

Vanguard

Organ of the National Steering Committee of the
Zimbabwe Communist Party Vol. 2 No. 2

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FOCUS ON *AGRICULTURE*



ZimCom Publishers for the
Zimbabwe Communist Party

From:
**How the Steel
was Tempered**
(1934)



Man's dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world — the fight for the Liberation of Mankind

by Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904-1936)

~ CONTENTS ~

EDITORIAL: PRODUCTION AND AGRICULTURE	4
LETTER: THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATED MEMBERSHIP	7
MESSAGE FROM SACP: ON THE LAUNCH OF THE ZCP	8
MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM WFTU - AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE	10
WFTU: ADDRESS OF GENERAL SECRETARY TO 106th ILC	12
WFTU; STATEMENT ON THE DISMISSAL OF 200 AIR ZIMBABWE WORKERS	14
SACP 14th CONGRESS	15
AMALGAMATED RURAL TEACHERS' UNION OF ZIMBABWE	17
VICTIMISATION OF A RURAL TEACHER	21
ACCELERATED FLOOD IRRIGATION	22
VERMICULTURE: THE USE OF EARTHWORMS IN AGRICULTURE	27
BEES AND BEE-KEEPING	33
LAND REFORM IN THE USSR	38
ORGANIC GARDENING IN CUBA	53
AGRICULTURAL MIRACLE IN VIETNAM	56

EDITORIAL:

PRODUCTION AND AGRICULTURE

The principal purpose of *Vanguard* is to educate and organise Communists and sympathisers in Zimbabwe and outside around the programme of our party, the Zimbabwe Communist Party; the core of our Party Programme being our Political Economy Programme which above all addresses the problem of reviving production in Zimbabwe.

For those who have a simplistic view of Marxism and think that Marxism is only about the working-class and class struggle, we recommend them to read more deeply into the works of Marx and Engels who consistently refer to ‘modes of production’. Marx’s *Capital* tells us in detail how capitalism works. It deals principally with the production and circulation of commodities. Socialism is conceived as an improved, less anarchistic and more equitable **mode of production**. In Zimbabwe at present, production is at a minimum and most of the working-class has been forced either into the informal sector (we published a document on the informal sector in the last issue of *Vanguard*) or into exile.

One of the few real Communists to ever be part of the Zimbabwe Government, former Deputy Minister of Finance Comrade Misheck Chinamasa, once commented privately:

“They talk about socialism — Do they know what socialism is? — Do they know what capitalism is?”

Remark made by Misheck Chinamasa to Ian Beddowes in Harare at the time of the Unity Accord (1988)

The “revolutionaries” of ZANU(PF) have taken over the means of production in the name of “indigenous empowerment” — and given them to the parasitic bourgeoisie, sometimes even referring to this process as “nationalisation”. Indeed, a few years ago, an article in the ZANU(PF) newspaper *Voice* bore the heading *Indigenisation Through Privatisation!*

The economy, then, is not only about ownership — it is also about production:

“...it is impossible to create or introduce socialism without learning from the organisers of the trusts. For socialism is not a figment of the imagination... if we are not Communists of infantile age and infantile understanding, we must learn from them, and there is something to learn, for the party of the proletariat and its vanguard have no experience of independent work in organising giant enterprises which serve the needs of scores of millions of people.”

V.I. Lenin, ‘Left-Wing’ Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality (1918): LCW Vol.27 p.350

“We have assumed power in a country whose technical equipment is terribly backward. Along with a few big industrial units more or less based upon modern technology, we have hundreds and thousands of mills and factories the technical equipment of which is beneath all criticism from the point of view of modern achievements. At the same time we have around us a number of capitalist countries whose industrial technique is far more developed and up-to-date than that of our country. Look at the capitalist countries and you will see that their technology is not only advancing, but advancing by leaps and bounds, outstripping the old forms of industrial technique.

And so we find that, on the one hand, we in our country have the most advanced system, the Soviet system, and the most advanced type of state power in the world, Soviet power, while, on the other hand, our industry, which should be the basis of socialism and of Soviet power, is extremely backward technically. Do you think that we can achieve the final victory of socialism in our country so long as this contradiction exists?"

"What has to be done to end this contradiction? To end it, we must overtake and outstrip the advanced technology of the developed capitalist countries. We have overtaken and outstripped the advanced capitalist countries in the sense of establishing a new political system, the Soviet system. That is good. But it is not enough. In order to secure the final victory of socialism in our country, we must also overtake and outstrip these countries technically and economically. Either we do this, or we shall be forced to the wall."

J.V. Stalin, *Industrialisation of the Country and the Right Deviation in the CPSU(B)*, Speech Delivered at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (1928) StWorks Vol. 11 pp.257-258

The conditions in Zimbabwe in 2017 are, of course, very different from those of Russia in 1917. But the necessity of production remains.

Did Marx, Engels or Lenin ever conceive of a revolution in which production virtually slowed to a halt?

Probably not. But the kind of thinking which Lenin and Stalin gave to the specific conditions of Russia one hundred years ago is the kind of thinking which we need to apply when looking at our own situation. Our country, Zimbabwe, is primarily an agricultural country — more so today than it was in 1980 due to the systematic closure of industry by the parasitic bourgeoisie in its quest for plunder. In order to build the nation, we must first feed it. We must also develop our production of important exportable cash crops.

We must honestly study the problems. We must examine Land Reform since 2000, neither praising nor denigrating the process as a whole, but studying it critically. It is not true that the Land Reform process has been a total disaster. Although the general state of agriculture is poor, there are areas in which the resettled farmers have been productive. The process has been uneven. Neither can **all** the problems of agriculture be blamed on badly implemented Land Reform. The total population of Zimbabwe — that is of those living within the country alone — is more than double what it was in 1980 — there are more than double the number of mouths to feed. Global warming has also taken its toll — since Independence the number of drought years has increased.

If we are serious about improving agriculture we must take **ALL** conditions into account, both human and environmental.

It is obvious that we have to revisit the problem of who has possession of land and how they are using it. Land should only be allocated to those serious about farming; a farm cannot be simply another item on the portfolio of a Harare businessman. Land must be owned and worked on by the people who live on it.

We must also study irrigation — which requires not only water, but also electricity.

We need to study land usage — are we making optimum use of the land, growing the crops, rearing the livestock, planting the orchards suitable for a particular area?

How are we dealing with forestry land, in particular in Manicaland and Matabeleland North?

How to we deal with the ‘mombes and mealies’* mentality among a large portion of our peasantry?

Can we teach our people about the commercial production of game meat, ostrich, goats, pigs and fish?

Can we teach our people that bees are not only about honey, but are vital for pollination of all fruit, bean and sunflower crops?

In carrying out these programmes we must, also examine the eating habits and food needs of the people. Can we educate our people to eat less mealie-meal and more traditional small-grains (as their ancestors did), more potatoes and sweet potatoes?

Tobacco is an important export crop — but there is also an ethical consideration — must we continue to poison the world with a highly addictive drug for profit?

Export crops are important, they bring in valuable FOREX. — How do we balance the food needs of our people with the need to earn much needed foreign exchange?

This issue of *Vanguard* will begin to examine some of these important problems both practically and theoretically. We must not only open up the debate but also use that debate practically for the improvement of agricultural methods. We will also study how agriculture has been handled in the socialist countries and see what lessons can be learned from them.

In future, at least one issue of *Vanguard* every year will be devoted predominantly to agriculture. Articles, letters, criticisms will be welcomed.

Ian Patrick Beddowes

Editor, ZimCom Publishers and *Vanguard*

*MOMBES AND MEALIES: Cattle and maize.

LETTER:

THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATED MEMBERSHIP

It is a generally optimistic reception that the Zimbabwe Communist Party has been met with upon its official foundation. While the reaction of the general public has been mixed, ranging from suspicion (of being an opportunistic ZANU(PF) project for example) to solidarity and intrigue; the first month has proved favourable in terms of recruitment. Those who have been following the early discourse amongst the general membership will however notice that despite this enthusiasm, understanding of basic Marxist principles amongst those joining the party is unacceptably low. Specifically, concepts such as ‘Vanguardism’ and ‘Scientific Socialism’ are often somewhat lost not only on these eager comrades but even more so on our target audience, the working-class as a whole. Surely, one cannot be expected to successfully make the case for communism without first genuinely understanding the underlying philosophy that forms the foundation of communism. Academic understanding of all the relevant theory must be a prerequisite for joining party discourse in practice; the Communist Party is not a platform to introduce new ideas that could clash with the foundational principles of Marxism-Leninism. Such voices would result in inconsistency and incoherence as we present our case. With this in mind, the primary strategy of the party for the next few years must be centred on building a solid academic foundation which party members can refer back to when contributing to party policy and winning over the workers and peasants. Equipping the membership with this education will streamline our efforts to build class consciousness amongst the masses.

It is understandable that many new comrades have little understanding of Marxism-Leninism. While the party leadership has a relevant practical background, most new comrades do not. The comrade writing this is no exception. It is the intention of this article to guide new members away from contributing their personal ideas without first ensuring that their worldview is formed through Marxist eyes. This extends beyond what we expect of a comrade in terms of their political views but ultimately in terms of how they perceive the world as a whole. Of course there is wiggle room in how you may view these things. Contrary to the capitalist narrative, communists are not conformist automatons who may only echo the leadership and it is not the intention of the party to compromise your freedom of thought. In fact, free thought is an important part of your capacity to make contributions towards our common aim. However if your foundational worldview is at odds with Scientific Socialism, you will need to refer back to your literature. Otherwise your contribution will simply muddy the discourse. Comrades in the leadership will send you literature on anything you need to brush up on from collectivisation to dialectical materialism. There is plenty of material to get stuck in to. Make no mistake; I know it isn’t light reading. Communist theory is hard. Universities teach this stuff as part of degree programmes. It can be daunting but this is a major utility of the party leadership. It is a support network for your education. You will notice the General Secretary offers Q&A’s on his personal Facebook page for example. Use these facilities; they are at your disposal. Let us work towards a well educated membership where every contribution is well informed. Surely then, we can only move forwards.

Harry Mutonga
Binga

Editor: Thank you Comrade Harry! *Vanguard* welcomes more letters like this!



SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

Message on the occasion of the launch of the Zimbabwe Communist Party

28th April 2017

Dear Comrades,

The South African Communist Party has not been a distant observer to your processes of forming the Zimbabwe Communist Party. Our Party has worked with many of you, in more than one capacity. South Africa has become a home to many Zimbabweans. Our struggle as the working class for democracy and social emancipation cannot be compartmentalised within national borders. It is a struggle whose success depends on the achievement of a socialist transition from capitalist barbarity and bourgeoisie dictatorship, to a communist society in which all forms of class rule and exploitation, their material basis and superstructures, will be abolished.

Our shared struggle is a struggle against the world-wide regime of capitalist exploitation and its consequent forms of political and broader social domination. Its highest stage, as Lenin succinctly put it, is imperialism. Its reigning manifestation is neoliberal globalisation, a process driven largely, but not exclusively, by transnational corporations and the Washington based institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank with the United States Treasury, and its entire imperialist regime structure as well as its allies, mainly from Western Europe, pulling the strings. Zimbabwe, as many other countries in Africa and the global south, was inserted and has since been hard-pressed in this oppressive regime of imperialism.

The forces of private finance monopoly capital have become dominant in the process. They control not only financial and capital markets, for example Wall Street in New York, the London Stock Exchange, that of Frankfurt in Germany, that of Paris in France, the Johannesburg Securities Exchange in South Africa, and so on. They also dominate the productive sector by means of the financial muscle they have accumulated through economic and financial exploitation of less powerful nation states and the masses of the working class. It is mainly these forces that have aggressively been driving the restructuring of the productive sector to maximise capital accumulation or “returns”. This includes severe investment conditionalities in the productive sector. This trend has now been **coupled with the now increasingly dominant speculative financial and capital market activities as opposed to the productive sector.**

In both our countries as in some other national liberation movements the problems of imperialist domination and the fight against it have been compounded by the rise in government of the parasitic bourgeoisie. Hiding behind the anti-imperialist struggle, the parasitic bourgeoisie selfishly utilises the gains of the liberation movement. Linked with this are many other problems driven by private or self-interests. We are looking forward in sharing our experiences in this regard and, most importantly, the way forward for our region and the African revolution.

Our struggle as the working class is an international struggle against a world regime of exploitation and its consequent forms of social domination. It is a struggle we must wage inside and across national borders. There are a significant number of comrades who have been involved in the formation of the Zimbabwe Communist Party who are correctly active in South Africa politically, and in broader social terms, on matters that affect not only Zimbabwean citizens but also South African citizens. We have shared our offices, our energies and the meagre resources available to our disposal in this regard. We have provided each other, according to our capacities, the solidarity we both need. We have done our best to contribute to the union of the two major communist formations that have come together to form the Zimbabwe Communist Party and to the success of the launch of the Party.

Congratulations are in order, dear comrades.

We are now looking forward to the growth of the Zimbabwe Communist Party both in terms of quantity and quality. We are looking forward to a better future for the Zimbabwean people, the majority of whom are the working class and peasants and live under conditions of exploitation, inequality and poverty. There are many Zimbabwean people not only in South Africa but also in other parts of the world due to the economic and political problems of capitalism both in its imperialist and local parasitic forms that have engulfed Zimbabwe. We are looking forward to seeing the Zimbabwe Communist Party addressing and finally resolving these problems. We pledge our revolutionary democratic international solidarity!

This message was meant to be delivered directly at the meeting that formally launched the Zimbabwe Communist Party in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. It was not delivered because Comrade Alex Mashilo, SACP National Spokesperson and Head of Communications together with Ian Beddowes of the Zimbabwe Communist League and Nicholas Mabhena of the Zimbabwe Communist Group were held at the Beitbridge border for 12 hours while going to the launch. Mashilo and Beddowes eventually had no other option but to return to South Africa after a day of interrogation by the Zimbabwe security cluster. The launch was held at an undisclosed venue outside Bulawayo because of the refusal of the Zimbabwe Republic Police to allow the formation of a Communist Party in a normal public hall. Despite the fact that Ian Beddowes was not allowed to proceed to the launch and that Nicholas Mabhena was delayed until after the Founding Conference was over, Comrade Mabhena was elected General Secretary and Comrade Beddowes National Political Commissar.



WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS – AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

WFTU MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO THE LAUNCHING OF THE FOUNDING CONFERENCE OF THE ZIMBABWE COMMUNIST PARTY ON 29 – 30 APRIL 2017.

Dear comrades and friends

The World Federation of Trade Unions, a class-oriented, democratic, militant trade union movement with 96 million members in all continents of the world, salutes you at the occasion of the launch of your revolutionary party. The launch of your party could not have happened at a better time as the internationalization of the capitalist production is daily causing a mess of the lives of the working class all over the world. International monopoly capitalism creates unprecedented miseries, poverty, unemployment, mass displacements and death all over the world generally and in the developing countries in particular. It also undermines the authority and sovereignty of the developing countries as well as ravaging their economies in its quest to maximize profits.

