

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: THE NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOVIET
AND EAST EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE:
FINAL (TECHNICAL) REPORT

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NOTE

This is the final, Technical Report from the editor of the Newsletter for Research on Soviet and East European Agriculture, publication of which was supported by the National Council from 1980 to the expiration of this latest contract in 1989. The Report describes activities in the last three years, and plans for future publication.

FINAL REPORT

THE NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOVIET & EAST EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE

FOR THE THIRTY-NINE MONTHS ENDED JUNE 30, 1989

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE (RSEEA) is a cooperative venture disseminating primary information among researchers in academe, agribusiness, trade and government.

Professional analysts employed by agribusiness, research libraries and trade organizations, and faculty from universities having programs in agriculture, agricultural economics, economics and/or area studies make up the core of the venture through their contributions to the newsletter. Without these contributors the newsletter would not exist, even with funding from the Council and the University.

The emergency grant from The National Council for Soviet and East European Research (NCSEER) in 1985 saved the newsletter from extinction. The follow-on grants from NCSEER for 1986/87, 1987/88 and related extensions, and the support from the University of Southern Maine (USM), provided the new editor of the newsletter, Professor Durgin, time to reorganize while continuing to publish. Without the support from the Council and the USM, the newsletter would not have been able to continue.

Since Volume 7, Combined Issues 1-4 were published in December, 1985, RSEEA's staff has successfully published 4 Issues for each of Volumes 8 through 11 on time and within budget.

These accomplishments encouraged the School of Business, Economics and Management (SBEM) of the USM to provide ongoing support for RSEEA during 88/89, 89/90 and 90/91. It provided 1/3 release time for Professor Durgin, the

newsletter's editor, and more than \$5,000 of unrestricted funds to cover the cost of graduate assistants for the editor, information acquisition and promotion of the Newsletter and other related RSEEA expenses each of these years. The USM's Office of Sponsored Research also provided support for data entry, production and dissemination assistance; including marketing, subscription and financial management services.

During the 39 month period, approximately 500 copies per issue of RSEEA were being sent to some 460 plus individuals in the United States, Canada and 18 foreign countries outside the North American Continent. Subscribers include faculty of major universities, prominent agribusinesses, executive offices of governments, including embassies and privy councils.

However, of these 500 plus copies distributed: 12 were strictly complimentary sent to prominent scholars, 61 complimentary copies were sent to contributors, 81 complimentary copies were sent to 32 individuals designated by the NCSEER, 6 copies were exchanged for related publications of other organizations and 142 subscribers paid for their subscriptions in 1989. 130 plus copies were regularly distributed for marketing purposes with the remaining kept for future requests. The continuing marketing efforts substantially helped to increase the subscriptions from 75 in March of 1988 to the 142 in June of 1989.

CONCLUSIONS

The RSEEA Newsletter must maintain between 250 and 300 subscriptions to cover the "out-of-pocket" costs for publication and dissemination. The NCSEER must be willing from time to time to provide supplemental funding for the Newsletter. The next editor's host institution must be willing to provide release time, graduate assistants, and assistance with the acquisition of source information and support for the promotion of the Newsletter.

FINAL REPORT

THE NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOVIET & EAST EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE

FOR THE THIRTY-NINE MONTHS ENDED JUNE 30, 1989

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the National Council for Soviet and East European Research (NCSEER), the goal of a continued life for the now eleven year old Newsletter for Research on Soviet and East European Agriculture (RSEEA) was reached. Without NCSEER funding there is little question but that RSEEA, the sole clearing house of information and communication among scholars working on Soviet and East European Agriculture, would have folded and the international network of scholars that Ken Gray (the founder and former editor of RSEEA) had so painfully built up over a seven year period would have evaporated.

At the time I was approached to take over the task of editing RSEEA, its prospects looked bleak. Ken Gray, who was leaving academe for a post with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, had been searching for almost a year to find a replacement editor who would continue the work he had been carrying on for 6 years, and there had been no issues published for about a year. I agreed to take on the task provided I could get financial support. The NCSEER provided that support and as a result I was able to carry out a series of technical improvements and also institute some changes with respect to the newsletter's coverage, all of which are described in the body of this report.

As a result of the favorable reception of the above noted changes and the expression of this in letters of support from readers, the Dean of the School of Business, Economics and Management of the University of Southern Maine became convinced that RSEEA would reflect credit on the School's newly formed Center for Business and Economic Research, RSEEA now has a permanent institu-

tional base of support.

This report is about our successes, failures and omissions. In vaunting the successes, there is no intent to deprecate the work of Ken Gray, RSEEA's founder who edited it for 6 years and built up a large network of contributors and subscribers before handing RSEEA over to us. We merely progressed marginally from the very strong base Ken Gray had labored so hard for so many years to establish. Thanks to the reputation that Gray had established for RSEEA, we had a willing stable of contributors and were able to marshal far more resources of all types than he had ever had at his disposal. The Soviet and East European Agricultural network owes him a great debt.

