6 above, two highly important conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the agricultural surplus during the entire period was negative to such an extent that almost a fourth of the accumulation in industry had to be transfered to agriculture (+131 against −31). This is explained mainly by the flow of machinery that was necessary to replace slaughtered livestock. Secondly, the contribution of freed peasant labor was almost as large (30 against 31) as the flow of resources from industry to agriculture. The net contribution of agriculture to industrialization was thus virtually nil. From row 5 we can see that 101 percent of the accumulation that took place in industry was due to a fall in real wages, which was caused by rapidly rising food prices on the black market. It is against this background that Barsov notes that 'The chief burden lay on the shoulders of the working class.'[96]

Of course it is rather dubious to draw such far reaching conclusions, based on materials from such a short period of time, but if we may believe Barsov — who has had access to the archives — there is no comparable data for the following period (remember Stalin's crack-down on statistics), and it is thus not possible to extend our analysis.[97] What we can do, however, is to back up Barsov's argument further by including flows of services. According to Marxist practice, his data include only material production,[98] and it must be an unmistakable fact that the net flow of services went in favor of agriculture. It is hard to imagine agriculture supplying industry with services on a scale to match its own consumption of medical care, education, transport and other government services. If we thus add this deficit onto the bill, the scales will tilt even further away from the traditional view of the resource flows. Furthermore, it is hardly likely that an extension of the time period would change our conclusions. At the end of the first five year plan, the situation in agriculture was so precarious that the entire economy was hanging on a very thin thread.[99] The procurements of grain during 1932—33 fell by 4 million tons, and the famine of 1932—33 is a well known historical fact.[100] Livestock herds were reduced to half compared with

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1928. Only three households out of five had private plots, less than one out of three had sheep or goats, and only one in six had pigs. Free market prices rose by a factor of 3.5 in 1932 alone, and their importance is reflected in the fact that this year the markets were legalized. Karcz quotes Stalin in admitting that the newly formed kolkhozy were 'weak, not yet (fully) formed economic units which are passing through approximately the same period in their organization as did our industrial plants in 1921—22. It is evident that the majority of them cannot be profitable (*rentabelnye*). But they will become profitable in the course of 2—3 years...'.[101] Of course, history was to show that they never would become profitable — up to date[102] — and against this background it is hard to believe that mass collectivization of the Soviet peasantry helped agriculture increase its contribution to the process of industrialization. Let us now pull together the threads of our somewhat lengthy argument and see what conclusions can be drawn.

Conclusions

This paper has dealt with three aspects of Soviet mass collectivization in 1929—32; the place of collectivization in Soviet development strategy; the role of ideology and class analysis with respect to collectivization; and the impact of collectivization on agriculture and on the economy as a whole. On all three counts we had tried to present interpretations that differ radically from 'traditional' teachings on the subject.

On the *first count,* the view that mass collectivization was a logical and maybe even necessary component of Soviet development strategy must be discarded out of hand. We have seen that, following the collapse of War Communism, the 1920s were characterized more by the absence than by the presence of policy, and particularly so with respect to agriculture. The various attempts made by the Bolsheviks to introduce elements of an agricultural policy were sporadic, contradictory, and often seemed to be based more on a desire to confiscate than on a conscious effort to promote production. Only in one respect can there be said to exist any continuity in Soviet development throughout the 1920s, and this concerns the basic attityde to relations with the peasantry. Virtually every action taken by the Bolsheviks was based on control, compulsion and force, with an almost total disregard for the effects on production as such. Here the conclusions by Jerzy Karcz and Arthur Wright, that collectivization followed as a necessary consequence of the 'frantic response' to the procurement crises, must be deemed logically flawless. It was precisely the absence of a clearly defined policy and the repeated changes in the rules of the game, that time after time landed the régime in conflicts with the peasantry, and which eventually brought about collectivization in order to put an end to these conflicts. Only in one context can collectivization be seen as a logical component in Soviet development stategy. If control, compulsion and force are ta-

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ken as the guiding principles, then the kolkhoz becomes the crowning piece of this development. This, however, is hardly enough to merit the term *development strategy.*

The *second count* reinforces our conclusions above, regarding the 'necessity' of collectivization. We have seen how ideological arguments and class analysis was used as a smoke screen in order to cover up the real course of events, to the point where Carr concludes that 'policy determines class analysis'. Under the surface political factional struggles determined the course of events. Bukharin's ideas of advancing slowly towards industrialization 'at the pace of a tortoise',[103] contrasted sharply with the left wing's wishes to force the issue. Furthermore, there was a clearly perceived need: 'of maintaining political élan, of not appearing to accept for an indefinite period a policy of gradualism based on the peasant, which would have demoralized the Party and so gravely weakened the régime.'[104] The dilemma for the Party was to: 'justify its existence, to justify the Party dictatorship in the name of the proletariat, a rapid move forward was urgent; but such a move forward would hardly be consistent with the "alliance with the peasants" which was the foundation of the policy of the moderates in the "twenties".'[105]