The whole world knows the plight of the working class of Zimbabwe which is the same as the situation of the working class in Swaziland, Lesotho, in fact all over Southern Africa, Africa, Latin America and Asia. In this context international monopoly is the common enemy of the working class all over the world. Imperialism imposes austerities everywhere using neocolonialism as the sharp weapon of exploitation of both the natural and human resources. They are able to do so through consistent support of neocolonial regimes and their national bourgeoisie.

In such a situation, the workers are left vulnerable and are even reduced to pauperism. The only hope for the working class is to unite and struggle to emancipate themselves; and to struggle successfully against their exploiters and oppressors. The working class needs a vehicle, which is a communist party, to lead and guide their struggles to victory. That vehicle is being born today.

For the working class, this conference is providing a ray of hope and should be supported with complete resolve. All the other classes that are victims of the barbaric system of capitalism should join hands together here at home and across borders and fight the scourge of exploitation of man by man. The clarion call, “workers of all countries unite” must be translated into practice.

The world is waiting in anticipation for the resolutions of your conference that will, for sure, raise the impetus of the struggle of the working class of Zimbabwe to a higher level. The revolutionary struggle of the working class is a struggle to defeat capitalism and imperialism and in its place establish socialism. We are together with you in the struggle to achieve socialism.

We wish your conference a huge success and look forward to working together.

~ 11 ~

Long live international working class solidarity!

This message was sent before the Founding Conference of the Zimbabwe Communist Party but we did not receive it due to some problems with the Internet and therefore it was not published in the last issue of 'Vanguard'.

— *Editor*



**ADDRESS OF
WFTU GENERAL SECRETARY
GEORGE MAVRIKOS
TO THE**



**106th INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC)
PLENARY SESSION:**

Geneva, Switzerland, 12th June 2017



Dear Colleagues,

On the behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions, we would like to extend our warm greetings to all representatives of trade union organisations of workers.

We live in a time period in which life, life quality, work and working conditions for the working class and the poor farmers are getting worse and worse day-by-day in all capitalist world.

The situation for all workers is crucial; the younger generations, the young workers, the young scientists and the young farmers are living in uncertainty and insecurity about the future.

The WFTU tries to organise the resistance and the struggles of trade unions in every corner of the planet, with the aim of defending the rights acquired by workers in every country and sector.

From this podium, we condemn the trade union persecutions in Kazakhstan; we express our solidarity with trade unionists in Colombia who suffer from the violence of para-military groups; especially we stand by the side of Colombian trade unionists who struggle against the efforts for dismantling of their trade unions.

By the side of the workers in Honduras who struggle for collective bargaining agreements, by the side of teachers in Mexico in their struggles against the education reforms, we express our solidarity with the ex-Braceros* and with our brothers in Angola.

We express our solidarity with the teachers and the working class in Turkey who suffer the consequences of the anti-democratic policies of the government of Turkey. We condemn the anti-labour policy of SAMSUNG multinational and we support the Samsung General Labour Union and its General Secretary Kim Sung Hwan who was in prison for 3 years because of his trade union activity.

The situation is complex and uncertain. The severe poverty and high unemployment generate a lot of difficulties in the development of struggles.

But we have no alternative. It is our duty to unite all workers according to the social class they belong to and to organise our resistance, sometimes through defence, sometimes through attack; with a flexible and clever strategy so as to have concrete positive results for the benefit of workers.

Along with the struggle for our financial, social, democratic and trade union rights that we must carry-out, we must also strengthen our action against the strategies of imperialism, of multinationals and trans-nationals that cause bloodshed to many peoples and force millions of people to abandon their country, region and home.

As WFTU, within the international trade union movement, we have at the forefront of our struggles our solidarity and internationalism with the peoples and the countries that are suffering imperialists interventions.

- Venezuela is today the target of the policies of the US and its allies.
- Cuba continues to suffer from the criminal US blockade that lasts more than 55 years.
- The Palestinian people still live without having their own country, while thousands of Palestinian children are imprisoned in the jails of Israel.
- The Syrian people suffer from the attacks of thousands of mercenaries who have been recruited and supported by imperialists.
- The peoples of Iraq, of Mali, of Libya, of Afghanistan, are suffering from undemocratic policies.
- The Gulf region is on fire because of the economic rivalries and intra-imperialistic antagonisms.
- The people of Mexico experience racism and the threats of the US President, who threatens to build a wall and persecute all economic immigrants.

This is the outline of the dark reality of today's capitalism.

Under these circumstances the world working class, all workers, we need a militant, efficient and active trade union movement. We need trade unions that will have courage, that will withstand, that will be democratic; that they will pay attention to the base of their members and that will unite all workers irrespective of religion, colour, gender and language.

In today's framework the theme of "Building a future with decent work" is more accurate than ever and can be achieved only through class oriented struggles having in their centre the satisfaction of workers contemporary needs.

The trade union movement also needs a representative ILO, without exclusions and discriminations; with equal treatment of its members trade unions, with democracy and transparency.

In this direction the WFTU has composed and distributed a text of general principles. We will continue our fight until the current unilateral picture of the Governing Body comes to an end. Proportional representation, equality and transparency are the preconditions for decent work and decent relations.

Thank you

*EX-BRACEROS: 4.6 million Mexican workers participated in the Temporary Worker Program, also known as the Bracero Program, which began soon after the USA entered World War II in 1942 and ended in 1964. During their time in the United States, the braceros had 10% of their wages deducted as a pensions fund. The money was sent to the Mexican authorities by the US authorities but the ex-braceros have never received anything. Though they have won some partial victories, they are still fighting for their money.



Zimbabwe: WFTU Statement on the dismissal of 200 Air Zimbabwe workers



12th July 2017

The World Federation of Trade Unions stands on the side of the Air Zimbabwe workers. The air company announced the dismissal of 200 more workers in its fourth round of lay-offs in eight years after having cut 300 jobs in August 2015 following cuts in 2009 and 2013.

We believe that the excuses of the management that the company is overstaffed are hypocritical since they are planning to hire more planes. This development proves once more that both in public and private companies the motivation is the same: the augmentation of the profits.

The WFTU calls the class oriented trade unions in the country and internationally to struggle against dismissals and privatisation in public companies.

The Secretariat

SACP 14th CONGRESS

What Are The Lessons?

by Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena

The South African Communist Party held its 14th Congress in Boksburg, Gauteng 10th - 15th July 2017 under the theme, “Defend, Advance, Deepen the National Democratic Revolution”.

This Congress was held at a when the revolutionary Alliance — (African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU, and the South African National Civic Association (SANCO) — is facing serious challenges in advancing the National Democratic Revolution. The Zimbabwe Communist Party was invited to the Congress as a fraternal organisation and used the opportunity to draw political lessons from our fraternal ally, particularly on how the SACP seeks to maintain its relationship with the ANC.

The conditions in Zimbabwe are different from the South African conditions. While the SACP was founded in 1921 and has, over the years, been guided by the resolution of the Communist International in 1927 which defined the relationship between the Communist Party and the National Liberation Movement, in Zimbabwe we did not have a Communist Party during the struggle for national liberation. The short-lived Southern Rhodesian Communist Party(1941-1949) did not survive long enough to make its political mark during the struggle for liberation.

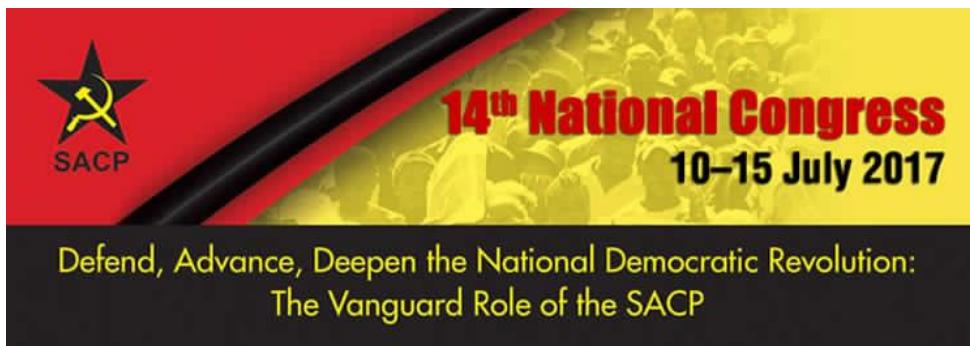
The liberation movement in Zimbabwe was supported by the Socialist Bloc countries (USSR, Cuba, etc) during the armed struggle. This did not in any way make our liberation movements communist parties. Historically the leadership of the liberation movements in the former colonies adopted and shouted socialist slogans to attract military support from the Socialist block, but upon liberation, those very leaders were the first to be captured by Western imperialist interests. The cabinets became committees of managers on behalf of the former colonists who continued to control the decisive means of production. The newly independent states achieved political freedom but nothing was done to transform the commanding heights of the economy for the benefit of society as a whole.

As Zimbabwean Communists, we have defined our struggle as the dual struggle against imperialism and unpatriotic black bourgeois. What we have observed in Zimbabwe is that, once the political leadership is exposed as economic looters, it quickly moves to adopt far-left-sounding populist policies in a bid to conceal its looting tendencies from the masses and place the blame on the doorstep of imperialist forces seeking a régime change agenda. They then seek to label those exposing their looting as agents of imperialism, or in the case of South Africa, as defenders of White Monopoly Capital.

The on-going debate on State Power is interesting for us as we are developing our strategic paper on our relationship to State Power. In Zimbabwe, the ZCP does not have a relationship with the ruling ZANU(PF) unlike the SACP which is part of the governing Alliance headed by the ANC. ZANU(PF) is a reactionary movement of economic looters and is anti-working-class; a former liberation movement that has betrayed the ideals of the liberation struggle. It should here be mentioned that while some of our comrades are members of ZAPU, as ZCP we have no formal relationship with ZAPU.

Our immediate political task is to build a strong progressive trade union movement and strong progressive informal sector organisations in Zimbabwe. With 94% of our urban working people now in informal employment, the building of strong, disciplined progressive organisations and through them revolutionary class-consciousness is critical.

The SACP Congress afforded us the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with other Communist Parties from around the world attending the Congress. We hope to take forward these discussions and formalise our relationship with these parties and hope to invite these parties to our Congress in two years time.



SACP TOP SIX ELECTED AT 14th CONGRESS



BLADE NZIMANDE
General Secretary



SOLLY MAPAILA
First Deputy
General Secretary



CHRIS MATLHAKO
Second Deputy
General Secretary



SENZENI ZOKWANA
National Chairperson



THULAS NXESI
Deputy
National Chairperson



JOYCE MOILO-MOROPA
National Treasurer



ZCP FRATERNAL DELEGATES, L to R:
TAKURA CHIPINDURA, Gauteng Provincial Secretary;
IAN BEDDOWES, National Political Commissar;
NGQABUTHO NICHOLAS MABHENA, General Secretary



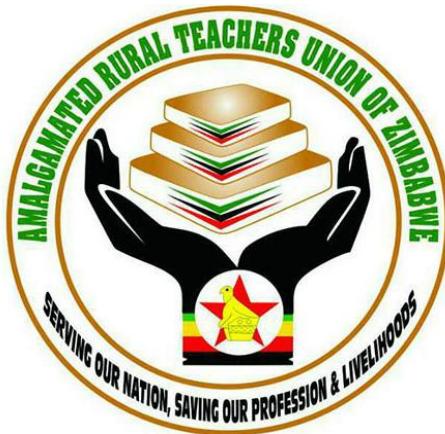
INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES L to R:
COMRADE SABIR, Representative,
Sudan People's Liberation Movement (North) (SPLM(N));
KENNETH KUNENE General Secretary,
Communist Party of Swaziland (CPS);
COMRADE from CPS,
N.N. MABHENA, General Secretary ZCP



LONDON RECRUITS RECEIVE SACP AWARD
Between 1967 and 1990 young people were recruited from
Britain and other European countries to work under cover for
the ANC and MK in South Africa.
Seen here (L to R) with former MK Chief of Intelligence,
RONNIE KASRILS are KEN KEABLE, Secretary of London
recruits, BOB NEWLAND and IAN BEDDOWES



ZCP GS WITH ZAPU DELEGATES L to R
DUMISO DABENGWA, ZAPU President
N.N. MASBHENA ZCP General Secretary
ROMA NYATHI, Chairperson ZAPU Council of Elders



AMALGAMATED RURAL TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE

The Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), formerly Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, is a teacher organisation founded in 2009 and launched officially in Harare on the 12th March 2013. The launch of RTUZ set a tone for our fight for the improvement of both working conditions of rural teachers and the livelihood of citizens living in rural areas. The idea of forming a rural teachers union was first mooted in 2009 when the government of Zimbabwe introduced an incentive scheme in which teachers were to get 10% of the levy paid by pupils. The incentive scheme benefited only the already privileged urban teachers. The rural teachers went on to meet in Gweru in August 2009 where we unanimously resolved that we had peculiar challenges that could best be represented by an autonomous, issues based, specific union, meant to amplify our voice in pressing for our demands to government. The Gweru meeting noted that the rural teacher is a central figure in rural communities and as such, the valuable contributions the rural teacher makes in strengthening both the development of our communities and the country as a whole should be recognised.

On 18th November 2016, the Rural Teachers Union Zimbabwe (RTUZ) united with other rural teacher associations and formed the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) and was duly registered with the Ministry of Labour and Public Service. ARTUZ currently has a membership of 5534 members and 233 associate members countrywide. The Union operates and has structures in eight (8) administrative provinces of Zimbabwe (excluding Harare and Bulawayo metropolitan provinces).

AIM

The aim of ARTUZ is to unite teachers, education workers and educationists and to work towards bridging the gap between rural teachers and urban teachers, so as to inspire rural teachers to fully commit themselves to their work and stimulate growth and development in rural communities.

VISION

The realisation of a motivated rural teacher peacefully co-existing with the community

MISSION

To enhance the capacity of rural teachers so that they become advocates of rural development and agents of community empowerment.

STRATEGIES

- Research, Policy Analysis and Monitoring
- Training, Education and Leadership
- Communication and Networking
- Lobbying and Advocacy

OBJECTIVES

- To negotiate on behalf of union members and to advance their individual and collective interests by entering into collective bargaining relations with the government and education authorities for the purposes of entering into collective agreements.
- To eradicate discrimination based on gender, sexism and sexual harassment of teachers, education workers and learners.
- To establish affirmative action programs for women and people with special needs and maximise their participation at all levels of the union and education system as a whole.
- To promote/oppose, as the case may be, any laws and administrative procedures that affect the interests of the members in particular and education at general.
- To institute legal proceedings on behalf of the union/its members in pursuance of the objectives of the union and to render, where appropriate, legal assistance to members in matters relating to education and employment.
- To conduct researches into educational & broader socio-economic matters.
- To establish and administer funds for the benefit of members and their dependents.

