

THE COMBINE: A NEW FORM OF PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION IN THE AGRICULTURE OF
THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Hanoi HOC TAP in Vietnamese No 2, Feb 75 pp 76-81

[Article by Nguyen Trung]

[Text] In addition to the great accomplishments of the other economic sectors, during the past 25 years the German people, under the leadership of the German Socialist Unity Party, have achieved great agricultural accomplishments.

On the basis of the new production relations, the scale of agricultural production has been increasingly expanded with a high level of organization. Modernized agricultural production has an increasingly industrial character.

With 880,000 agricultural workers (of a total of 7.8 million workers), in 1973 the collectivized peasants of the GDR produced a volume of production with a value of 32 billion marks, which was 10.4 percent of the gross social product. Today, a peasant cooperative member can produce enough grain and food products to feed 28 people. Labor productivity is quite high. For example, on the average a worker in Madgeburg District works 7.4 hectares of land and produces 1.8 tons of meat, 6.6 tons of milk, and 3,700 eggs. Crop productivity has attained advanced indices: wheat and barely have attained 36.7 quintals per hectare; white potatoes, 188.6 quintals per hectare; sugar beets, 324.6 quintals per hectare; beets for animal feed, 567.6 quintals per hectare; oil-bearing seeds, 20.6 quintals per hectare, etc. Domestic animals are also very numerous: there are 4.8 million cows, 8.5 million pigs, 12.2 million laying hens, and 1.3 million sheep. The material and technical bases of agriculture have been strengthened: in 1969 the number of tractors amounted to three for every 100 hectares, there were 237 kg of chemical fertilizer (including N.P.K.) per hectare, and 430,000 hectares were irrigated (with controllable irrigation and drainage). The level of cadres and workers in agricultural labor was increasingly high: in 1970, 57.6 percent of the agricultural laborers had college or skilled worker levels.

The appearance of the countryside has completely changed. The lives of the peasants have been improved in all ways. The average income of a worker in agriculture is equal to the level of a worker in industry (cooperative members in an average cooperative had an income of 8,700 marks per year). The difference between cities and the rural areas has been essentially eliminated.

Those results were due, first of all, to the position of agriculture in the national economy being determined with increasing clarity. The Government and people of the GDR are aware that in order for the socialist economy to develop there cannot be industry or agriculture alone, but that there must be both industry and agriculture, and they must develop together and influence each other. The higher the level of industry, the more agriculture must be developed correspondingly, for only then can it satisfy the needs of industry and the lives of the people. Therefore, the Party has strengthened its leadership of agriculture and has encouraged the laboring peasants to produce enthusiastically in order to win great victories in agriculture.

The transformation in knowledge was manifested in the specific organization of implementation. The matter of strengthening the material and technical bases of agriculture and leading agriculture to intensive cultivation and increased productivity was given much attention. From 1960 to 1969 the amount of chemical fertilizer used increased from 950,000 tons to 1.53 million tons, the number of tractors brought into the fields increased from 80,000 to 190,000, etc. The grafting, cross-breeding, and propagating of the various high-productivity plant varieties were carried out urgently and the new varieties were brought into production rather well.

The improvement of the organization and management of agricultural economics was also carried out very positively. The GDR paid attention to improving planning with the implementation of policies to use economic levers and ideological education. Unified organs to guide agriculture and the food-processing industry were established, the agricultural science and technology research and cadre training organs were improved, and the economic management role of the state was strengthened.

Especially, during the past several years the problem of the organization of concentrated and specialized production at a high level has been posed. Industrial methods have been introduced into agriculture. The form of production of the combine type has appeared. A new form of production organization which is appropriate to the specific conditions of the GDR, it has been proven to be effective in accelerating the strong development of agriculture.

The strong, continuous development of the building of socialism has established for agriculture increasingly difficult missions, under the conditions of an increasingly large number of agricultural workers being withdrawn for transfer to the industrial front. Therefore, agriculture must transform production along the lines of a higher degree of concentration and specialization, create conditions for introducing modern science and technology,

increase labor productivity, further raise the level of skill of agricultural cadres and workers, and advance socialist production relations a new step forward. In actuality, that is a process of revolutionary change in all aspects of agriculture.

The development of production forces demands the perfecting of production relations and the improvement of organization and management. During the past several years, although the agricultural cooperatives and state farms were consolidated and equipped to a high degree with equipment and machinery, in view of the new scientific and technical accomplishments, and of the requirement to introduce industrial production methods into agriculture, it became increasingly clear that the scale of production of the cooperatives (on the average, 600 hectares) and the state farms (on the average, 850 hectares) was not appropriate. For example, in cultivation the GDR has eight-blade plows (attached to the Soviet Union's K700 tractors) to replace the three-or-four-blade plows of the past. The new plows can plow two hectares per hour and must be used on an area of about 6,000 hectares if their capacity is to be fully utilized. There are also harvesting combine machines which have much higher productivity than the previous harvesters but which can achieve high economic effectiveness only if they are used on an area of about 2,000 hectares. The same is true with regard to animal husbandry. The GDR has built various types of modern stables and pens that can be used to raise 2,000 milk cows or 5,000 meat cows. But the scale of the cooperative is too small for those types of stables and pens to be used. Furthermore, the cooperatives, even the step-3 cooperatives, do not by themselves have sufficient capital to purchase the new machines and build the various types of modern stables and pens.