The political situation toward the end of the 1920s is thus of paramount importance. The party leadership felt its grip was slipping, and particularly so with respect to the peasantry. It is here that Stalin emerges with a 'policy of all-out industrialization and collectivization (that) was a means of breaking out of the *cul-de-sac,* of mobilizing the Party to smash peasant resistance, to make possible the acquisition of farm surpluses without having to pay the price which any free peasants of free peasant associations would have demanded.'[106] Mass collectivization was thus a political weapon used by Stalin not only in his struggle against the left and right wings of the party, but above all to establish — once and for all — party premacy over the peasantry — premacy of a party that by now was Stalin's own. In this light it is hard to view mass collectivization as a logical step in a premeditated strategy aimed at restructuring agriculture in order to furhter agricultural production.

This brings us over to our *third count,* the actual impact of collectivization as it happened. Here we have shown that in terms of agricultural production as such, as well as in terms of peasant welfare, the events in 1929—32 were nothing short of an unmitigated disaster. It is when we approach the question of the transfer of resources out of agriculture and into industry that the ground gets less firm to tread on. If it was the case that such a transfer actually took place, then it will at least be possible to discuss whether or not Soviet rapid industrialization was worth the almost total demolition of Soviet agriculture and the massive sufferings that were imposed on the peasantry. If, however, no such transfer took place, then we have removed the last mitigating circumstance for collectivization.

Unfortunately, as we have stated above, our case is rather weak at this point. We have presented recent research, the results of which indicate that the flow of

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resources may have been much weaker than is commonly believed, maybe even to the point where the flow of resources actually went from industry to agriculture. Of course, there is much in this research that is open to debate — especially in the light of the strength of the conclusions. The period studied is rather short, and the method used in calculations is rather questionable. However, there are two important arguments that point in favor of this new interpretation. Firstly, the fact that the agricultural sector suffered substantially during collectivization does not necessarily imply that industry benefited. The mass destruction of livestock herds, for example, surely did not contribute toward capital accumulation in industry. Secondly, the fact that Barsov, who himself is an active Soviet scholar, has gotten his writings published in the Soviet Union, lends added credence to his results. His conclusion, for example, that the burden of industrialization was placed on the shoulders of the proletariat runs counter to the traditional apologetic Soviet view of collectivization as a necessary evil. If Barsov's case had not been strong, he would hardly have been allowed to publish his results.

Whatever the true state of matters, a debate has been stirred up, that will hopefully lead to the shedding of more light on this previously uncontroversial issue, and if Barsov's arguments are found to hold water, many a text-book on this important period in Soviet development will need to be rewritten.

Let us now — by way of conclusion — return to one of the questions posed at the outset of this paper: 'Can the Soviet model of collectivization be recommended for other nations, that find themselves in a similar position?' As the reader might infer by now, our answer to this question is in the negative. The essence of the dilemma facing any government that contemplates a similar policy, is captured by Tanzania's President Nyerere, writing on the collective 'ujamaa' program:

> 'The truth is that when human beings want to make great progress they have no alternative but to combine their efforts. And there are only two methods by which this can be done; people can be made to work toghether, or they can work together. We can be made to work together by, and for the benefit of, a slave owner, or by, and for the profit of, a capitalist; alternatively we can work together voluntarily for our own benefit.'[107]

The evidence we have presented above indicates that the latter has not been true in the Soviet case.

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NOTES

* The author is indebted to Lars Edgren and Kristian Gerner for valuable comments on an earlier draft.