VALUES

- Transparency
- Equity and Equality
- Accountability
- Efficiency
- Democracy and solidarity

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Advisory Board
- National Executive Council

- Secretariat

PARTNERS

- Students Christian Movement of Zimbabwe (SCMZ)
- Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI)
- Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe (CCDZ)
- Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)
- ZINASU (Zimbabwe National Students Union)
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
- Counselling Service Unit (CSU)
- VERITAS

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Trained 80 teachers in post trauma counselling
- Produced 2 research reports on policies in the education sector
- Parliamentary engagement on new curriculum
- Bonus payments for 2016
- 3 end child marriages discussions in rural areas (2016)
- 4 sports for peace tournaments in 2016
- 3 peaceful protests in 2016

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Collective bargaining for better salaries, allowances and conditions of service
- Welfare and central legal protection, litigation, protection against arbitrary firing and unfair treatment at work.
- Individual low interest loans for members
- Free annual diary and T-shirts.
- Quarterly magazine, *The Rural Teacher*
- Monthly circulars/ circular letters/newsletters
- Teacher development programmes
- HIV and AIDS training programmes
- Grievance handling
- Teacher management and professional support services
- Study Circles
- Leadership Training Programmes
- Exchange programmes at regional and international levels

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VICTIMIISATION OF A RURAL TEACHER

The Case of Mackswel Basiyavo

Comrade Mackswel Basiyavo is Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Communist Party in Mashonaland Central. The ZCP calls on all class conscious trade unions and trade unionists inside and outside Zimbabwe to show solidarity with Comrade Mackswel and calls upon ZANU(PF) to stop victimising our member.



Mackswel Basiyavo

Statement made by ARTUZ 29th June 2017

The Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe, (ARTUZ), is sickened by the sustained victimisation of our National Legal Secretary, Mr Mackswel Basiyavo.

Comrade Basiyavo is a science teacher and a revolutionary trade unionist stationed at Chipindura Secondary School in Guruve. The ARTUZ leader has been a target of the ZANU(PF) régime which views him as a threat to the socio-political order in Mashonaland Central. The ruling party's proxies have been cooking cases against Comrade Basiyavo in a desperate bid to force him out of the teaching profession.

Initially Mr Basiyavo was maliciously charged with improperly associating with 5 minors but was acquitted as the kids exonerated him of any wrongdoing. Basiyavo was represented by prominent Guruve Lawyer, Nancy Mabhoyi in the protracted legal battle. The woman behind this malice being one headmistress by the name Nyepudzai Maporisa.

Maporisa then hatched another plan of organising ZANU(PF) members to demonstrate against the innocent teacher. On Friday 26th May Maporisa organised a meeting that comprised SDC members, local councillor Kamuzonde who happens to be a ghost worker in the Youth Ministry and ZANU (PF) District Chair to fine tune their doomed plot.

An SDC member who attended the meeting revealed that they were now mobilising a ZANU(PF) linked mob to demonstrate for the ouster of Basiyavo at the school even though he was found not guilty of all the charges they framed him with. The source said they're roping in the sitting MP for Guruve North, Rtd. Major-General Epmarcus W Kanhangwa so as to continue to instil fear into the revolutionary.

ARTUZ calls upon the Public Service Commission to take action against the misguided headmistress who has violated regulations by putting the life of her subordinate in danger. The headmistress is also derailing the STEM initiative by frustrating a science teacher working under difficult conditions in rural Guruve.

As a Union we will institute litigation against the immoral and uncouth woman who is both bringing the name of our profession into disrepute and putting the life of our Comrade at risk.

We call upon the ruling ZANU(PF) party to desist from interfering with education affairs. The party has chased many educators from rural schools disadvantaging rural learners in the process.

Fighting for pro-poor education.

ARTUZ INFORMATION

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ACCELERATED FLOOD IRRIGATION

In Zimbabwe, many ordinary people now have land but have neither the knowledge nor the equipment to use it well. Accelerated Flood Irrigation (AFI) is a simple, low input-cost method of growing vegetables. Using this method properly, as little as one hectare of land can produce enough income to comfortably sustain a family.

What is essential for this method of vegetable growing is a water source. One single tap with good pressure is enough plus a hosepipe long enough to reach all beds. Careful preparation of beds is, however, critical.

A typical bed will be 50 metres long and 4 metres wide — very long and narrow. The width should normally be 3.6 metres in order to facilitate cultivation from each side without having to walk on the bed.

Start by ploughing one hectare of land. It does not matter for this kind of agriculture if you own a tractor with a plough or not. Even if it is done using an ox or a donkey — it is still good.

Now comes the important part. Beds must be formed by hand. Four people should be able to make AT LEAST one bed per day.

Check the way the land slopes. (Your beds do not have to be in line with the fence surrounding the field).

Each bed must run along the slope so that it is as level as possible within itself. It does not have to be level with other beds.

Take pegs, a long line and a tape measure. Measure 50 metres by 3.6 metres and start preparing a bed with raised sides the same as you might do with a small bed close to your house. Mark the sides with pegs and a long piece of string. Keep your beds straight.

Now comes the more difficult part. With a bricklayers level and a long straight-edge, make sure that the bed is exactly level from end-to-end and from side-to-side; that may mean that in some places you will have to build the bed up, in others to dig down. But it must be level!

Now take a 50 metre length of hosepipe and close one end by tying it with wire. Then every 200mm (20cm) make holes with a nail. Make the holes on alternate sides of the hosepipe. This we refer to as the bed-hose. Lay the bed-hose in the middle of the bed in a straight line. (this is why all beds must be same length so that the bed-hose always lies straight and reaches from end to end). Connect the bed-hose to the hosepipe connected to the tap. Within a few minutes the bed will be flooded. If you have done your levelling right, the water will be spread out evenly. If not, at this stage the water will show where your bed is uneven and you can correct it.

Once a bed has been watered, it is an easy job to move the bed-hose to the next bed. 15-30 minutes is enough time to water a bed.

Although a 50 metre bed with a 50 metre hose is ideal, other lengths may be used, but generally these should be shorter. 30 metres, 20 metres or 10 metres being useful lengths. It is difficult to manage a level a bed longer than 50 metres.

Now for the crop rotation. This can be varied and there are other rotations. This is a simple one with low input cost and easy maintenance.

1. Animal manure
2. Green leafy vegetable. (choumollier, rape, tsunga, spinach etc.)
3. Maize with nyemba (cow peas)
4. Onions or leeks
5. Potatoes or sweet potatoes
6. Vegetable compost
7. Green leafy vegetable
8. Maize with nyemba
9. Onions or leeks
10. Potatoes or sweet potatoes

Repeat the rotation.

Animal manure

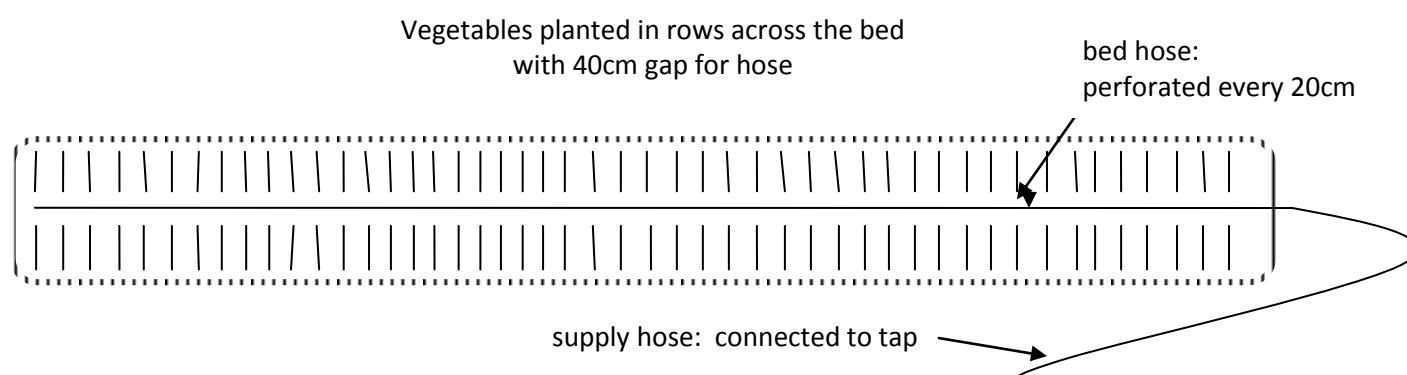
Manure from any animal is fine. Even processed human manure if you live near a sewerage works.

Spread the manure very thickly on each bed; at least 10mm (1cm) thick. Water for two weeks without planting. This will make the seeds in the soil and in the manure grow. Once the weeds have germinated, they can be removed easily within one day. Weeding is a very time consuming part of market gardening. Dig in the manure at this stage, leave for one more week, then plant seedlings. (During the time that you were watering the empty ground you will have planted seeds and seedlings will be ready for planting. In the case of spinach (Swiss chard), the seeds must go straight into the ground.)

Planting of rows

Your rows must go **across** the bed, **not along** it. This will enable people to cultivate without trampling on the bed. The middle of the bed, about 300mm (30cm) wide will be left empty. This is where the hosepipe will go. The beds must be planted with the seedlings 200mm (20cm) apart. They must be 150mm (15cm) apart within the row. This is a much closer crop density than normal but is possible because of the amount of manure used and also that the ground is kept perpetually moist through mulching.

Standard Bed for Accelerated Flood Irrigation



Mulch

Mulch is any material that will cover the ground and keep it moist. This is important not only because it conserves water but also because it encourages the micro-organisms in the soil to reproduce and release nutrients to the plants. It inhibits weed growth and also provides a hiding place for spiders and insect predators who eat the insects which attack the plants. Mulch can be old leaves, maize stover (stalks) — even newspaper and cardboard.

Weeding

Should weeds start to appear, they can be destroyed quickly by the use of a Dutch hoe — otherwise known as a push hoe. This can be pushed between the rows and a narrow rake small enough to fit between the rows (which can be made by a local welder) used to pull them out from between the rows. Two people working together, one on the hoe and the other on the rake, can clear the weeds in such a garden very quickly.



Dutch Hoe



Narrow Rake

After every crop, the ground should be watered for two weeks to encourage weed germination followed by removal. This practise should continue until weed seeds are eliminated from the beds.

Marketing

If there are 5 beds of leafy vegetables like this, they can be picked and taken to town for sale at least three times a week. This alone can provide enough money to run the farm on from day to day. With this kind of farming, a bakkie (pick-up) is more important than a tractor. It is necessary to get the vegetables to the market.

More on crop rotation

Once the green leafy vegetables are finished, the next crop is mealies grown with nyemba. As there is irrigation, the mealies may be grown out of season, in particular to be cooked as green mealies. Sweet corn varieties can be good here. In each small hole where mealies are to be planted there should be 2 mealie seeds and 3 nyemba seeds. The advantage of the nyembas, like any leguminous (pea or bean) crop is that the roots attract nitrogen fixing bacteria.

The mealies should normally be picked green. The nyembas may be picked half grown for use as green beans, full grown for use as beans and the leaves used for mufushwa (dried green vegetables). The mealie stover may be used for mulch.

The remains of the nyemba must not be removed but dug in to enrich the soil. While those remains are rotting underground, onions, which are shallow rooted should be grown. as well as their commercial value, onions are useful in the cycle as they drive away most insect pests.

The final crop must be potatoes or sweet potatoes. before this is done, the bed must be lifted and made narrower, 2½ metres instead of 4 metres and raised. It then becomes easy to harvest the crop later from the loose raised soil.

The rotation is then repeated but with vegetable compost after the second rotation, animal manure only being used after two rotations.

Weed control

After each crop is removed, the bed must be watered for two weeks and any weeds removed at the end of the two weeks. If this is done repeatedly, there will be very few unwanted seeds left in the soil.

Grass and weeds around the garden must be constantly slashed. Once weeds come into flower and then seed, the problem of weed control and labour used for this increases enormously.

Insect pests

These are reduced by both crop rotation and mulching. However, khaki-weed which grows wild can be planted in one bed and cultivated. It is a natural insect repellent. this common funny smelling wild plant can be boiled and the water mixed with soap (washing-up liquid is fine) and sprayed on the crops. it can also be pulled up and used as an insect repelling mulch. This will deter or kill most insects.

Marigold flowers are related to khaki-weed and it is common practice to grow these attractive insect repelling plants around vegetable beds.



khaki-weed

Cheap tobacco or tobacco dust is even more effective. it is very poisonous and kills almost any small creature. It can be boiled and sprayed like the khaki-weed but must not be used for tomatoes, potatoes or egg-plant as it is closely related and can introduce crop disease.

Garlic is also very good as a crop spray. If short of labour, garlic can be grown as a crop. It stays 6 months in the ground but requires little attention. When sold there is a lump sum comes back to the farm. there is only one known insect which attacks it, the garlic moth which is not common. If grown, some should be kept for crop spray.

Compost

Vegetable compost enriches the soil and makes it more manageable. After taking crops to town, the bakkie must not come back empty. Thrown-away and rotting vegetables must come back and be used as compost. There are instruction manuals on making good compost. Remember that compost must be regularly turned over to aerate it.

Vermiculture

The culture of earthworms — as frequently done by people who like fishing — is much cheaper and more natural than putting ammonium nitrate into the soil. The worm tunnels bring the nitrogen in the air into the soil. The worms also turn both animal and vegetable manure into a form digestible by the plants. See the following article.

Conclusion

This is a brief introduction on a simple but effective method of growing vegetables. it does not claim to be exhaustive. Other rotations can be used effectively such as climbing beans, tomatoes and either onions or garlic.

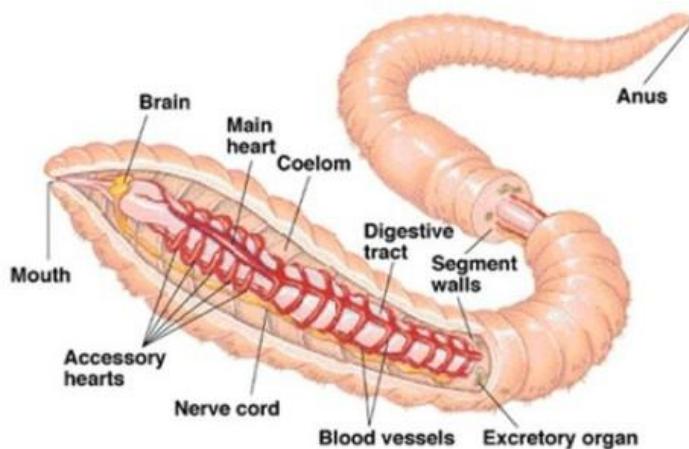
The basic AFI method does not use excessive water, and is cheap and effective. There are no expensive inputs. It is sustainable and enriches the land.