On the basis of that actual situation, the Party and Government of the GDR affirmed that production could not be carried out on a small scale. A high degree of concentration and specialization of production is one of the basic ways to increase labor productivity, reduce expenses, and lower the production costs of agricultural products, while also being an indispensable pre-condition for applying the newest accomplishments of science and technology in production.

But how should concentration and specialization be accomplished so that they may be most effective?

In agricultural production there are many ways to achieve concentration and specialization. In the GDR the combining of the cooperatives in order to have a larger scale of production encountered many difficulties because it was expensive, required the mobilization of much capital, it was necessary to resolve at the same time a whole series of problems regarding science and technology which in actuality could not yet be resolved, and it was necessary to overcome difficulties regarding the level of management once the production units had advanced to a larger scale. Furthermore, technology was still evolving, so it was impossible to review the scale of the cooperatives one every few years. Therefore, the Party and Government of the GDR, fully

utilizing the existing advantages and latent capabilities and on the path of studying and enquiring, choose a policy of concentration and specialization which was appropriate to the specific conditions of the country. The Eighth Plenum of the German Socialist Unity Party in June 1971 decided that that was the path of organizing cooperation with regard to production and commercial operations (combines) in agricultural production. The Plenum reached the conclusion that with the conditions of the GDR, the combine was the most rational policy, the path to production with the highest effectiveness in the present stage. There are two forms of such combines: combines of the agricultural cooperatives and the state farms and combines of the agricultural production installations, the food processing industry enterprises, and the commercial organizations in the cultivation and distribution sectors.

How are combines in the GDR organized? Combines are a form of cooperation in the production and commercial operations of many production installations, in order to achieve a production goal on the basis of maintaining the existence and legal autonomy of the installations participating in the combine. According to the requirements of production and their conditions and capabilities, the cooperatives and state farms cooperate with one another in production and commercial operations in many ways: there are combines with a time limit (for the attainment of a certain production goal; there are permanent combines (to use existing machinery or purchase new machinery; there are combines for cooperation in individual tasks (for example, cooperation in irrigation, water drainage, animal husbandry pens, or mechanization) or in individual sectors (for example, in animal husbandry or cultivation); and combines for cooperation in multiple tasks (combining capital, labor forces, and other production facilities to achieve a number of definite production tasks) or in an entire enclosed production line (cooperation with one another from the animal husbandry, cultivation, and processing elements until the completion of the products).

The activities of the combines are aimed toward the plan indices of the state. The legal basis of combines is a contract signed by the production units. The cooperation of the combine is based on voluntariness and is not limited geographically, and the production units may participate in many combines at the same time, depending on their requirements and capabilities. The units participating in the combine elect a Management Council consisting of representatives of the production units, which has the mission of preparing the production proposals and then submitting them to the Cooperative Members' Congress (if there are cooperatives) to be decided upon. If the Congress agrees, the Management Council carries them out. Cooperative cadres participating in the Management Council continue to receive the distribution of their cooperative. The combine has no separate finances. Every year the combine audits all of its receipts and expenditures. Losses and profits are distributed among the component members according to the ratio of their contribution of production capital, land, production facilities, etc., to the combine. Each cooperative is still an economic accounting unit, and the combine is only a form of coordination.

The form of production and commercial cooperation most widespread in the GDR is the cultivation combine (called KAP for short). The cultivation combine utilizes the labor and agricultural implements of the component units, and the organization of production in the cultivation sector is in accordance with the resolutions of the joint conference of leaders of those units. Those combines are responsible only for the cultivation sector. Animal husbandry remains the responsibility of the component units, but the combine provides animal feed by means of economic contracts.

In the process of cooperation in production and commerce, the specialization of production in each sector also gradually takes form. For example, the cultivation combine is in turn divided into a field crops combine, a garden combine, a combine for growing animal feed, etc.

Thus it may be said that the GDR has used the form of units cooperating in production and commerce as a transitional stage, a bridge from each cooperative and each state farm to production that is more specialized, concentrated, and modernized.

Advancing agriculture to large-scale socialist production with a high degree of concentration and specialization, and introducing industrial production methods into agriculture are new subjects which the collective peasant class of the GDR is now studying and implementing. How the form of cooperation in production and commerce will progress still depends on the specific situation of future development. To date, after a period of implementation, that process has attained a number of good results.

Labor, technology, and investment capital have, by means of the combines, been mobilized and used to the maximum. The new accomplishments of science and technology have been widely applied. The combine has many additional modern production facilities, such as new-style animal pens, modern milking installations, highly productive transportation networks and draft power, mechanical sprinkling systems, etc., but there is practically no need to borrow additional capital from the state. That is in accordance with the slogan "From each mark, each hour of labor, and each gram of materials, obtain higher utilization effectiveness," which was put forth by the collective peasant class of the GDR.