1. Marx (1969), p. 22.
2. See for example Carr (1952a), pp. 385 ff., and also Husain and Tribe (1981).
3. See Lewin (1974a) as a good starting point.
4. See Blum (1957).
5. This is argued *inter alia* by Struve (1970).
6. The reader is referred to Smith (1968) on the rise of serfdom, and to Maynard (1962) and Robinson (1961) on conditions for the peasantry in nineteenth century Russia.
7. Volin (1970), p. 21.
8. Ibid., p. 17.
9. The peasants' perception of property rights is reflected in the maxim: 'We are yours, but the land is ours.' Volin (1970), p. 35.
10. On this point, Volin quotes a contemporary Russian writer saying that: 'The landlords have been convinced for a long time that, no matter how harsh the discipline, serf labor can never compare in productivity with free labor. In the 1840s this conviction was already an axiom for thinking and reading landlords.' Volin (1970), p. 34. See also Pokrovski (1970).
11. Volin (1970), pp. 44 ff. See also Emmons (1968).
12. In this sense, the Emancipation of 1861 can be seen as a prelude to the revolutions of 1917.
13. Robinson (1961), p. 194.
14. Volin (1970), p. 105. By 1916 the numbers had grown to around 40 percent.
15. See further ibid. p. 105.
16. Lewin (1968), p. 132.
17. Carr (1952), p. 31.
18. See for example Nove (1969), pp. 46 ff. for details on these developments.
19. There is some debate on the point as to whether NEP was a break with a desired policy or a return to a normal state of affairs after the disruptions of War Communism. The latter is the 'traditional' view, held *inter alia* by Dobb (1966). The former has been pioneered recently by Roberts (1970) and Szamuely (1974). See also Gerner and Hedlund (1982).
20. Taniuchi (1981) terms this policy the 'Ural-Siberian Method', owing to the fact that Western Siberia and the Urals had had the best harvest and thus were hardest hit by the requisitions. See also Lewin (1965, 1966, 1974b).
21. Moorsteen and Powell (1966), p. 299.
22. Karcz (1979), pp. 441 ff. reviews the arguments of the proponents of this 'traditional' view.
23. There is something that does not fit here. If the risk for armed conflict was imminent, the

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chosen path must have been counterproductive. A German attack in 1932 would surely have been disastrous. On the ohter hand, if conflict was not imminent, why all the haste?

24. Granick (1967), pp. 133 ff., argues that the actual need for investment in heavy industry was considerably lower than is commonly believed, mainly due to lower replacement rates for capital equipment.

25. Karcz (1979), p. 443, points out that there are no other examples where a similar strategy has been chosen under similar circumstances. Neither Napoleon nor Hitler found it necessary to centralize production in order to support their war efforts.

26. As Arthur Wright points out, both left and right 'opposition' warned against precisely this course while debate was still possible, i.e. before Stalin's takeover. Wright (1979), p. 9.

27. See ibid. pp. 29 ff. for a whealth of reference.

28. Ibid., p. 6.

29. See Lewin (1968), Ch. 2—3, for a fuller account of rural stratification during this important period.

30. Ibid., p. 66.

31. It is also symptomatic that the serednyaks were further divided into subcategories. See ibid. pp. 68 ff.

32. Ibid., p. 74.

33. Ibid., p. 75.

34. Ibid., p. 77.

35. Ibid., p. 70.

36. Ibid., p. 71.

37. Ibid., p. 51, *Pravda,* March 20, 1925.

38. Our presentation is by necessity greatly simplified. See further Erlich (1960), for an account of the connection between debate and practical policy.

39. Quoted by Nove (1964), p. 23.

40. See note 20 above.

41. Nove (1969), pp. 169 ff.

42. Quoted by Lewin (1968), p. 55.

43. Estimates below from Ibid., p. 72.

44. One percentage point corrsponds to about 250,000 households, or 1.25 million individuals.

45. Quotations above from Lewin (1966), p. 192.

46. Ibid., p. 194, note 21.

47. Ibid., p. 195.

48. Ibid., p. 195.

49. Ibid., p. 198.

50. Carr (1958), p. 99.

51. An invaluable source on this process are the so called Smolensk Archives. These are classified documents, kept by the party organization in Smolensk, which were captured by the Germans and later fell into American hands. They have subsequently been analyzed and published in Fainsod (1958).

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52. *Pravda,* March 2, 1930. See Davis (1980), pp. 269 ff.
53. Wright (1979), p. 7.
54. See ibid. p. 7 for reference.
55. Ibid., p. 7.
56. Ibid., p. 9.
57. Erlich (1960), p. 174.
58. Jasny (1961), pp. 73 ff.
59. Karcz (1979), p. 448.
60. Ibid., p. 448, refers to this process as being 'consistent with an alternative policy of ''muddling through'' '.
61. Karcz (1964), p. 122.
62. On the number of casualties in this process, Karcz (1971), p. 38, says: 'Several million households, up to a total of 10 million persons or more must have been deported, of whom a great many must have perished', and further; 'The total deaths due to the great Soviet Famine of 1932—34-a direct consequence of collectivization — may never be precisely established, but a figure of some 5 million appears to fit well with demographic data.'
63. For a vivid description of the horrors of the period of collectivization, see Sholokhov (1934).
64. Lewin (1974a), p. 318.
65. This is obviously of great relevance when making recommendations for other countries in similar positions. See futher Fallenbuchl (1967).
66. See Hedlund (1984), Ch. 2.
67. From the Table below it can be seen not only that the increase in national income during the first plan (1928—32) was impressive, but also that the bulk of this increase was accounted for by increased investment, i.e. accumulation.

