

# Russia's Virgin Lands Beckon But Muscle, Patience Required

(Editor's Note: This is the fourth of five reports on "Russia Revisited" by a former Moscow correspondent who recently made an extensive tour of the Soviet Union.)

**By COLETTE BLACKMOORE**  
United Press International  
Kaskelensky Virgin Land Farm, Kazakhstan, USSR — UPI—The call of the far-off Virgin Lands is a glamorous one, but it demands plenty of muscle, a strong stomach and a lifetime of patience.

From a cozy seat in Moscow, it may seem like a thrilling experience to go build a new world out East. And no doubt it will seem even more so a hundred years from now when the story of how Siberia was opened up to Communism is a major chapter in every Russian child's history book—like the conquering of the American Wild West.

If there are no Indians or massacres in the Siberian picture, the Soviet story-tellers will probably have invented them by then. As for other obstacles, such as bad men and the struggle against the elements, wind, thunder, and famine, there will be enough of those to lend excitement to the Eastern epic.

But right now, even the most expert Hollywood script writers would have a hard time making the Virgin Lands of Kazakhstan appear the place to spend the rest of one's life.

## Takes Guts

To stick with it out here, hundreds of miles from a decent movie house and a football stadium, it takes more guts than possessed by some of those Russian youths who have answered the Communist Party's appeal to go East.

A good many young Soviets though, and they were the majority, have had the stick-to-it-iveness required and they have settled down to raise Virgin Land families as well as crops.

It is those who stayed and those who are yet to come and stay that we write about here.

The dirt road leading to Kaskelensky Farm is full of ruts and detours. The only inhabitants are the prairie dogs who sit on their haunches un-

til the sound of a car sends them scurrying down their holes.

## No Trees

The yellow brown landscape stretches for miles without running into a single tree. If the earth were not round, there would be no end to the wheat fields you could see, especially with a strong telescope.

For here it is wheat and not corn that comes close to being as "high as an elephant's eye."

Suddenly, plunked down in the middle of nowhere, like an oasis in the steppe, you come upon a settlement of more than 5,000 people with cottages, stores, schools, barns, stores and machine repair shops.

Five years ago, there was nothing and no one on this land.

In November, 1954, the first pioneers arrived, carting their tents on their backs. One Siberian winter later, barracks began to replace some of the tents and by the spring of 1956, 12,000 hectares (nearly 30,000 acres) of winter wheat had ripened.

Six thousand more hectares followed and that fall the first delivery of 1,300,000 pounds (almost 47 million pounds) was in the hands of the Soviet government.

## Hard-Going

Kaskelensky State Farm was a going concern, a hard-going one.

The year 1957 saw the acreage expanded, but it also brought little rainfall and the harvest was none too good. The farmers discovered that growing wheat in dry southern Kazakhstan is a risky business—water has to be pumped up to irrigate every square foot of sown land.

Better not to put all your eggs in one basket. So they settled on 24,000 hectares of wheat and went in for sheep, livestock and poultry raising as well.

The farm already has 47,000 sheep, 2,000 head of livestock and 9,000 chickens and is aiming for more. Horses and camels, traditional load bearers in Kazakhstan, help trac-

tors and combines with the heavy work.

Kaskelensky settlers came from all over the Soviet Union. Besides Russians, Ukrainians and Kazakhs, there are some 14 other nationalities, including Azerbaijanians, Kalmuks, Tatars and lots of Volga Germans whom Stalin exiled to the republic before the war.

## Like Mushrooms

Four hundred of the farm's families now live in individual two and three room cottages, strewn like mushrooms over the land.

Small windows, thick walls and special roofing help to keep the inside cool in summer and warm in the well-buried winters.

Young trees and kitchen garden vineyards are beginning to give some shade out-of-doors.

And the dust is slowly coming under control—that intractable dust which is everywhere: in your nostrils, on your furniture and in your food. "You should have seen it the first year," the farmers say. "We had a visiting foreign photographer here and every time he raised his camera it was to shoot the dust."

No one who has ever lived in a dust bowl can imagine what life is like in the hundreds of new farms in Soviet Siberia, like this one.

## Few Prospects

You battle against nature all day with few prospects for pleasure in the evening. "About all there is to do when you get home is to read, listen to the radio and make children," is how one Russian put it.

In the first few years, the lack of recreation and especially the scarcity of girls were the main reasons why some of the young people quit the Virgin Lands. The farm's deputy director explained: "A fellow often had to travel many kilometers to find a wife and when he found one the temptation not to return was great."

Last year the Communist Party met this problem by appealing in newspapers all over the country for volunteer-

# Cambodia Police Order Arrests

Pnom Penh, Cambodia—UPI—Authorities investigating Monday's palace bombing have ordered the arrest of "a number" of members of the anti-government underground, it was reported today.

The arrests resulted from a palace guard officer's report that he received a letter signed by the underground last week advising him to resign his post because "we are going to wipe out the whole royal family."

Prince Vakrivan, chief of palace protocol, and two other members of the royal staff were killed when a package addressed to King Suramarit and Queen Sisowath exploded while it was being unwrapped.

The king and queen escaped injury because an appointment called them away from the room where the package was being unwrapped about two minutes before it blew up.

Girls. It warned them that they were in for a rough time, but promised them their pick of boy friends and husbands who would appreciate them.

For more than 20,000 girls, this was a promise too good to resist and they came and are still coming to Kazakhstan.

## Enough Women

"Now we have enough women" said the deputy director. "And to keep the young people we have built an outdoor concrete dance floor where a home grown orchestra plays in the evenings, and soon we will put up our own palace of culture."

In looking over the Virgin Lands, where good harvests still do not come easily and where life begins at the bare bones, one wonders why the Soviet leaders undertook this tremendous project of plowing up 21 million hectares of new earth in five years.