Once people have become used to organic farming methods for local consumption, they will find that there is a huge export market for organically grown crops overseas.

The land is there. but it will not make people rich automatically, it needs knowledge, organisation and hard work. There is no need for Zimbabweans to be poor.

VERMICULTURE

The Use of Earthworms in Farming



After writing *The Origin of Species* (1859) Charles Darwin (1809-1892) devoted much of the rest of his life to the study of earthworms. In his book *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Actions of Worms with Observations on their Habits* (1881) Darwin wrote:

“The plough is one of the most ancient and most valuable of man’s inventions, but long before he existed, the land was in fact regularly ploughed, and still continues to be ploughed by earthworms. It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world as have these lowly organised creatures.”

Earthworms aerate, till and fertilize the soil, breaking down organic waste into plant-available forms, improving the soil structure and nutrient and water-holding qualities of soil.

In the past 50 years in particular, the use of chemical fertilizers, over-tillage of the soil and the use of pesticides have killed earthworms and other beneficial organisms, leading to poor soil fertility, loss of soil structure and soil erosion. At the same time, rotting organic waste dumped in landfills is polluting our underground water supply and releasing vast amounts of the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. Earthworms eat organic waste and give us healthy soil and organic fertilizer in return.

Some earthworm facts

As worms move through soil and decaying organic matter, they eat and aerate it, depositing castings as they go. These castings are rich in nutrients and beneficial soil organisms. Inside the gut of one worm there are enzymes and masses of bacteria and microbes. Everything that passes through the gut of an earthworm is coated with these beneficial microbes and bacteria.

While fertile soil has in the region of 5-million microbes per gram, worm castings have been found to contain up to 100-million microbes per gram — up to 20 times more! In the soil, these microbes continue to break down organic matter into plant-available forms, thereby enabling plant roots to take up nutrients that would otherwise have stayed bound in the soil. These beneficial organisms also suppress the growth of pathogens, which means healthy soil and healthy plants.

Not surprisingly, it is these very microbes that play a major role in determining soil fertility, so it is ironic that earthworms are the very creatures that are killed by inorganic fertilizer applications. While we have been taught that bacteria are “bad”, the vast majority of bacteria are not harmful to humans, in fact many are beneficial and essential to sustaining the processes of life.

Earthworms work tirelessly tunnelling deeply in the soil and bringing subsoil closer to the surface mixing it with the topsoil. The tunnels they make last long after the worms are dead. The sticky slime helps to hold clusters of soil particles together in formations called aggregates. This helps to maintain the structure of the tunnels. These tunnels bring atmospheric nitrogen into the soil and the slime also contains nitrogen in a form easily accessible to plants; they assist root growth as they are lined with readily available nutrients and make it easier for roots to penetrate deep into the soil; they facilitate infiltration of water into the subsurface and help in harvesting rainwater which is stored as moisture and is slowly released to crops during dry weather. In those fields where organic methods of cultivation are used water retention created by the action of earthworms helps crops survive when in other areas they have dried out.

Earthworms live on waste. They feed on vegetable waste and any form of organic matter available, as well as living organisms such as nematodes, protozoans, rotifers, bacteria, fungi which are harmful to plant growth. Their intake per day is one third of their body weight. The organic matter the earthworms consume gets digested in their bodies and gets excreted in the form of casts, a type of soil aggregate rich in nutrients. They convert organic matter into forms accessible to plants. Earthworm slime contains nitrogen.

Types of earthworm

1. **Litter dwellers** or **epigeic** species live in crop or forest litter. They are not common in most agricultural soils. The red wiggler, *Eisenia foetida*, the main type of worm used in worm farms is an example of a litter dweller. We will examine worm farms later.
2. **Topsoil dwellers** or **endogeic** species live in the upper 4 to 6 cm of the soil. They live primarily from partially decomposed organic matter that is already incorporated in the soil. They eat their way through the soil, creating horizontal burrows that they fill with their excrement. These species ingest large amounts of soil that they mix with digested crop residue in their guts.
3. **Subsoil dwellers** or **anecic** species live in permanent vertical burrows that can be up to 2 metres deep. These earthworms need surface crop residue to live. Their burrows remain open, although they cap the top with crop residue that they pull to the entrance. These species ingest substantial amounts of soil that they mix with digested residue in their guts. Their excrement is primarily deposited at the surface of the soil.

We will first examine how to encourage earthworms of types 2 and 3. Firstly, it is important that the soil between plants is kept perpetually moist. In vegetable gardening this can be achieved by mulching; the mulch will protect the ground from drying and will also slowly be ingested by the worms adding fertility to the soil. Where maize or small grains are being grown, inter-cropping with nyemba (cow peas) and pumpkin in the traditional manner helps both to shield the ground from drying up and also provides leaf-litter for the worms to eat. Worms do not like acidic soil and the soil pH should be maintained between 5 and 7 by the occasional addition of lime if necessary.

Worms can further be encouraged by the making of a worm nursery.

1. Dig a pit about 2 metres square and ½ metre deep.
2. Put in a layer of any vegetable matter: grass cuttings, kitchen waste or animal manure (even dog poo), then a layer of soil, another layer of waste, another layer of soil and keep repeating until the pit is full. Avoid citrus fruit, onions, animal carcasses or meat.
3. Any worms in the area will be attracted. If you know a place where there are already worms, throw them in. They breed quite fast. But do not use red wiggler, the kind used in worm farms or any other type 1 worms.
4. Plant any kind of cover crop on top. Spinach (Swiss chard) grows fast and is ideal for this purpose. The worms are attracted to the roots of growing plants.
5. Do not cultivate around the plants or dig the soil. Keep it moist.
6. After about 3 months your surface crop should be ready and there should be plenty of worms underneath.
7. Dig up chunks of the earthworm soil and bury it where needed a little below the surface otherwise birds will eat the worms you have cultivated.
8. Keep the soil moist and covered with either growing plants or mulch for your worms to survive.

Raising Red Wigglers

Red wigglers are the main kind of type 1 earthworm used for making rich fertilizer from waste. These are the kind bred for fishing. The breeding of red wigglers is a bit more complicated than the encouragement of types 2 and 3 in the soil, but it can produce all the fertilizer that your soil will ever need. There are some advanced commercial methods of doing this, but we will first start with the simple, easy and cheap way of doing this. They breed very fast and can double their numbers every 3 months.

The Principle of the Stacked Bin Worm Farm

The principle of the stacked bin worm composter is that, unlike the drab earthworms, who dig deep, our red compost worms always migrate upwards, towards the food, leaving their castings to fall below them. We use this information about red worms to our advantage. Generally the idea is to build up a multiple stacking system of connected worm bins or trays that are slightly tapered to allow the bins to nest, one within the other. Worm castings (the compost) are collected in the lower bins and worm food (kitchen or garden scraps) is consumed in the upper levels of the wormery. When a lower bin is nearly full of castings it is emptied and rotated to the top and so on.

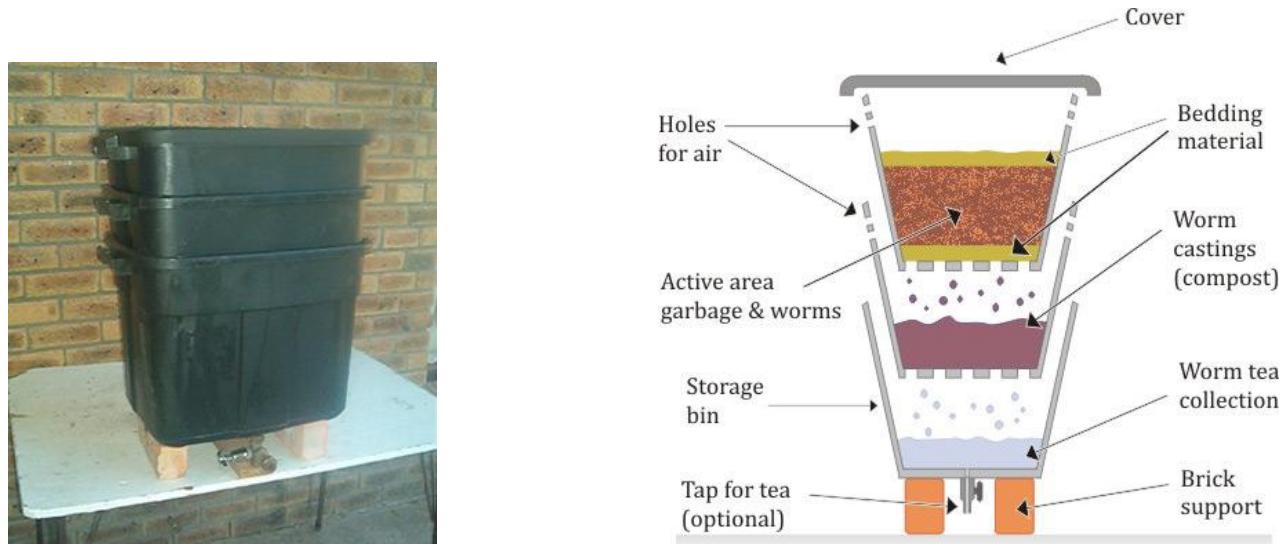
Choosing Your Bins

The size and number of the bins is variable, depending on the desired scale of the operation. Common plastic storage bins, sold for general household use at hardware stores, supermarkets and camping goods outlets are quite suitable for making your worm farm.

For our purposes we need bins with sloping sides so that one bin can fit inside the next. A lid is required for the top bin. Worms hate light – so do not get bins which let in light. Heavy black bins are good. Plastic storage containers are not expensive and come in a variety of sizes.

For a small scale composting set-up, for processing kitchen waste, three containers of about 45 litre each would be adequate. For processing a greater amount of waste such as from large gardens or stables, bigger bins with more tiers can be set up, just as easily.

Instructions for Creating a Worm Composter



The Sump

The lower sump bin is configured differently from the upper bins and would be prepared first. Its function is to collect excess fluid, called worm tea, or compost tea.

- The sump may be fitted with a 15mm barrel tap, through a small hole drilled in the base for conveniently draining out the excess fluid (the worm tea) that will accumulate there. This tap is not essential, but would avoid the otherwise potentially messy job of having to tip the worm tea out by rotating the bin.
- If you do decide to put in the tap, make sure it seals well in the hole, by providing good washers and lock nuts.

The Composting Bins

The two upper bins will actually hold the worms. They are to be identical and are prepared as follows :

- Drill a pattern of 6mm holes across the entire base of each container for drainage and to allow for ventilation and the upward migration of the compost worms, these holes should be regularly spaced at approx 50mm centres apart in either direction.
- For further aeration, drill a row of 6mm holes at 50mm centres, in a continuous line around the walls of each of the bins. This line of holes would be about 100mm below the top rim of the bin.

- It is not essential to drill holes in the lid, which is closed tightly over the upper bin. as you should get enough air through the sides.

Setting It Up

After preparing your bins, you first set up the lower (sump) bin on bricks or blocks, allowing enough space to tap off the fluid from beneath it. Choose a shady location for the worm farm (in a shed or garage, if you are subject to frosts).

- The second and third bins are “nested” within each other and dropped into the sump bin. To maintain a working space for the worms, and for accumulation of compost, you need a few spacers or packers of about 20cm (200mm) height, between the two upper bins and some smaller packers of about 15cm (150mm) in the lower (sump) bin. You can use bricks or wood blocks.
- The packers also prevent the tapered worm bins from jamming together and cause a gap between the bins, which improves ventilation.
- To prevent “nasty bugs” from squeezing in between the bins, you should close (caulk) the small gap between them with strips of shade cloth, or mosquito netting.

Starting Production

Now you are ready to go into production :

- Set up your worms in the top bin with shredded newspaper, put in a little compost and a handful or two of damp soil with the worms and after a few days you will be ready to start feeding in your kitchen scraps. Cover the food with more bedding material to discourage pests and keep the lid closed.
- Make sure the worm farm is never allowed to dry out, by sprinkling water over the bedding periodically, if there is not already enough moisture coming from the food scraps.
- When the top bin has been fully productive for a while, the worms will multiply (worms are hermaphrodite having both sets of sex organs and fertilize each other’s eggs when mating) and compost will be start accumulating from the worm castings. When the quantity of compost is meaningful, stop putting feed into this bin and swap over the upper two bins by putting bin No 2 to the top of the stack, with bin No 1 now in the middle.
- Set up this new top bin with clean bedding, a small amount of the old castings and immediately start feeding your kitchen scraps into it. Over a few days, the worms will naturally migrate upwards towards the new food source, leaving the lower bin with only a few stragglers and it should be ready for the harvesting of your compost within about three weeks after the swap.
- To get at any specific layer, to add food, bedding or to remove the vermicompost, just lift off all the overlying worm bins, one by one until the desired level is exposed for examination and then replace them in the same order.

All you need to do is to keep repeating the process of alternating the top two bins on a regular basis, taking out the compost, whenever it accumulates, and tapping off the worm tea from time to time. This vermitea, is a very valuable product as it is a highly concentrated liquid fertilizer that can be diluted for immediate use on your garden.

Advanced vermiculture

This article so far has looked at vermiculture on a very simple level. However, in Zimbabwe there is a company called Zim Earthworm Farms (ZEF) which is producing worm produced organic fertilizer on an industrial scale. Started by Professor Ephrem Whingwiri in 2012 with the assistance of Dutch aid agency Hivos, this company is looking at the use of worms to reduce waste on a large scale.. The company has worked with communal farmers in the Hwedza area and offers training for those interested in developing vermiculture at a more advanced level. It is also looking at reducing waste in urban areas and producing worms for stockfeed.

The contact information for those interested:

00 263 (0)7276 4132
ewhingwiri@zimearthworms.com

Information for this article has come from a number of online sources; we acknowledge, in this respect: “Vermiculture” on the Full Cycle website; the Working Worms website and their article “How to Make your Own Worm Farm”; the Zim Earthworm Farms website and a number of articles about this venture. — Editor.

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BEES AND BEE-KEEPING



In Zimbabwe, there is a common fallacy that the main function of bees is the production of honey. This erroneous idea plays some part in low production of certain crops. Honey is only a bi-product — the main function of bees is crop pollination. Almost all fruit crops, sunflowers and bean crops, especially sugar beans and green beans rely on bee pollination. With these crops, if the flowers are not pollinated by bees, the flowers will fall off without any production of fruit. The destruction of wild bees nests for honey in our rural areas plays a major role in the reduction of harvests.

