

Soviets mobilize to save record harvest

by Konstantin George

The Soviet Union is currently mobilizing every available resource, civilian and military, to collect and save as much as possible of the *grain crop of the century*, harvested and lying in the fields of Ukraine, southern Russia and the north Caucasus, the Volga region, and Kazakhstan. There is, as of Aug. 9, every chance—despite enormous harvest losses resulting from deficiencies in transport and storage—that a record *saved* grain crop will materialize from this harvest. The prospect is thus at hand that the U.S.S.R. will emerge self-sufficient in grain for the first time in two decades.

U.S. congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche, upon hearing the news, pointed to a proposal that he made in a speech in Berlin on Oct. 12, 1988. In the context of the coming reunification of Germany, he said at that time, we must define relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in such a way that food policy becomes the basis for promoting peace, to ensure food security for every person and every nation on this planet. “Now that the Soviets seem to have overcome, somewhat, part of their terrible food crisis, it probably marks this as the time to proceed for a true Food for Peace program as the next step,” LaRouche said on Aug. 9.

‘A chance to feed ourselves’

What is at stake in the war for the harvest was spelled out in the front-page headline of the Aug. 5 *Pravda*: “A chance to feed ourselves.” The article carried the announcement that the grain harvest (before losses) is a whopping 300 million tons, then declaring that while it is realistic to believe that losses can be kept within the normal annual range of 30-40 million tons, the total remaining would be more than the 1989 harvest after losses (211 million tons) *plus* record grain imports of some 40 million tons.

Pravda added that it is “still more realistic” to expect losses to be higher. However, even should losses total 60 million tons, which now appears realistic, that still leaves an all-time record of 240 million tons, surpassing the 1978 record of 237 million tons.

For the first time in over a decade, Moscow will not be beholden to the multinational grain cartels. In the worst case scenario (a harvest of some 240 million tons), Moscow could

reduce the grain imports needed for consumption by some 30 million tons—although actual purchases from the West, under this scenario, would be higher, as Russia would desire to procure a buffer for next year. In the best-case scenario, pulling in 250-260 million tons, imports could be drastically reduced and every ton imported would go for next year’s buffer. In either case, billions of dollars in precious foreign exchange would be saved, and could be used for importing, above all from united Germany, capital goods, machinery, and infrastructural and processing equipment to help revive and develop the shattered civilian economy. Add this factor to the “oil windfall” of *minimally* \$15 billion extra per year in hard currency export earnings that Russia will receive with an oil price rise to \$30 per barrel, and one sees that Russia has acquired the basis for financing massive imports of German, French, Japanese, and South Korean goods and technology.

Effort on a wartime scale

The decisive phase of the “war” to bring in the harvest began Aug. 3, when “extreme measures” decreed by an emergency session of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers were announced. These measures constituted, as reported by Radio Moscow that day, a mobilization “to assist in gathering the harvest” of men and equipment from the Army, the KGB, the Interior Forces, workers from urban enterprises, and students. Indeed, the students of the Soviet Union, who since last year have been exempted from military service, have now been “drafted” to serve in the war for the harvest.

As confirmed in statements by Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and others, the Army, KGB, and other security forces are engaged in the biggest deployment since World War II. Under the new “extreme measures,” 10,000 additional Army trucks were called out to join the 35,000 Army trucks already deployed since mid-July to help transport the harvested grain and other produce.

The militarization of the harvest extends beyond mobilizing “all hands” to go to the fields. For example, as noted in the Aug. 3 military daily, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, units and vehicles from the Soviet Western Group of Forces, based in East Germany, have been sent to the Volga region to help bring in the harvest—a historic first. The Soviet Air Force’s military transport fleet has been deployed to move perishable crops like fruits and vegetables from the area of production to urban consumption centers throughout the U.S.S.R.

The effort now being undertaken falls just short of a formally proclaimed national state of emergency. Such a declaration sometime during August cannot be excluded. As TASS reported on Aug. 4, “several participants” at the Aug. 3 emergency session had called for proclaiming a national state of emergency for the duration of the harvest. That next level of mobilization in this war could soon occur. After all, the stakes for Moscow, namely achieving the capability to “feed ourselves,” could not be higher.