An English agricultural expert who toured the area said that from the farmer's viewpoint it would make much more sense to try to double wheat output in the fertile Ukraine than to take such a risk here in uncertain land.

# State's 13 Interim Committee Costing About Quarter Million

Salem—UPI—Oregonians are paying about a quarter of a million dollars for 13 interim committees appointed by the 1959 Legislature to study critical state problems.

The committees are charged with reporting their recommendations to the 1961 Legislature after study and hearings slated for all parts of the state.

Included on the committees—which are designed to keep study rolling in key areas between legislative sessions every two years—are senators, representatives and, in some cases, lay members appointed by the governor for their specialized knowledge.

Most expensive committee is one on education which is chaired by Sen. Ward Cook (D-Portland). The Legislature appropriated \$73,000 for a study of school finance and other pressing school problems.

Rep. Clarence Barton (D-Columbia) again heads the interim tax committee, another major group which is investigating the state's tax structure with an eye to getting more industry for Oregon. The Legislature appropriated \$25,000 for this purpose.

Another area where the state spends large amounts of

money is being studied by the Interim Committee on Public Welfare, which is responsible for studying the state's welfare program and also the administration and enforcement of public welfare laws.

Rep. Grace Pech (D-Portland) is chairman of this committee, which also received a \$25,000 appropriation.

Some committees such as the ones on Executive Appointments and Traffic Court Rules required no appropriation while the interim committee on highways uses its own funds to study all phases of motor transportation.

The important highway committee is headed by Sen. Anthony Yturri (R-Ontario). The Committee on Traffic Court Rules is a new one, designed to study traffic offenses, including arrests, traffic tickets, fines and court procedures. Included on the committee are Attorney General Robert Y. Thornton, Capt. Farley Mogan of the state police, Vern Hill, director of the state motor vehicle department, plus lawyers and judges.

Criminal Law Revisions. A valuable service is performed by the emergency board composed of four senators and five representatives

who must pass on money matters for various state agencies while the Legislature is not in session.

A revision of Oregon's criminal law will be studied by an interim committee headed by Sen. Carl H. Francis (R-Dayton). Four district attorneys will help the legislators with this complex subject.

Labor management relations also will get a working over from a committee headed by Sen. Harry D. Boivin

(D-Klamath Falls).

A detailed study to determine the best method of administering and enforcing laws relating to natural resources will be performed by a committee of which Sen. Andrew Naterlin (D-Newport) is chairman.

The interim committee on agriculture with Sen. Francis Ziegler (R-Corvallis) at its head will try to determine the source, volume and use of public funds for agriculture.

Other committees include Interstate Cooperation and Mining Board appointments.

Some of the committees already have held meetings to organize and start gathering background information.

MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or. Thursday, Sept. 3, 1959

# Coos Bay Awarded Television Channel

Washington—UPI—A Federal Communications Commission examiner Wednesday recommended award of TV channel 11 at Coos Bay, Ore., to Pacific Television, Inc.

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# Key to Feeding World Population Held by Botanists

Montreal—(Science Service)

Seaweed and algae are not the miracles that will dampen the fuse on the "O-bomb"—"O" for overpopulation—that is now threatening to explode. Neither will turning tropical jungles or barren deserts into farmland provide enough food for the millions of people. The main hope for feeding them will come from increasing future plant productivity per unit area throughout the world.

This is what Dr. E. C. Stakman, plant pathologist at the University of Minnesota, told scientists here recently at the 9th International Botanical Congress. "Plants hold the basic patents on which depends man's earthly existence," he said. Because of this, "Botanists are among the most important people in the world, for it is they who are the explorers, the interpreters and the reformers in the plant kingdom."

During the ten-day conference, he pointed out, the world population will be increased by "another Montreal." Close to 1,300,000 more persons will need to be fed.

**Seaweed and Algae**  
Right now there are many serious problems and difficulties in using foods such as seaweed and algae. Cost, engineering methods of cultivation are some of the unknowns. It is doubtful, Dr. Stakman indicated, that the pressing urgency of feeding 45,000,000 new mouths a year can be met by these crops. There are some prospects, but few certainties, that substantial areas of new lands can be provided for agriculture, the American botanist said.

Birth control, which many persons advocate as an answer to overpopulation, is not only difficult to implement, it does not answer the present overpopulation problem.

However, there are three basic ways in which agricultural productivity can be increased: 1. Breeding and selecting better plants; 2. Improved plant nutrition; 3. Improved plant protection. With research directed to these fields, significant increases in food production can be achieved in a relatively short time, Dr. Stakman said.

The past has already shown what can be done with "breeding, feeding and protection,"

he pointed out.

## Unsuitable Regions

Strains of corn and wheat, bred especially to survive drought, disease and other catastrophes, have virtually doubled yields and made it possible to grow crops in supposedly unsuitable regions. Adding micronutrients to the soil can increase crop yields many times. As an example, Dr. Stakman said that the addition of one pound an acre of ammonium molybdenate to soil that had been fertilized increased the yield of one kind of clover ten times.

The best-bred and best-fed crop will be useless for food if it is not protected to insure that the increased yield will be maintained from year to year. Even in the U.S., the botanist said, yields from important economic crops will vary greatly.

In the underdeveloped countries, where maintaining the food supply is almost always a precarious endeavor, an unforeseen storm or insect plague can be disastrous. These countries, Dr. Stakman suggested, might do well to devote some 75 per cent of their research funds to preventing or alleviating the physical hunger of the people.

Experimentation  
"There is need for experimentation to determine when and where the facts and principles revealed by research can be applied to the solution of the food problem," he said. International Institutes to study basic and regional botanical problems related to the food problem could help.

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