

# Speculation Occurs Even With Collective Russian Gardeners

By NEIL A. MARTIN  
United Press International

"They squeezed blood out of the customers for green onions, lettuce, radishes, cucumbers and tomatoes. And the price lists, hidden away from the buyer, are still doing no good."

A Soviet tirade against a capitalist economy?

No, it's just another in a series of blasts at Soviet collective farmers which have appeared in the Russian press during the past few months.

Some Soviet farmers, it seems, are guilty of a serious economic crime — speculation. They are said to be buying up large quantities of farm produce, trucking it hundreds of miles to big city markets and selling it at handsome profits.

Pravda, Izvestia, Ekonomicheskaya Gazetta and other publications have publicized the mushrooming activities of these speculators with stories and pictures. The press coverage has coincided with government drive to curb the illegal dealings of such Soviet economic entrepreneurs.

In the Soviet Union, speculation, black market dealing, embezzlement, hoarding and bribery are economic crimes punished by heavy fines, imprisonment or even death before a firing squad.

Farmers Arrested  
Several farmers were arrested this summer in Siberia,

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where they were caught selling tons of citrus fruits at extravagant prices. The fruits were brought from the distant Georgian Republic by plane to northern Soviet cities.

Speculation is an old problem for the Soviet Union. But since the death of Stalin in 1953, collective farmers have been playing their quick-money schemes with alarming regularity. And Soviet officials appear unable or unwilling to crack down on the speculators.

Under the collective farm system, Soviet farmers share in the surplus produce of the farm and are permitted to cultivate their own private gardens. It is also legal for them to sell any excess farm or garden goods on the open markets in the larger Soviet cities.

Consequently, many collective farmers spend more time cultivating their own gardens and traveling to the city markets than tilling the government fields.

The government has tolerated this in the past because in some areas the collective and state farms were unable to supply Soviet consumer demands. Supplementary food — regardless of its origin — was welcomed.

Supply 81 Per Cent  
Although the private plots represented less than 3.2 per cent of Soviet farm land tilled in 1961, they supplied 81 per cent of the nation's eggs, 60 per cent of the potatoes and 40 per cent of the meat.

On the other hand, the Moscow City Vegetable and Fruit administration last month received from state and collective farms only 371 tons of green onions instead of the 500 tons ordered, 341 tons of radishes instead of 1,100 tons and 19 tons of lettuce instead of the assigned 130 tons.

The economic weekly speculated that Moscow market officials were conniving with the speculators for a share of the profits. Maximum prices set by the government were supposed to be posted in clear view of the buyer. But, the paper said, the price lists were hidden from the traffic center and placed unnoted near the store manager's office.

As a result, the paper reported, green onions were priced at one ruble and 20 kopeks (\$1.33) per kilogram (2.2 pounds), but were sold by speculators for five rubles (\$5.55) per kilogram. Other fruits and vegetables were sold at three times their listed price, the paper added.

Officials Check  
Market officials are supposed to check the collective farmers

for "certificates of ownership" which prove they own a private garden and are qualified to sell the goods.

Since 1954, however, the Soviet trade ministry has suggested that officials not bother the farmers for their papers in order to increase the flow of farm produce to the market.

Thus when Soviet farmers arrive at city markets hundreds of miles from their homes with truckloads of fruit and vegetables, Soviet officials have no accurate way of checking whether the farmers' credentials are authentic or where the produce came from.

One paper said a farmer recently turned up in Moscow with three tons of early cabbage.

"Is anyone going to believe he grew it in his own kitchen garden?" the paper sneered.

The farmer apparently had little trouble selling his cabbage at what was described as a good profit.

One Soviet militiaman was quoted as saying: "They come with a sack of apples and leave with a sack of money, and nothing can be done about it."

Senate Committee Hears Tax Experts

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Senate Finance committee was to begin a series of closed-door briefings from staff experts today on the complex \$11 billion tax cut bill passed by the House.

The tutoring sessions were expected to continue into next week. Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon then will be called as the first witness in public hearings, expected to continue for many weeks. Already 75 persons have asked to testify.

The measure, approved by the House eight days ago, would provide reductions for virtually every federal taxpayer starting Jan. 1. One-third of the cut would be delayed until Jan. 1, 1965.

It is doubtful that Congress will complete action on the measure this year because of lengthy hearings and the civil rights bill. However, supporters say that if the bill is not passed until next year, the first stage of the two-part tax cut would be made retroactive to Jan. 1, 1961.

Mail Fraud Trial Date Rescheduled

PORTLAND (UPI) — Trial date of seven Chicago and Los Angeles area men on mail fraud charges in connection with sale of desert land near Burns in Eastern Oregon, was changed from Nov. 25 to Dec. 2 Wednesday.

Six of the men entered pleas of innocent Wednesday to a new indictment, and the other is expected to enter a plea next week. The new indictment was similar to the first but applied several rulings by Federal Judge John F. Kilkenny modifying several words and phrases.

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