

CHAPTER 3

SINO-SOVIET BLOC: PERSISTENT FOOD PROBLEMS

The Sino-Soviet bloc, as a whole, has suffered from a persistent shortage of food, with occasional lapses into massive deficits and famine. The disasters of Chinese agricultural policy have become the most conspicuous in the Communist area, but failures in the U.S.S.R. over a period of more than 40 years, persistent as well as post-World War II failures in the Eastern European satellites, would be regarded as catastrophic if compared with any but the Chinese experience.

Food is a major preoccupation of all the governments of the Communist area, from East Germany to North Korea. In every country massive efforts have been made to increase the production of food and fiber. Table 3 sets forth the relevant data.

TABLE 3.—*Cereal grains in the Sino-Soviet bloc*

Year	Population (millions)	Area (million hectares)	Average yield (quintals per hectare)	Total output (million metric tons)	Output per capita (kilo- grams)	Percent change output per capita 1935-39
1935-39	800	199	12.4	246	308	-----
1950	859	195	10.7	210	244	-20
1953	906	206	11.8	244	269	-13
1956	962	235	12.6	296	307	-----
1959	1,025	223	12.9	288	281	-9

Source: Derived from appendix tables A-1, A-7, A-8, A-9, and A-10.

While analysis of agricultural developments in the Sino-Soviet bloc is difficult, because of the unreliable data made available by the Communist countries, it appears that the trend in production of cereals during the 1950's as a whole was upward. Production seems to have increased, however, more or less as additional acreage has been put into cultivation. Yields in 1959 were only slightly higher than the average for 1935-39. The 1959 output of cereals per capita was still less than in 1935-39.

The situation in the different countries in the bloc varied considerably. Eastern Europe as a whole appeared to have produced enough food to meet basic nutritional standards, although the adequacy of diets varied from section to section. In Communist Asia, where reliable information is even more scanty than elsewhere, it is at least clear that starvation is a major problem.

Output of selected cereals and all grains, pulses, roots, and tubers in the three sections of the bloc for 1935, 1956 (an especially good year in the U.S.S.R. and mainland China), and 1959, is shown in table 4.