	1928	*1932*	
National Income	25.0	40.1	(billion rubles)
Consumption	21.3	22.4	
Investment	3.7	17.7	

Source: Ellman (1975), p. 845.

68. Johnston and Mellor (1961), p. 571.
69. During 1928—32 the urban population rose from 10 to 21 million. Ellman (1975), p. 857. The development of exports during the same period is shown below (billion rubles).

1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
0.1	0.3	4.8	5.1	1.7

Source: Ellman (1975), p. 847.

70. The new materials are found in Barsov (1968, 1969, 1974). Western scholars who have participated in the debate include Ellman (1975), Millar (1970, 1974), Morrison (1982) and Nove (1971).
71. See *inter alia* Dobb (1966).
72. The table is reproduced in Karcz (1967), p. 402.
73. See further Karcz (1967, 1970) and Davis (1970).

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74. Karcz (1967), p. 402.

75. The Stalin/Nemchinov table still shows up in support of interpretations of this highly important period, and results will necessarily be biased toward the apologetic side. See for example Wickman (1981).

76. Between 1924/25 and 1927/28 procurement prices for grains fell by about 20 percent, while those for other forms of agricultural produce either remained stable or in some cases even increased somewhat. The consequence was that grain production was turned into a lossmaking enterprise, and Karcz argues that this was the first time when 'a tax element was (consciously or accidentally) introduced into the system of government grain prices.' That grains were unprofitable is also shown by the margins by which the prices paid by private traders exceeded those paid by the government (percentages): rye-53; wheat-23; barley-53; and oats-72. Karcz (1967), p. 414.

77. Lewin (1965), p. 165, note 7.

78. Karcz (1967), p. 415.

79. This is the share of the harvest that actually left the farms, i.e. that was not used as inputs like for example seed. It is precisely the size of this share that much of the debate stood round.

80. The actual *form* of remuneration for work is important here. Instead of a fixed wage for work done or a share in the harvest, the peasants were credited points for work done. At the end of the year the (potential) surplus of the farm would be distributed according to points allocated, and there was thus no guarantee whatsoever that there would be any pay at all for collective work. See further Wronski (1957).

81. Karcz (1971), p. 42.

82. Ellman (1975), p. 857, Karcz (1971), p. 41.

83. Karcz (1971), p. 45.

84. That this was so can be seen from the table below, which demonstrates clearly how grains could expand at the expense of livestock products, (million tons).

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*
Grains	8.3	10.2	17.9	18.8	13.7
Meat	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.1	0.8
Milk	5.9	5.9	5.4	4.8	3.2
Eggs (mill. pieces)	4.7	4.1	2.8	1.8	1.3

Source: Ellman (1975), p. 846.

85. Karcz (1971), p. 44.

86. See further Karcz (1979) for a review of writings based on such assumptions.

87. For an early exchange on views regarding the direction of resource flows, see Millar (1970, 1971) and Nove (1971a, b). Karcz (1979) incorporates Barsov's data in the analysis, and Wright (1979) gives a broad sweep over the area. See also Morrison (1982) for a critical review of Barsov's methodology.

88. Cf. American 'Gerrymandering' practices.

89. Morrison (1982) highlights this problem, and argues that other scholars have accepted Barsov's data in an uncritical fashion.

90. See further Ellman (1975), p. 850.

91. The index for free market prices rose from 233 in 1929 to 3006 in 1932. Ellman (1975), p. 849. See further Malafeev (1964).

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92. During the period 1928—32, urban real wages fell by 49 percent, largely due to the rapid rises in food prices. Ellman (1975), p. 850.
93. The reader is referred to Ellman (1975), p. 851, which builds on a model presented by Millar (1974), p. 83.
94. Ellman (1975), p. 852.
95. See further Millar (1974), p.754, and Morrison (1982).
96. Quoted by Ellman (1975), p. 857.
97. Millar (1974), p. 754. Karcz (1979) uses Barsov's data to extend the analysis up to 1940, but these data are neither complete nor compatible with those we have presented here.
98. One is led to ask why it is 'production' to transport chicken but not people?
99. Karcz (1971), p. 51.
100. See Dalrymple (1964, 1965).
101. Karcz (1971), p. 52.
102. Hedlund (1984), Ch. 5.
103. Nove (1964), p. 22.
104. Ibid., p. 23.
105. Ibid., p. 23.
106. Ibid., p. 23.
107. Nyerere (1968), p. 120.

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