Another new factor is that in one respect the combine is a form of organization to help the deficient cooperatives catch up with the good cooperatives. The cooperatives participating in the combines differ from one another with regard to productivity and income. The combine's income is not directly divided up among the workers but is turned over to the cooperatives (according to the ratio of participation with regard to the various aspects and the labor productivity that was attained). Thus two cooperative members of two different cooperatives doing the same type of work in a production unit of a combine may have different income levels. That situation affects the cooperative members and the cooperatives, and stimulates the deficient cooperatives to go all-out to keep up with the good cooperatives. Furthermore, in the process of developing combines the deficient cooperatives are given priority in assistance so that they may keep up with the common leap forward.

Another new feature is that in vertical combine cooperation the various elements -- agricultural production, the processing industry and commerce -- are integrally related to one another. The composition of this type of combine consists of the agricultural production installations (cooperatives and state farms), the industrial enterprises (slaughter houses, meat-processing plants, canneries, tanneries, etc.), and the circulation and distribution organizations. Thus it may be said that it is an embryonic form of the combined industry-agricultural teams, a future step on the path of agricultural development of the GDR.

At present, the combines account for about 70 percent of the cultivated area of the GDR. Although the cooperatives still develop production on the basis of separate economic accounting and still own their production facilities, the production function and ownership of means of production of the installations participating in the combines have begun to change. In fact, some combines have developed into an economic unit with tight structures. That is also a new embryonic form of organization in the agricultural production of the GDR, on the path of advance to large-scale, modernized production.

The process of promoting the introduction of industrial production methods into agriculture is also a process of further strengthening the alliance between the working class and the collective peasant class. In this process those two fraternal classes are more tightly bound together. The workers have provided the cooperative peasants with modern production facilities, new scientific and technical knowledge, and advanced experiences in the reform of a whole process of social labor. That alliance was also manifested in the Eighth Plenum of the German Socialist Unity Party in approving a budget of 26.5 billion marks to invest in agriculture during the 1971-1975 plan, which is 15 percent of all capital invested in the economic sectors throughout the country. That is a favorable condition for the collective peasant class to advance further and to develop agriculture harmoniously and in balance with the development of industry.

Another important change in the process of achieving cooperation in production and commerce is the great change on the part of the peasant cooperative members. With work by shifts and the receiving of salaries, the peasant cooperative members have begun to enter a new phase: the phase of agricultural production in accordance with industrial methods. That situation requires that the thinking and responsibility of the cooperative members no longer be restricted to the sphere of a single cooperative, but that they be expanded. Their understanding must be more comprehensive, their level of mastery of science and technology must be higher, and their organization and management must be better. They will gradually become accustomed to the new scale of production, have more confidence in their capabilities, and resolutely follow the leadership of the party of the working class.

In recapitulation, determining the position of agriculture, strengthening the leadership and guidance of the Party and state with regard to agriculture, strengthening the material and technical bases of agriculture, and improving the organization and management of agriculture -- including the improvement

of the forms of production organization -- are important elements in the development of agriculture in the GDR. During the past several years, due to those elements, especially with the organization of highly concentrated and specialized production, and promoting the introduction of industrial production methods into agriculture, the Party and Government of the GDR have manifested the superiority of the socialist production relations, increased the positiveness and initiative of the production bases, and promoted a great leap forward in the development of agriculture.

The present direction of agricultural development of the GDR is still to continue to promote intensive cultivation, concentrate and specialize production, and introduce industrial production methods into agriculture. Under the conditions of the cultivated land being relatively poor in quality, the average per capita land area being small, and the land area being reduced because of basic construction, the strengthening of the material and technical bases of agriculture in order to create high economic effectiveness is extremely important. For example, with regard to chemical fertilizer the GDR will increase the level of fertilizer from 73 kg of nitrogenous fertilizer per hectare (in 1970) to 100 kg of nitrogenous fertilizer (in 1975). With regard to irrigation, although it has encountered many difficulties regarding water sources and has very inadequate equipment, the GDR is striving to increase the area with controllable irrigation and drainage from 435,000 hectares (in 1970) to 800,000 hectares (in 1975). The mechanization and breeding stock elements have also received attention. Especially, the GDR believes that its seed stock work is backward, so it has paid all-out attention to cross-breeding new varieties which have high productivity and good quality and are suitable for mechanization, and has kept abreast of the new developments in seed stocks in the world. On the basis of strengthening the material and technical bases, the production combine form will be further perfected and will gradually increase to a higher form.

Organizing scientific and technical research and training agricultural cadres has continued to receive attention. The Academy of Agricultural Science and the other research institutes, with rather large research staffs and installations, are entering into the planning and accounting of the scientific research topics and are rapidly bringing the results of research into production. The improvement of the contents and methods of instruction in order to improve the quality of cadre training has received much attention. Schools are becoming places for the comprehensive training of cadres. The schools have also signed contracts with the production bases to train cadres so that they may be appropriate to the requirements of those bases.

We are extremely happy over the great accomplishments in the sphere of agriculture, as well as in the other spheres, of the people of the GDR, and sincerely wish the people of the GDR the winning of many even greater victories on the path of building and developing socialism.

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