We sometimes hear of people complaining that they have grown sunflowers which are “blind” — that do not give seed. The truth is this. The sunflower is a composite flower. Inside the big petals are a large number of florets — individual small flowers. Each one produces one seed — IF that individual flower is visited by a bee. Whether the bee comes from a beehive owned by the farmer or whether it is a wild bee makes no difference. Every single floret must be visited by a bee for it to become a sunflower seed.

Sunflower crops can be increased by four times through the introduction of bee-hives, bean crops can be doubled — and there is still that wonderful by-product — honey.

Some new farmers in Zimbabwe have taken over citrus groves but have never considered bee-keeping. In the biggest fruit-growing area in the southern African region, fruit growers pay large sums of money to professional bee-keepers to bring their hives for pollination, knowing that they will benefit from the increased harvest. Attempts to grow fruit without taking bee-pollination into account and introducing beehives is as foolish as planting seeds without watering them. Unlike vermiculture, bee-keeping or apiculture, to give its proper name, needs training from the start. In Zimbabwe those interested should contact:

Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe (BKAZ)

phone:00 263 772 860 102
email: zimhoney@hotmail.co.uk

LAND REFORM IN THE USSR

When we introduce serious, production-based land reform in Zimbabwe, we should realise that others have gone before us. the task will not be easy. Soviet land reform was the first in any socialist country. The job was neither simple nor straight forward.

This piece is based mainly on the relevant chapters in “Another View of Stalin” (1994) by Ludo Martens. Ludo Martens (1946-2011) was the founder of the Workers’ Party of Belgium and of the Congolese Communist Party. He was an adviser to President Laurent Kabilo of the Democratic Republic of Congo and wrote extensively on Congolese history.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1917, the year of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Russia was far behind western Europe. Serfdom, the most extreme form of feudalism, which in its Russian form came very close to chattel slavery, had only been abolished in 1861. Black slaves in the USA were first granted freedom at the beginning of 1863, less than two years later. Like in the United States, there was limited real change because despite the fact that people could no longer be bought and sold in the old fashion, they still had little option but to work for the same landowners; although serfdom had been abolished, feudalism in a somewhat moderated form was still in existence. And the peasants of Russia formed a far higher percentage of the population than former black slaves of the United States. Further, the steppes of Russia, like the prairies of the United States, are immense areas of flattish land with generally good soil suitable for large scale cultivation, but the steppes only receive about half the rainfall of the prairies which historically led to recurring drought and famine.

A description of the life of the peasant can be found in the writings of Irish writer and academic, Dr Émile Joseph Dillon who lived in Russia from 1877-1914:

“The Russian peasant... goes to bed at six and even five o’clock in the winter, because he cannot afford money to buy petroleum enough for artificial light. He has no meat, no eggs, no butter, no milk, often no cabbage, and lives mainly on black bread and potatoes. Lives? He starves on an insufficient quantity of them.”

“When there was an epidemic in a district they often killed the doctors ‘for poisoning the wells and spreading the disease’. They still burn witches with delight, disinter the dead to lay a ghost, strip unfaithful wives stark naked, tie them to carts and whip them through the village...”

É.J. Dillon writing as E.B. Lanin, *Russian Characteristics* (1890)

In 1928, 11 years after the revolution, Dillon was amazed:

“Everywhere people are thinking, working, combining, making scientific discoveries and industrial inventions. If one could obtain a bird’s-eye view of the numerous activities of the citizens of the Soviet Republics one would hardly trust the evidence of one’s senses. Nothing like it; nothing approaching it in variety, intensity, tenacity of purpose has ever yet been witnessed. Revolutionary endeavour is melting colossal obstacles and fusing heterogeneous elements into one great people; not indeed a nation in the old-world meaning but a strong people cemented by quasi-religious enthusiasm... The Bolsheviks then have accomplished much of what they aimed at, and more than seemed attainable by any human organisation under the adverse conditions with which they had to cope. They have mobilised well over 150,000,000 of listless dead-and-alive human beings, and infused into them a new spirit. They have wrecked and buried the entire old-world order in one-sixth of the globe...”

É.J. Dillon, *Russia Today and Tomorrow* (1929)

DECREE ON LAND

The Great October Socialist Revolution began with the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks* on 25th October 1917; the following day, 26th October 1917, Lenin, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets, made the first two decrees of the new Soviet government, the 'Decree on Peace' — which led to the early withdrawal of Russia from the First World War — and the 'Decree on Land' (reproduced here in slightly abridged form):

“(1) Landed proprietorship is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

“(2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the volost* land committees and the uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

“(3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc.

“(4) The following *Peasant Mandate*, compiled by the newspaper *Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta Krestyanskih Deputatov...* shall serve everywhere to guide the implementation of the great land reforms until a final decision on the latter is taken...

Peasant Mandate on the Land

“(i) Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever; land shall not be sold purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated.

“(ii) All land, whether state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc. shall be confiscated without compensation and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it.

*BOLSHEVIKS: The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was formed from a number of small Marxist groups in 1899. At the Second Congress in 1902 it split into the majority — Bolshevik — faction which accepted Lenin's idea of building a disciplined party of dedicated cadres as opposed to the minority faction — Mensheviks — who wanted a loosely organised mass party. As the majority of European Social-Democratic Parties had sold out the workers by supporting the bourgeoisie in their respective countries and sending workers to slaughter each other on the battlefields of the First World War, soon after the Revolution, the Bolsheviks revived the name 'Communist Party' used by Marx and Engels in 1848 and became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) — CPSU(B).

**VOLOST & UYEZD: The volost was a small unit of administration, the uyezd was a larger unit consisting of a number of volosts (nearest English translation is 'ward'). The uyezd is now called a raion still a unit of administration and may be translated as "district".

“Persons who suffer by this property revolution shall be deemed to be entitled to public support only for the period necessary for adaptation to the new conditions of life.

“(iii) Lands on which high-level scientific farming is practised — orchards, plantations, seed plots, nurseries, hothouses, etc. — shall not be divided up, but shall be converted into model farms, to be turned over for exclusive use to the state or to the communes, depending on the size and importance of such lands.

“Household land in towns and villages, with orchards and vegetable gardens, shall be reserved for the use of their present owners, the size of the holdings, and the size of tax levied for the use thereof, to be determined by law.

“(iv) Stud farms, government and private pedigree stock and poultry farms, etc. shall be confiscated and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune depending on the size and importance of such farms.

“(v) All livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on their size and importance, and no compensation shall be paid for this. The farm implements of peasants with little land shall not be subject to confiscation.

“(vi) The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian state (without distinction of sex) desiring to cultivate it by their own labour, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it. The employment of hired labour is not permitted.

“In the event of the temporary physical disability of any member of a village commune for a period of up to two years, the village commune shall be obliged to assist him for this period by collectively cultivating his land until he is again able to work.

“Peasants who, owing to old age or ill-health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their right to the use of it but, in return, shall receive a pension from the state.

“(vii) Land tenure shall be on an equality basis, i.e. the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labour standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions.

“There shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure — household, farm, communal, or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.

“(viii) All land, when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies, from democratically organised village and city communes, in which there are no distinctions of social rank, to central regional government bodies.”

V.I. Lenin, *Report on Land to Second All-Union Congress of Soviets* (26th October 1917)
LCW Vol.26 pp.258-260

Note that the Leninist slogan was “Land to the tillers!” — land to those that work on it. Land was not given to government ministers or officials. Note also that the kinds of farms designated in 4 (iv) were not sub-divided among the peasants but became state property. contrast that with the sub-division of agricultural-industrial estates in Zimbabwe.

COLLECTIVISATION



Signing on to join the collective farm (1930)

The collectivisation that began in 1929 was an extraordinary period of bitter and complex class struggles. It decided which force would run the countryside: the rural bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

Here was the problem that the Communist Party had to confront: The peasant masses remained in their state of backwardness and continued to work mostly with hand tools; the better off would have animal-drawn ploughs. Communist ideology had to contend with extreme ignorance resulting from the extreme poverty that characterised the peasant masses.

It was relatively simple to defeat the Tsar and the landowners. But how could centuries of primitive methods of production and ingrained superstition be defeated?

The Civil War (1918-1922) had completely disrupted the countryside; ten years of socialist governance had introduced the first elements of mass culture and minimal Communist leadership. But the traditional characteristics of the peasantry were still there, as influential as ever. 90% of the land continued to be run according to the traditional communal village system, in which the rich peasants predominated. The rich peasants were known as kulaks — the term means “fist”.

“Every village commune has always three or four regular kulaks, as also some half dozen smaller fry of the same kidney...

“They want neither skill nor industry; only promptitude to turn to their own profit the needs, the sorrows, the sufferings and the misfortunes of others.

“The distinctive characteristic of this class... is the hard, unflinching cruelty of a thoroughly educated man who has made his way from poverty to wealth, and has come to consider money-making, by whatever means, as the only pursuit to which a rational being should devote himself.”

S.M. Stepniak, *The Russian Peasantry* (1895)

“And of all the human monsters I have ever met in my travels, I cannot recall any so malignant and odious as the Russian kulak.”

É.J. Dillon, *The Eclipse of Russia* (1918)

From 1921, the Bolsheviks had concentrated their efforts on the principal objective, which was the re-establishment of industry on a socialist footing. At the same time, they attempted to rebuild the productive forces in the countryside, by encouraging individual production and small-scale capitalism, which they tried to control and lead towards various co-operative forms.

“Between 1922 and 1926, the New Economic Policy, by and large, was a brilliant success... The production of the peasant economy in 1926 was equal to that of the whole of agriculture, including the landowners’ estates, before the revolution. Grain production reached approximately the pre-war level, and the production of potatoes apparently exceeded that level by as much as 75%....”

R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

The socialist revolution had brought great gains to the peasant masses. The peasants without land had received plots and direct taxes and rent were significantly lower than under the old régime. And the peasants kept and consumed a much greater share of their harvests.

“Grain for the towns, the army, industry and export in 1926-1927 amounted to only 10 million tonnes as compared with 18.8 million tonnes in 1909-1913 (average).”

R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

At the same time the Bolsheviks encouraged the peasants to form various kinds of co-operatives also creating the first experimental collective and state farms*. The point was to determine how, in the future, peasants could be led to socialism, although the schedule was still unclear. However, on the whole, there existed by 1927 very few socialistic elements in the countryside where predominantly the peasants worked their individual plots of land.

By 1927, 38% of the peasants had been regrouped in consumers’ co-operatives, but it was the rich peasants who led them. These co-operatives received 50% of the farm subsidies, the rest being invested in private holdings, in general kulak.

By 1927, following the spontaneous evolution of the free market, 7% of peasants, i.e. 2,700,000 peasants, were once again without land. Furthermore, the landless were no longer accepted in the traditional village commune.

***COLLECTIVE AND STATE FARMS:** A collective farm differed from a state farm in that it was owned by its occupants rather than by the state. A state farm would normally be as described in item (4)(iii) in the Decree on Land — Lands on which high-level scientific farming is practised — orchards, plantations, seed plots, nurseries, hothouses, etc.

A collective farm was called a **kholkhoz**, plural **kholkhozy**, a member was a **kholkhozine**. A state farm was called a **sovkhoz**, plural **sovkhhozy**, a member was a **sovkhhozine**.

In 1927, there were still 27 million peasants who had neither horse nor cart. These poor peasants formed 35% of the peasant population. The great majority were middle peasants: 51% to 53%. But they still worked with primitive implements. In the whole of the Soviet Union, between 5% and 7% of peasants succeeded in enriching themselves: these were the kulaks.

The supply of market wheat had to be guaranteed to ensure that the rapidly expanding cities could be fed and that the country could be industrialised. Since most of the peasants were no longer exploited by the landowners, they consumed a large part of their wheat. The sales on extra-rural markets were only 73.2% of what they were in 1913. Before the revolution, 72% of the grain had come from landowners and kulaks. In 1926, on the other hand, the poor and middle peasants produced 74% of the market wheat. In fact, they consumed 89% of their production, bringing only 11% to market. The large socialist enterprises, the kolkhozy and the sovkhozy only represented 1.7% of the total wheat production and 6% of the market wheat, but they sold 47.2% of their production, almost half of their harvest. In 1926, the kulaks, a rising force, controlled 20% of the market wheat.

In 1927, the balance of forces between the socialist economy and the capitalist economy could be summed up as follows: collectivised agriculture brought 0.57 million tonnes of wheat to market, the kulaks 2.13 million tonnes.

The social force controlling the market wheat could dictate whether workers and city dwellers could eat, hence whether industrialisation could take place. The resulting struggle became merciless.

In the autumn of 1924, after a quite meagre harvest the kulaks and private merchants bought the grain on the open market, speculating on a price hike in the spring and summer. By May 1925 the State had to double its buying prices of December 1924. Despite a good harvest in the following year, 1925, buying prices paid by the State remained high. Industrial development in the cities increased the demand for grain. But **the better-off peasants refused to sell their wheat**. The State was forced to capitulate, abandoning its plans for grain exports, reducing industrial equipment imports and reducing industrial credit.

In 1927, the grain harvest fell. In the cities, the situation was not positive. Unemployment was high and increased with the arrival of ruined peasants. The differences between worker and technician salaries increased. Private merchants, who still controlled half the meat sold in the city, blatantly enriched themselves. On top of this, the Soviet Union was once again threatened with war, after Britain decided to break diplomatic ties with the USSR.

Stalin understood that socialism was threatened from three sides. Hunger riots could take place in the cities. The kulaks in the countryside could strengthen their position, thereby making socialist industrialisation impossible. Finally, there was the possibility of foreign military intervention.

“What is the way out? The way out is to turn the small and scattered peasant farms into large united farms based on cultivation of the land in common, to go over to collective cultivation of the land on the basis of a new and higher technique. The way out is to unite the small and dwarf peasant farms gradually but surely, not by pressure, but by example and persuasion, into large farms based on common, co-operative, collective cultivation of the land with the use of agricultural machines and tractors and scientific methods of intensive agriculture. There is no other way out.”

J.V. Stalin, *Political Report of the Central Committee to the 15th Congress of the CPSU(B)* (1927)
StWorks Vol.10 pp.312-313

In 1928, as in 1927, the grain harvest was 3.5 to 4.5 million tonnes less than in 1926, due to very bad climatic conditions. In January 1928, the Politburo unanimously decided to take exceptional measures, by seizing wheat from the kulaks and the well-to-do peasants to avoid famine in the cities. Worker discontent was increasing. Tension was rising in the countryside. The situation seemed hopeless. Whatever the cost, the cities needed bread.

The first wave of collectivisation

It was essential for the success of accelerated industrialisation that a relatively low price for market wheat be maintained. A rising rural bourgeoisie would never have accepted such a policy. Only the poor and middle peasants, organised in co-operatives, could support it. And only industrialisation could ensure the defence of the first socialist country. To give a solid material base for socialism in the countryside would require building tractors, trucks and threshers.

On 1st October 1927, there were 286,000 peasant families in the kolkhozy; by 1st June 1929 they numbered 1,008,000. During 1929, collectivised agriculture produced 2.2 million tonnes of market wheat, as much as the kulaks did two years previously. Stalin foresaw that during the course of the next year, it would bring 6.6 million tonnes to the cities:

“Now we are able to carry on a determined offensive against the kulaks, break their resistance, eliminate them as a class and replace their output by the output of the collective farms and state farms.”

J.V. Stalin, *Concerning Questions of Agricultural Policy in the USSR* (1929) StWorks Vol.12 p.176

Once the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) had called for accelerating the collectivisation, a spontaneous movement developed, brought to the regions by activists, youth, old soldiers of the Red Army and the local apparatuses of the Party. Early in October 1929, 7.5% of the peasants had already joined kolkhozy and the movement was growing. The Party, which had given the general direction towards collectivisation, became conscious of a mass movement, which it was not organising:

“Now, dekulakisation is being carried out by the masses of poor and middle peasants themselves, who are putting complete collectivisation into practice. Now, dekulakisation in the areas of complete collectivisation is no longer just an administrative measure.”

J.V. Stalin, *Concerning Questions of Agricultural Policy in the USSR* (1929) StWorks Vol.12 p.176

During the ratification of the First Five-Year Plan, in April 1929, the Party had planned on a collectivisation level of 10% by 1932-1933. The kolkhozy and the sovkhozy would then produce 15.5% of the grain. That would suffice to oust the kulaks. By 1st January 1930, 18.1% of the peasant families were members of a kolkhoz. A month later, they accounted for 31.7%. Collectivisation quickly assumed a dynamic of its own, achieved largely as a result of the initiative of rural cadres. The centre was in peril of losing control of the campaign.

This race towards collectivisation was accompanied by a dekulakisation movement: kulaks were expropriated, sometimes exiled. What was happening was a new step in the fierce battle between poor peasants and rich peasants. For centuries, the poor had been systematically beaten and crushed when, out of sheer desperation, they dared revolt and rebel. But this time, for the first time, the legal force of the State was on their side.

Numerous anti-Communist books tell us that “the collectivisation was imposed by the leadership of the Party and by Stalin and implemented with terror.” This is a lie. The essential impulse during the violent episodes of collectivisation came from the most oppressed of the peasant masses. A peasant from the Black-Earth region declared:

“I have lived my whole life among the batraks [landless agricultural workers]. The October revolution gave me land, I got credit from year to year, I got a poor horse, I can’t work the land, my children are ragged and hungry, I simply can’t manage to improve my farm in spite of the help of the Soviet authorities. I think there’s only one way out: join a tractor column, back it up and get it going.”

Quoted: R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

The Party prepared and initiated the collectivisation, and Communists from the cities gave it leadership, but this gigantic upheaval of peasant habits and traditions could not have succeeded if the poorest peasants had not been convinced of its necessity. The revolution was not implemented through regular administrative channels; instead the state appealed directly to the party rank and file and key sectors of the working class in order to circumvent rural officialdom.

How did Stalin and the leadership of the Communist Party react to the spontaneous and violent collectivisation and dekulakisation tide?

In November 1929 the campaign of the 25,000, was launched. The Central Committee called on experienced industrial workers from the large factories to go to the countryside and to help out with collectivisation. More than 70,000 presented themselves and 25,000 were selected: people conscious of the leading role of the working class in the socialist transformation of the countryside.

It was during the month of January 1930 that the 25,000 arrived on the front line of collectivisation. These workers maintained regular correspondence with their factories and their unions; their letters give a precise idea of what was happening in the villages.

The Red Army also played its part. In the autumn of 1929, 30,000 activists were trained on Sundays, during their time off, by the Red Army, which organised another contingent of 100,000 people during the first months of 1930. Furthermore, the Red Army trained a large number of tractor drivers, agricultural specialists and cinema and radio operators.

On 1st January 1930, there were 339,000 Communists among a rural population of about 120 million people — 28 Communists for every 10,000 inhabitants. Party cells only existed in 23,458 of 70,849 village Soviets; many village Soviets were directly controlled by the kulaks. The Party nucleus was composed of mainly of young peasants who had fought in the Red Army during the Civil War. This political experience had fixed their way of seeing and acting. They had the habit of commanding and hardly knew what political education and mobilisation meant. The rural administrative structure was burdensome, the lines of command confused, and the demarcation of responsibility and function blurred and poorly defined.

During the first few weeks of 1930, Ukraine organised 3,977 short courses for 275,000 peasants. In February 1930, the mobilisation of 7,200 urban Soviet members was decreed, to work at least one year in the countryside and some Red Army members and industrial workers were permanently transferred to the kolkhozy.

Upon arrival, the 25,000 immediately had to fight against the bureaucracy of the local apparatus and against excesses committed during the collectivisation; they were unanimous in their criticism of district level organs participating in collectivisation claiming that it was they which were responsible for the race for percentages. Many complained of the illegal acts and of the brutality of rural cadres. By opposing the bureaucrats and their excesses, they succeeded in winning the confidence of the peasant masses.

The illiterate peasants, living in barbaric conditions and subject to the influence of the Orthodox priests, could easily be manipulated. Many of the priests claimed that the “Reign of the Anti-Christ” had come. The kulaks added that those who entered the kolkhozy made a pact with the Anti-Christ.

Among the 25,000, many were attacked and beaten. Several dozen were murdered by the kulaks. But the essential contribution of the 25,000 in the countryside was the introduction of a completely new system of production management, way of life and style of work. The poor peasants, on the frontline for collectivisation, did not have the slightest idea about the organisation of collective production. They hated their exploitation and, for that reason, were solid allies of the working class, but as individual producers, they could not create a new mode of production. The workers introduced regular work days, with morning roll call. They invented systems of payment by piecework and wage levels. Everywhere, they had to introduce order and discipline.

Often, a kolkhoz did not even know its boundaries. There was no inventory of machinery, tools or spare parts. Machines were not maintained, there were no stables, nor fodder reserves.

The workers introduced production conferences where the kolkhozines exchanged practical knowledge, they organised Socialist Competition between different brigades, and they set up workers' tribunals where violations of rules and negligence were judged. The 25,000 were the living link between the proletariat and the kolkhozine peasantry.

At the request of 'their' worker, large factories would send agricultural equipment, spare parts, generators, books, newspapers and other items impossible to find in the countryside. Worker brigades came from the city to do certain technical or reparatory tasks or to help with the harvest. The worker also became schoolmaster. He taught technical knowledge. Often, he had to accomplish accounting tasks while giving on the job training to new accountants. He gave elementary political and agricultural courses. Sometimes he looked after literacy campaigns.

Dekulakisation

For collectivisation to succeed, the poor and middle peasants had to be convinced of the superiority of collective work which would allow the wide-scale introduction of machinery. Furthermore, socialist industry had to be capable of producing the tractors and machines that would constitute the material support for collectivisation. Finally, a correct attitude had to be defined for the kulaks, the irreconcilable adversaries of socialism in the countryside. This last problem led to significant discussions within the Party. The question was posed as follows, just before the political changes in favour of the kolkhozy. Senior Politburo member Mikoyan said on 1st March 1929:

"In spite of the political authority of the party in the countryside the kulak in the economic sphere is more authoritative: his farm is better, his horse is better, his machines are better and he is listened to on economic matters... the middle peasant leans towards the economic authority of the kulak. And his authority will be strong as long as we have no large kolkhozy."
Quoted by R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

In 1928-1929, identical rumours were found throughout the Soviet territory

"In the kolkhoz, women and children would be collectivised."

"In the kolkhoz, everyone would sleep under a single gigantic blanket."

"The Bolshevik government would force women to cut their hair so that it could be exported."

"The Bolsheviks would mark women on the forehead for identification."

"The Bolsheviks would Russify non-Russian populations."

"A special machine would burn old people so that they would not eat any more wheat."

"Children would be taken away from their parents and sent to crèches."

"The Kolkhozines would be the first ones sent in a war."

Then a rumour announced that soon the White Armies would return. Believers were told about the coming of the Anti-Christ and that the world would end in two years. In the Tambov okrug, the kulaks carefully mixed rumour and political propaganda. They said that:

“Setting up the kolkhozy is a kind of serf labour where the peasant will again have to work under the rod... the Soviet government should enrich the peasants first and then push through the establishment of kolkhozy, and not do what it is doing now, which is to try to make a rich farm out of ruined farms which have no grain.”

R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

How should the kulak be treated? There were differences of opinion within the Party:

In June 1929, Karpinsky, a senior member of the Party, wrote that the kulaks should be allowed to join kolkhozy when collectivisation included the majority of families, if they put all their means of production into the indivisible fund. This position was upheld by Kaminsky, the President of the All-Union Kolkhoz Council. But the majority of delegates, local Party leaders, were categorically opposed to the admission of kulaks into kolkhozy. A delegate stated:

“If he gets into the kolkhoz somehow or other he will turn an association for the joint working of the land into an association for working over Soviet power.”

Quoted by: R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

In July 1929, the Secretary for the Central Volga Region, Khataevich, declared that:

“Individual kulak elements may be admitted to collective associations if they completely renounce their personal ownership of means of production, if the kolkhozy have a solid poor-peasant and middle-peasant nucleus and if correct leadership is assured.”

Quoted by: R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

However, there were already several cases that were going in the opposite direction. In Kazakhstan, in August 1928, 700 bai — semi-feudal Central Asian lords and their families, were exiled. Each family owned at least one hundred cattle, which were distributed to the already-constituted kolkhozy and to peasants who were being encouraged to join kolkhozy. In February 1929, a Siberian Regional Party Conference decided not to allow kulaks. In June, the North Caucasus made the same decision.

The 17th September 1929 issue of *Pravda* presented a major report on the kolkhoz “Red Land Improver” in Lower Volga. Established in 1924, this model kolkhoz received 300,000 roubles, credit from the State. But in 1929, its socialised property amounted to only 1,800 roubles. The funds had been used for personal gain. The president of the kolkhoz was a former Socialist Revolutionary; the leadership included former traders, the son of a priest and four other former Socialist Revolutionaries.

The Central Committee resolution of 5th January 1930 drew conclusions from these debates and affirmed that it was now capable of:

“passing in its practical work from a policy of limiting the exploitative tendencies of the kulaks to a policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class...”

After this resolution, which announced the end of capitalist relations in the countryside, the kulaks threw themselves into a struggle to the end. To sabotage collectivisation, they burnt crops, set barns, houses and other buildings on fire and killed militant Bolsheviks. Most importantly, the kulaks wanted to prevent collective farms from starting up, by killing an essential part of the productive forces in the countryside, horses and oxen. All the work on the land was done with draft animals. The kulaks killed half of them. Rather than cede their cattle to the collectives, they butchered them and incited the middle peasants to do the same.

At the beginning of January 1930, a spontaneous movement to expropriate the kulaks began to take place and on 30th January 1930, the Central Committee took important decisions to take charge of this movement, publishing a resolution entitled, *On Measures for the Elimination of Kulak Households in Districts of Comprehensive Collectivisation*. The total number of kulak families, divided into three categories, was at most 3%-5% in the grain-growing regions and 2%-3% in the other regions:

(I) The Active Counter-Revolutionaries: The Central Committee of the CPSU(B) limited the number to 63,000 for the whole USSR. Their means of production and personal property were to be confiscated; heads of families were to be sentenced to imprisonment — those who were organisers of counter-revolutionary acts could be sentenced to death. Members of their families were to be exiled to remote areas of the Northern Region, Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan or to remote districts of their own region.

(II) The Richest Kulaks, Large-Scale Kulaks and former Semi-Landowners: Lists of kulak households in this category were to be prepared by District Soviets and approved by Okrug Executive Committees on the basis of decisions by meetings of collective farmers and of groups of poor peasants and batraks, with an upper limit for the whole USSR of 150,000 households. The means of production and part of the property of the families on these lists were to be confiscated; they could retain the most essential domestic goods, some means of production, a minimum amount of food and up to 500 roubles per family. They were then to be exiled the same as Category (I)

(III) The Majority of Kulaks: These were probably reliable in their attitude to Soviet power. They numbered between 396,000 and 852,000 households. Only part of the means of production were confiscated and they were installed in new land within the administrative district.

By the end of 1930, in the three categories, 330,000 kulak families had been expropriated; most of this took place between February and April. We do not know the number of Category I kulaks that were exiled, but it is likely that the 63,000 criminal elements were the first to be hit; the number of executions of this category is not known either. The exiled from Category II numbered 77,975 at the end of 1930.

The majority of the expropriations were in the third category; some were reinstalled in the same village, most in the same District.

Dizzy with success

By 1st March 1930, 57.2% of all peasant families had joined kolkhozy. This impulsive development of the kolkhoz movement, as well as the violent reaction of the kulaks, who were followed by some of the middle peasants, once again provoked vigorous discussion within the Party. On 2nd March 1930, Stalin published an important article in the Party newspaper *Pravda* entitled, *Dizzy with Success*:

“The Soviet government’s successes in the sphere of the collective-farm movement are now being spoken of by everyone. Even our enemies are forced to admit that the successes are substantial. And they really are very great. It is a fact that by 20th February of this year 50% of the peasant farms throughout the USSR had been collectivised. That means that by 20th February 1930 we had over-fulfilled the five-year plan for collectivisation by more than 100%.

“But successes have their seamy side, especially when they are attained with comparative ‘ease’ — ‘unexpectedly’, so to speak... People not infrequently become intoxicated by such successes; they become dizzy with success, lose all sense of proportion and the capacity to understand realities;

“Hence the Party’s task is: to wage a determined struggle against these sentiments, which are dangerous and harmful to our cause, and to drive them out of the Party... if they should be allowed free scope, then there can be no doubt that the collective-farm movement will be considerably weakened and the danger of its breaking down may become a reality. Hence the task of our press is: systematically to denounce these and similar anti-Leninist sentiments.

“The successes of our collective-farm policy are due, among other things, to the fact that it rests on the *voluntary character* of the collective-farm movement and on *taking into account the diversity of conditions* in the various regions of the USSR. Collective farms must not be established by force... The collective-farm movement must rest on the active support of the main mass of the peasantry.

“We know, for example, that in a number of the northern areas..., where conditions for the immediate organisation of collective farms are comparatively less favourable than in the grain-growing areas, attempts are not infrequently made to *replace* preparatory work for the organisation of collective farms by bureaucratic decreeing of the collective-farm movement, paper resolutions on the growth of collective farms, organisation of collective farms on paper — collective farms which have as yet no reality, but whose “existence” is proclaimed in a heap of boastful resolutions.

“We know that in a number of areas of Turkestan there have already been attempts to ‘overtake and outstrip’ the advanced areas of the USSR by threatening to use armed force, by threatening that peasants who are not yet ready to join the collective farms will be deprived of irrigation water and manufactured goods.

“Who benefits by these distortions, this bureaucratic decreeing of the collective-farm movement, these unworthy threats against the peasants?

“Nobody, except our enemies!

“What may these distortions lead to?

“To strengthening our enemies and to discrediting the idea of the collective-farm movement.

“Can it be said that the Party has already picked out the main link of the collective-farm movement in the system of collective-farm development?

“Yes, this can and should be said.

“What is this chief link?

“Is it, perhaps, *association for joint cultivation* of the land?

“No, it is not that. Associations for joint cultivation of the land, in which the means of production are not yet socialised, are already a past stage of the collective farm movement.

“Is it, perhaps, the *agricultural commune*?

“No, it is not that. Communes are still of isolated occurrence in the collective farm movement. The conditions are not yet ripe for agricultural communes — in which not only production, but also distribution is socialised — to be the *predominant* form. The main link of the collective-farm movement, its *predominant form* at the present moment, the link which has to be grasped now, is the *agricultural artel*. [artel — a traditional Russian form of co-operative].

“In the agricultural artel, the basic means of production, primarily for grain-farming — labour, use of the land, machines and other implements, draught animals and farm buildings — are socialised. In the artel, the household plots (small vegetable gardens, small orchards), the dwelling houses, a part of the dairy cattle, small livestock, poultry, etc. are *not socialised*.

“The artel is the *main link of the collective-farm movement* because it is the form best adapted for solving the grain problem. And the grain problem is the *main link in the whole system of agriculture* because, if it is not solved, it will be impossible to solve either the problem of stock-breeding (small and large), or the problem of the industrial and special crops that provide the principal raw materials for industry. That is why the agricultural artel is the main link in the system of the collective-farm movement at the present moment.

“Such is the line of the Party at the present moment.

“Can it be said that this line of the Party is being carried out without violation or distortion?

“No, it cannot, unfortunately. We know that in a number of areas of the USSR, where the struggle for the existence of the collective farms is still far from over and where artels are not yet consolidated, attempts are being made to skip the artel framework and to leap straight away into the agricultural commune. The artel is still not consolidated, but they are already “socialising” dwelling houses, small livestock and poultry; moreover, this ‘socialisation’ is degenerating into bureaucratic decreeing on paper, because the conditions which would make such socialisation necessary do not yet exist.

“The art of leadership is a serious matter. One must not lag behind the movement, because to do so is to lose contact with the masses. But neither must one run too far ahead, because to run too far ahead is to lose the masses and to isolate oneself. He who wants to lead a movement and at the same time keep in touch with the vast masses must wage a fight on two fronts — against those who lag behind and against those who run too far ahead.”

Extracts from; J.V. Stalin, *Dizzy with Success* (1930) StWorks Vol.12 pp.197-205

Hindus, a US. citizen of Russian origin, was in his native village when Stalin’s article arrived. Here is his testimony:

“In the market places peasants gathered in groups and read it aloud and discussed it long and violently, and some of them were so overjoyed that they bought all the vodka they could pay for and got drunk.”

Quoted: R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia I: The Socialist Offensive; The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (1980)

At the time that Stalin wrote his article, 59% of the peasants had joined kolkhozy. He obviously hoped that most would remain, but in a rural world dominated by small producers, Stalin’s criticism of such blatant errors was clearly dangerous. Enthusiasm easily transformed itself into defeatism when leftist errors were criticised. For many local leaders, there was a feeling of panic and disarray; their morale and their confidence was severely shaken. Within the party as a whole, right-opportunist tendencies were still present. Some, afraid of the bitterness and the violence of the class struggle in the countryside, took advantage of the criticism of the excesses of collectivisation to start criticising, once again, the very concept of collectivisation. Alternately attacking the Leninist leadership with right-wing and ‘leftist’ arguments, they tried to put forward anti-Communist positions.

Retreats and advances

The collectivisation rate fell from 57.2% on 1st March 1930 to 21.9% on 1st August 1930 rising again to 25.9% in January 1931. However, for the most part, the gains of the first large wave of collectivisation were remarkable. The collectivisation rate greatly exceeded what was planned for the end of the first Five-Year Plan in 1933. In May 1930, after the massive departures from kolkhozy, there were still 6 million families as opposed to 1 million in June 1929. The typical kolkhoz contained 70 families instead of 18 in June 1929. The collectivisation rate was higher, and the kolkhoz were for the most part artels, instead of TOZy (Associations for the Joint Cultivation of Land).

The number of dairy cattle increased from 2.11 million in January 1930 to 4.77 million in May 1930. In the kolkhozy, there were 81,957 Party members on 1st June 1929 and 313,200 in May 1930. With the great collectivisation wave, the kolkhozy consisted mainly of landless and poor peasants. However, a large number of middle peasants had joined. In May, 32.7% of the leading members were former middle peasants. In May 1930, the fixed assets of the kolkhozy were valued at 510 million roubles, 175 million coming from the expropriation of the kulaks.

Remarkable results

Despite the major upheavals provoked by collectivisation, the 1930 harvest was excellent. Good climactic conditions had contributed, and these might have led the Party into under-estimating the difficulties still to come. Grain production amounted to 77.2 million tonnes, compared to 71.7 in 1929. Thanks to national planning, mechanised agriculture, particularly of cotton and sugar-beet, rose by 20%. However, because of the slaughter of a large number of animals, animal production decreased from 5.68 million roubles to 4.4 million roubles, a drop of 22%.

In 1930, the entire collective sector (kolkhozy, sovkhozy and individual plots of the kolkhozines) generated 28.4% of gross agricultural production, compared to 7.6% the previous year. In October 1930, 78% of peasant families were still individual producers.

The second wave of collectivisation

Between September and December 1930, a propaganda campaign was launched. The leadership of kolkhozy distributed activity reports to individual peasants in their area and special meetings were called for those who had left the kolkhozy in March. In September 1930, 5,625 recruitment commissions, composed of kolkhozines, went to persuade the peasants in districts with low collectivisation rates. Kulaks who were sabotaging the collectivisation continued to be exiled, particularly in Ukraine. The autumn 1930 collectivisation campaign was carefully led by the Party leadership: it was not led with the same forcefulness as the first wave, and there was no centralised campaign to exile the kulaks.

From 1st September to 31st December 1930, 1,120,000 families joined the kolkhozy, just over half in the grain producing regions. So 25.9% of families opted for collectivised agriculture. By allocating the best land and different kinds of benefits to the kolkhozines, the economic pressure on the individual peasants increased during 1931 and 1932.

At the same time, the kulaks made their last desperate attempts to destroy the kolkhozy. Of the 34 million horses in the country in 1928, there remained only 15 million in 1932. One Party member spoke of "the liquidation of the horses as a class." Of the 70.5 million head of cattle, there only remained 40.7 million in 1932. Only 11.6 million pigs out of 26 million survived the collectivisation period.

The second great wave of collectivisation took place in 1931 and brought the number of collectivised families from 23.6% to 57.1%. By 1935 the collectivisation level had reached 83.2%, essentially completing the collectivisation of agriculture.

The “Holodomor” lie.

In 1932 there was a famine, caused in part by the sabotage and destruction done by the kulaks and in part by adverse weather conditions. At the same time there was a typhus epidemic which killed a great number of people. Today this famine is referred to by the Nazi government of Ukraine as the “Holodomor”. Using ridiculously exaggerated figures on the numbers of deaths and totally ignoring the typhus epidemic, they and other anti-Communists accuse Stalin and the Soviet government of attempting genocide against Ukrainians despite the fact that there was also famine and epidemic in other regions. They forget that earlier they had talked proudly about their achievements in disrupting collectivisation. Isaac Mazepa, leader of the Ukrainian Nationalist movement boasted that in Ukraine they had succeeded in 1930-1932 in sabotaging agriculture:

“At first there were disturbances in the kolkhozy or else the Communist officials and their agents were killed, but later a system of passive resistance was favoured which aimed at the systematic frustration of the Bolsheviks' plans for the sowing and gathering of the harvest... The catastrophe of 1932 was the hardest blow that Soviet Ukraine had to face since the famine of 1921-1922. The autumn and spring sowing campaigns both failed. Whole tracts were left unsown, in addition when the crop was being gathered... in many areas, especially in the south, 20%, 40% and even 50% was left in the fields, and was either not collected at all or was ruined in the threshing.”

Isaac Mazepa, *Ukraine Under Bolshevik Rule*, Slavonic Review Vol.12 1933-1934 pp. 342-343
Quoted: Douglas Tottle, *Fraud, Famine and Fascism* Chapter 8 (1987)

Economic and social creativity

It is often claimed that the 1930 collectivisation was imposed by force on the peasant masses. In fact it was achieved through the extraordinary social and economic creativity of this period, a revolutionary creativity shown by the masses, intellectual cadres and Party leaders. Most of the basic features of the socialist agricultural system were established during the 1929-1931 struggle.

“This was a learning process on a vast scale, and in an extremely brief period of time, in which party leaders and their advisers, local party officials, the peasants and economic regularities all contributed to the outcome.... Major features of the kolkhoz system established in 1929-1930 endured until Stalin's death, and for some time after it.”

R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia II: The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930* (1980)

Firstly, the kolkhoz was conceived as the organisational form that would allow the introduction of large-scale mechanised production in a backward agricultural country. The kolkhozy were designed for grain production and industrial agriculture, particularly cotton and sugar-beet. The production from the kolkhozy was supplied to the state at very low prices, which helped with the socialist industrialisation: the sums spent by the state to feed the city populations and to supply industry with agricultural raw materials were kept very low. The kolkhozines received compensation, thanks to the considerable revenue generated by sales on the free market and by supplementary work.

Secondly, the Tractor Machine Station system was created to introduce machines in the countryside. Agriculture benefited from massive investments that totally transformed the technical conditions of farms. This complete upheaval of agricultural technique was only possible thanks to the replacement of small and medium-scale agriculture by large-scale agriculture.

But how were modern techniques introduced in the kolkhozy?

Tractor Machine Stations

During the summer of 1927, a comrade by the name of Markevich created an original system, the Tractor Machine Stations (TMS) that centralised control of machines and made them available to the kolkhozy.

In the beginning of 1929, there were only two Tractor Machine Stations, both state property, with 100 tractors. There were also 50 'tractor columns', belonging to grain co-operatives, each with 20 tractors. 147 large kolkhozy had 800 tractors but the majority of the 20,000 tractors were dispersed on the small kolkhozy. Some proposed that tractors and machines be sold to the kolkhozy claiming that if the peasants did not directly own the tractors, then they would not mobilise to find the funds; but in 1929 the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate reported that the experiences with tractors belonging to co-operatives made it impossible to do serious planning since there were not sufficient repair shops and breakdowns often occurred due to lack of maintenance.

Markevich proposed to use 200 tractors for every 40,000 to 50,000 hectares of arable land, along with a repair shop. He underlined that it was necessary for agricultural technology to be managed by a 'unified organisational centre' for the entire Soviet Union. Technology used around the world had to be studied in order to find the best kind of machines, machines had to be standardised and the management of machines had to be centralised.

As early as spring 1930, this system showed its superiority. The TMS only served 8% of the kolkhozy, but 62% of the peasants in those kolkhozy remained during the retreat. The centralised harvest was greatly simplified by this system, since the kolkhozy simply gave one quarter of their harvest to the TMS as payment.

TMS workers were considered industrial workers. Representing the working class in the countryside, they had great influence among the kolkhozines in the areas of political and technical education and of organisation. In 1930, 25,000 tractor drivers received their education. In the spring of 1931, courses were organised for 200,000 young peasants who would enter the TMS, including 150,000 tractor drivers.

An ingenious system for payment of the kolkhozines was devised, called 'work-days'. A decree dated 28th February 1933 placed the different agricultural tasks in seven different remuneration categories, whose value, expressed in 'work-days', varied from 0.5 to 1.5. In other words, the most difficult or arduous work was paid three times as dearly as the easiest or lightest work. The kolkhoz revenue was distributed, at the end of the year, to the kolkhozines according to the number of work-days they had effected. The average revenue per family, in the cereal regions, was 600.2 kilograms of grain and 108 roubles in 1932. In 1937, it was 1,741.7 kilograms of grain and 376 roubles.

Finally, a balance was found between collective labour and the individual activity of the kolkhozine peasants. The legal status of the kolkhozy, made official on 7th February 1935, fixed the basic principles, defined through five years of struggle and experience.

In 1937, the individual parcels of land cultivated by kolkhozines represented 3.9% of the cultivated surface, but the kolkhozines derived 20% of their revenue from them. Each family could own three horned animals, one of which could be a cow, one sow with piglets, ten sheep and an unlimited number of poultry and rabbits.

Investments in the countryside

At the end of 1930, the Tractor Machine Stations controlled 31,114 tractors. The total number of tractors increased steadily during the thirties: from 210,900 in 1933, to 522,000 in 1940. In 1929 there were only 2 combine-harvesters in the whole of the Soviet Union, by 1941 there were 182,000. Despite all the bourgeoisie's hue and cry about the repression suffered by the rich peasants during the collectivisation, in less than one decade, the Russian peasants left the Middle Ages and joined the 20th Century. Their cultural and technical development was phenomenal.

This progress properly reflected the sustained rise in investment in agriculture. It increased annually from 379 million roubles in 1928, reaching 4,983 million in 1935. These figures deny the theory according to which Soviet agriculture was “exploited” by the city: never could a capitalist economy have made such large investments in the countryside. Agriculture’s share in the total investment increased from 6.5% in 1923-1924 to 20% during the crucial years 1931 and 1932; by 1935, its share was 18%.

The breakthrough of socialist agriculture

Starting in 1933, agricultural production rose most years. The year before collectivisation, the cereal harvest attained 71.7 million tonnes. In 1930, there was an exceptional harvest of 83.5 million tonnes. In 1931 and 1932, the Soviet Union was in the depth of the crisis, due to socio-economic upheavals and to desperate kulak resistance and to drought.

Grain production fell to 69.5 and to 69.9 million tonnes. Then, there were three successive harvests from 1933 to 1935 of 89.8, 89.4 and 90.1 million tonnes. Particularly bad climactic conditions produced the worst harvest, in 1936, of 69.3 million tonnes, but its effects were mitigated by reserves and good planning of distribution. The next year, there was a record harvest of 120.9 million tonnes, followed by high levels of 95.0, 105.0 and 118.8 million between 1938 and 1940.

Socialist agriculture dramatically rose as soon as the considerable industrial and agricultural investments had an effect. The total value of agricultural production stagnated between 1928 and 1934, oscillating between 13.1 billion roubles and 14.7 billion roubles. Then it rose to 16.2 billion in 1935, reaching 23.2 billion in 1940.

The Kharkov Tractor Works...was built (in 1929) ...‘outside the Five-Year Plan’. All steel, bricks, cement, labour were already assigned for five years. Kharkov could get steel only by inducing some steel plant to produce ‘above the plan’. To fill the shortage of unskilled labour, tens of thousands of people — office workers, students, professors... volunteered on free days... “Every morning, at half-past six, we see the special train come in,” said Mr Raskin. “They come with bands and banners, a different crowd each day and always jolly.” It was said that half the unskilled labour that built the Plant was done by volunteers.

Anna Louise Strong, *The Stalin Era* (1956)

A peasant population rising from 120.7 to 132 million people between 1926 and 1940 was able to feed an urban population that increased from 26.3 to 61 million in the same period.

The kolkhozine consumption in 1938 had increased, in terms of percentage of peasant consumption under the former régime, to: bread and flour, 125%; potatoes, 180%; fruit and vegetables, 147%; milk and dairy products, 148%; meat and sausage, 179%.

Colossal support

The collectivisation prevented that from happening. Collectivisation and a planned economy allowed the Soviet Union to survive the barbaric war waged against it by the German Nazis.

During the first years of the war, wheat consumption was reduced by one half but, thanks to planning, the available quantities were equitably distributed. The regions occupied and ravaged by the Nazis represented 47% of the area of cultivated land. The fascists destroyed 98,000 collective enterprises. But between 1942 and 1944, 12 million hectares of newly cultivated land were sown in the eastern part of the country.

Thanks to the superiority of the socialist system, agricultural production was able to return to the 1940 level by 1948, three years after the end of the War.

In a few years, a completely new system of organisation of work, a complete upheaval of technique and a profound cultural revolution won the hearts of the peasants. The overwhelming majority became attached to the new system. The proof came during the war, since in the regions occupied by the German troops, despite the efforts made by the Nazi authorities, the kolkhoz model of agricultural production was maintained.

Alexander Zinoviev, who as a young man was an opponent of Stalin had this to say:

“When I returned to the village, even much later, I often asked my mother and other kolkhozines if they would have accepted an individual farm if they were offered the possibility. They all refused categorically.

“The village school) had only seven grades, but acted as the bridge to the region’s technical schools, which trained the veterinarians, agronomists, mechanics, tractor drivers, accountants and other specialists needed for the new agriculture. In Chukhloma, there was a secondary school with ten grades that offered better perspectives to its finishing students. All these institutions and professions were the result of an unprecedented cultural revolution. The collectivisation directly contributed to this upheaval. Besides these more or less trained specialists, the villages hosted technicians from the cities; these technicians had a secondary or higher education. The structure of the rural population became closer to that of urban society... I was a witness to this evolution during my childhood... This extremely rapid change of rural society gave the new system huge support from the masses of the population.

As a student after the Second World War, Zinoviev recalls a discussion that he had with another anti-Communist student:

“If there had been no collectivisation and no industrialisation, could we have won the war against the Germans?”

“No.”

“Without the Stalinist hardships, could we have kept the country in an orderly state?”

“No.”

“If we had not built up industry and armaments, could we have preserved the security and independence of our State?”

“No.”

“So, what do you propose?”

“Nothing.”

Alexander Zinoviev, *Les confessions d’un homme en trop* [Confessions of an Extra Man] (1990)

We are always told by our enemies how unsuccessful Soviet land reform was, but before that, famine happened regularly. There was a serious famine in 1891-1892, and again in 1901, long before the Revolution. There was another in 1922 just after the Civil War. The peasants even had traditional ‘famine bread’ made from moss, bark, wild plants and husks. The 1932 famine, the causes of which are explained above was the last in the USSR. Land reform gave a better life to the peasants and fed the growing cities.



Collectivisation: Before and After



ORGANIC GARDENING IN CUBA

This article was originally published in the USA in the “San Francisco Chronicle” Wednesday 15th March 2000 and in “The Trowel” Issue 11 Spring-Summer 2000 by the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners



The world’s greatest organic farming experiment is going on right now and everyone who eats food should know about it. Cuba, our island neighbour to the south, has been undergoing a radical agricultural and economic revolution as it seeks to dramatically increase its food production using organic methods.

Cuban agriculture was Latin America’s star performer, relying on the latest chemical pesticides, fertilizers and farm equipment from the Soviet bloc. It was farming Central California style with huge mono-crops nourished by agro-chemicals.

This highly industrialized, capital-intensive farming practice came to a screeching halt in 1989 when the Soviet Union collapsed. Cuba lost 85% of its foreign trade, including food, agricultural imports and petroleum. Already crippled by the US embargo, the country was financially devastated with its food supply hit hardest.

The Cuban response was to go organic, a much cheaper alternative to conventional chemical farming that doesn’t rely on imports. The state’s priorities shifted to food production, the scientific community began focusing on organic practices and city dwellers were mobilized as urban farming became a vital source of food.

Amanda Rieux, instructor for the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners’ Gardening and Composting Educator Training Program, has just returned from a trip to Cuba with a Food First Sustainable Agriculture delegation. For Rieux, this was an opportunity to see organic practices in use on a nationwide scale and a chance to assess the implications for all of us.

“In America, the work I do is on the fringe,” says Rieux. “Organic farming is still perceived as unusual and far from the norm. It was exciting to be in a place where the efforts of the entire government are behind sustainable agriculture.” (Sustainable agriculture refers to an integrated system whereby the gardener works within natural biological cycles and uses only naturally occurring resources.) **“The idea of the small urban farm being highly productive, sustainable and the source of a nice income was heartening to see. Cuba proves it’s feasible, it’s happening.”**

With limited gasoline to transport, refrigerate and store food from the countryside, food production was brought to the cities. Cuba now has one of the most successful urban agriculture programs in the world. The State is making unused land available to fledgling urban farmers and thousands of empty lots have been turned into organic oases.

In Havana alone there are 8,000 organic gardens producing a million tons of food annually. The gardens range in size from a few meters to several hectares. The urban farmers primarily grow lettuce, bok choy, onions, chard, radishes, tomato, cabbage and broccoli. Gardens can employ anywhere from one to 70 people depending on the size of the garden. And people from all walks of life are participating. Rieux says:

“At one garden I visited, there was a construction worker, a mechanic, an engineer and a mathematician: all these people are working in the urban garden. You can make more money as an organic farmer than you can as an electrical engineer right now.”

The state is supporting the new urban gardeners through extensive university research into sustainable organic practices, including soil health and fertility.

Cuba’s scientific community is also developing breakthrough biological fertilizers and pesticides using naturally occurring organisms and insects.

According to Food First executive director Peter Rosset, there are more than 200 biotech centres in Cuba producing and distributing cutting-edge, non-toxic bio-fertilizers and pesticides based on local micro-organisms. Biological controls, such as Bt, a common organic pesticide, are available in the US, but Rosset says by focusing so much of its research resources in this arena, Cuba is way ahead of the rest of the world.

In Havana, the Urban Agriculture Department was formed to educate and assist the neophyte city gardeners in implementing these new techniques. Small state run stores were established to sell seeds, hand tools, pots and some biological controls and serve as educational sites, offering workshops and advising the urban farmers and gardeners.

“Cuba is not a commercial society. You can’t think, ‘Gosh, I’d like to grow something. Let me go to the hardware store and buy seeds and get myself some compost.’ There were no stores. The State had to provide shops with inexpensive goods to promote urban agriculture,” Rieux said.

The Cuban gardeners incorporate some traditional organic practices, such as the use of worm compost-castings (worm poo) from red-worms fed a diet of kitchen scraps. Worm compost is generated quickly and is higher in nitrogen that is more quickly accessible by crops than regular compost.

They also rely heavily on inter-planting — where diverse crops are planted together — which discourages the pests that accompany mono-crop farming. This is a major shift from contemporary industrialized farming, with its acres of corn that provide a veritable buffet for bugs, as well as mono-cropping’s inherent dependency on pesticides.

The gardeners are also experimenting with their soil by leaving their crop residue (the stalks, vines, and anything else left after the harvest) on the field instead of clearing it off. A layer of worm compost is added on top to create rich soil another old-fashioned organic idea. Rieux says the Cuban farmers are now very articulate about healthy ecosystems:

“When they find a problem in their garden, they’ll watch closely, noticing if there is a check in their system that might pull the problem back. For instance, if they’re having aphids, they might wash their plants off and watch for a day or two to see what happens. Does a parasitic wasp come for the aphids? Will a lady beetle show up? Will something come and work within the system and deal with the aphids? Working within a whole ecosystem is a given. That was something that the conventional agricultural methods had completely obliterated.”

The city farmers are also tackling the lack of medicine in Cuba. A casualty of the trade embargo, Cuba can import neither medicine nor the ingredients to make it. Even aspirin is a rarity in Cuba. Rieux says she saw a lot of people growing green medicine in their urban gardens.

“I saw a beautiful green medicine garden grown by one man,” she says. He’s growing oregano, marjoram, lemon grass, sage, tila (a kind of sedative), chamomile, calendula, aloe. The herbs are processed as teas and tinctures. In half an hour he had eight or nine customers, a steady flow of business.”

The state needed a dramatic incentive to stimulate interest in urban food production. And money is just as stimulating to Cubans as it is to us. So major economic changes were instituted to support the organic transition in the cities.

Prices were de-regulated and the state created farmers markets, which legalized direct sales from farmers to consumers.

Farmers markets popped up all around the city on the garden sites. Some of the urban gardens, called organiponicos, were established as employee-owner co-operatives with the members sharing in all the profits made.

Today, farmers can make three times more than professionals by selling their produce direct to consumers. Reason enough for engineers to abandon their calculators for hoes.

Cuba's advanced organic farming techniques have led to major cultural shifts as many city-dwellers have become farmers. But what happens when the Cuban economy shifts and the embargo is lifted? Now that they are such capable organic growers, will they revert to chemical farming? Rieux says no:

“Yes, there are people who believe some of the gardeners will revert to the old practices, but many people will still farm organically. Even when the embargo lifts, the small farmer will make more money organically because he spends so little. He’s not going to start buying chemicals. He won’t have to. He has the knowledge now.”

For the rest of the food-eating world, the Cuban agricultural greening shows that when a government decides to, it can put its strength behind sustainable, profitable, non-toxic agriculture.

“The shift towards sustainable agriculture has been very successful in Cuba, people are eating better there now than they did five years ago,” says Rieux. “And, there is an understanding that these methods have social and environmental values, as well as economic. It has been an empowering movement for the Cuban people.”

Granted, Cuba was in a tough, hungry place that made willingness to experiment essential. But at a time when we are dumping ever-increasing amounts of chemical pesticides on our crops, poisoning our aquifers and sterilizing our soil, this large-scale experiment should be watched by all.

AGRICULTURAL MIRACLE IN VIETNAM

from the Vietnam News Agency

A former rice importer

After the 1975 national re-unification, Vietnam suffered for years from food shortages, and had to reach out to its foreign friends and partners for aid. Under the First Five-year Plan (1976-1980) designed by the Communist Party of Vietnam, the country embarked on the co-operatives model in order to enlarge the size of production in the agricultural sector, yet the result fell short of expectations, and it still needed to import thousands of tons of food during this period.

The stagnation dragged on for the next five years. In the early 1980s, this southeast Asian country continued to import hundreds of tons of food each year up until 1985. commendably, the agricultural sector took a sharp turn just four years after the implementation of Renovation Policy (Doi Moi), which was adopted at the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1986, and for the first time exported 1.5 tons of agricultural products. Since then, the sector has firmly been on the track to a bright future.

Surprising achievements

Vietnam's production values in agriculture grew about 4% per year for the period of 1986-2016. Following the international financial crisis of 2008 onwards, despite the difficult international macro-economic climate, the sector managed to maintain stable growth rates that helped balance the economy. There are ten Vietnamese farm products which have reached net values of 1 billion US dollars (USD): rice, coffee, rubber, cashew, pepper, cassava, vegetables, shrimp, catfish and forest products. While other sectors were reeling from the impact of the economic recession, Vietnam's agriculture sector overcame many challenges and grew 3.3% in 2014, compared with 2.6% of 2012 and 2013.

The average growth rate of this sector in 2011-2015 period reached 3.13%, in comparison with a target of 2.6% to 3% issued by the Party's 11th National Congress. By 2014, the country's export turnover of farm, forest and fishery products was 30.8 billion USD, a record high figure to date. As a result, the agricultural sector is the only one that maintains a trade surplus, making the country one of the top global exporters in this sector.

In 2015, agricultural export turnover went up slightly, at 30.13 billion USD, and by that year's end, Vietnamese farm products were on the shelves in over 100 countries and territories, with 24 competitive items. The sector performed rather better with a growth rate of 1.36%, worth 32.1 billion USD. All of these figures have proved the real miracle in the country's agricultural development after more than 30 years of decisive reform policy.

Another notable achievement after Doi Moi has been the modern rural development programme, which became a nation-wide movement that put a new face on many rural areas. More than 1,600 communes and over 10 districts have qualified for the criteria of modern rural areas. Along with this, the poverty rate is going down rapidly, with 2% of the poor population each year successfully escaping poverty.

Infrastructure in the agricultural sector is being upgraded. Irrigation systems have been developed to serve multiple tasks, strengthening capabilities to adapt to climate change and high sea levels. Other infrastructure for farm production continuesd to be modernised. Food safety has been scrutinized closely.

Restructuring in the agricultural sector have seen considerable improvement. Vietnam consistently uses 3.8 million hectares of land for rice plantation to secure food security and maintain export turnover. Rice production grows at over 3% every year. The yearly earnings per hectare of rice plantation is more than 80 billion VND.

The ratio of livestock profit in comparison with total agricultural values has risen, as the farmers are pursuing large-scale production instead of household model farming.

Fisheries have changed from simple exploitation of natural resources to the development of aquaculture (fish-breeding). Fishery production reach 6.55 million tons in 2015.

Challenges ahead

Although Vietnam has been doing really well in this sector, many difficulties lie down the road. Vast production has been hampered for years by fragmented farms, making it hard to utilise advanced technologies and modern production process. Moreover, this also brings about troubles against product quality inspection, which could lead to disadvantages in exportation.

Meanwhile, Vietnam is amongst the areas most affected by climate change. High sea levels pose a major threat to the country's agriculture. As a coastal country, most of its agricultural areas lie along the coast in the two main delta basins, Red River and Mekong Deltas. If the sea keeps rising at its current rate, significant areas of those lands will be submerged, causing crop losses. The issue becomes more difficult due to some countries upstream on the Mekong River constructing more dams. These dams reduce the quantity of fresh water flowing down the delta, allowing salt water to enter in times of drought.

Against this backdrop, the country will surely press ahead with its agriculture strategy, and also have to adopt comprehensive policies to address the afore-mentioned obstacles.



Rubber



Pepper



Sea-Food



Rice

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