Furthermore, the accomplishments and changes described in this report could not have been carried out without the help of the University of Southern Maine's Office of Sponsored Research (OSR). Gene Pranger of OSR took care of the overall management of the newsletter, including printing and distribution, as well as all of the tasks associated with subscriptions, mailing lists, billing and accounting. It is he who initiated and carried out all of the improvements on the technical plane which are covered in Section 1. He, together with Lynn Matyas, has also exercised a key role in decisions regarding the expansion of RSEEA's coverage and the formulation of our current "marketing strategy". Lynn Matyas of the same office provided uncannily accurate typing and fast turnarounds of materials submitted to her for entry into the wordprocessor, as well as a great deal of helpful advice on a wide range of matters.

The very marked improvement in the publication's appearance since the publication of our first issue (Vol. 7) is due solely to Ms. Matyas' efforts. Her dedication and efforts have provided a strong motivation to raise the quality of the content. It is thanks to Ms. Matyas' strong interest in the newsletter

and her constant prodding and enforcement of deadlines that RSEEA gets published and mailed out every quarter.

I have also been fortunate in having the assistance of Dr. Craig Deitrich who edits a section on China for each issue. I have also been fortunate in having the assistance of several students who have worked as research assistants: Ray Collitt and Pat Hogan.

The report is divided into 5 sections. Section I describes the improvements made on the technical plane by Gene Pranger. Section II Describes our "marketing strategy". Section III describes the expansion of coverage. Section IV describes our failures and omissions. Section V discusses plans for the future.

I. TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS

A. We have restored RSEEA to its former four issues per year with a current average of 30 pages per issue.

B. The appearance has been improved and the type density of the publication has been reduced to improve the readability of the text.

C. A computerized record keeping system has been set up for the mailing list, billings and keeping track of credits for information submitted.

II. MARKETING STRATEGY

A. RSEEA began as a cooperative venture which means that scholars submitting items of interest to the research community are given free subscriptions. This poses a dilemma. The large number of free subscriptions keeps us continually in the red and in need of outside financial support. On the other hand, if in the name of self-financing, we stop providing complimentary subscriptions to the contributors of bibliographies, research and other items, RSEEA's life blood, so to speak, will dry up. It became clear that since there

will be very little subscription monies forth coming from individual scholars in the field, it could come to some extent only from libraries and the businesses and institutions where the scholars work, and to a larger extent from non-specialists working in related fields or perhaps teaching Soviet and East European subjects. Thus we expanded our coverage to include China and a larger amount of statistical materials (described in the next section). This attempt to broaden RSEEA's appeal, while all the while continuing to serve as a clearing house of specialists seems to be beginning to show some results.

B. RSEEA some how caught the attention of the Associated Press which did a story on RSEEA together with a picture of the RSEEA staff. This story went nation wide, and was carried in the Des Monies Register, the Indianapolis Star, the Philadelphia Inquirer and many other papers through the nation. The Canadian national daily the Globe and Mail also carried the article. The results was a surge in inquiries and increase in subscriptions from U.S. and Canadian agribusiness firms, libraries and Canadian governmental institutions.

III. EXPANSION OF COVERAGE

A. Coverage of China: The University of Southern Maine is fortunate to have on its faculty a nationally recognized scholar on China, Craig Deitrich. While not an economist, Craig is well acquainted with China, is fluent in Chinese, and is quite "au courant" in Chinese economic matters. Craig wrote an excellent article on Chinese grain production for Volume 10, Issue 1 and since that time has served as Associate Editor for Chinese agriculture. He provides statistical, bibliographic and other items, and edits the special section on China in each issue.

B. Statistical Materials: Issue 4 of Volume 9 carried a very wide range of statistical materials relating to sown area, output, etc. in the USSR and

Eastern Europe.

Since that time we have been carrying an ever larger amount of statistical materials. Issue 1 of each volume carries statistical reports on the degree of fulfillment of the agricultural plans in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Gregor Iazarcik (Research Project on National Income in East/Central Europe) has been doing East Europe and Keith Severin (formerly with USDA's FAS and now with Jaeneke Associates) has been doing the part on the USSR.

While these are of little value to specialists who have, as most do, direct access to the statistical hand books of the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, they are of greater value to the non-specialists tangentially engaged in research or interested in Soviet and East European agriculture, but lack the language ability.

C. Short Articles: We have had an increasing number of special reports and articles by outside specialist from both academe and government. These are of interest to both the specialist and non-specialists. Each issue contains two reports on the harvest outlook: one for the USSR prepared by Christian Foster of the USDA and one on Eastern Europe by Nancy Cochrane of the USDA. We have also had pieces by Alan Mustard, former agricultural attache at the US Embassy in Moscow, several short piece by USDA researchers, and several articles from specialists in academe. This is all part of an effort to broaden RSEEA's appeal to non-specialists.

IV. OMISSIONS

We have not yet established the board of Contributing Editors we had planned. While it seemed, and still does seem like a good idea, it just did not seem to work out in practice. Before listing individuals on the masthead as contributing editors I wanted to be certain that they would be contributing

editors in fact and not just in name. Up until recently the "glory" of being a contributing editor was simply not commensurate with the work involved. But as RSEEA expands in circulation and is becoming more widely cited the "glory" factor seems to be increasing. We have lined up one very serious contributing editor beginning with Volume 12, and we expect to have a firm commitment from a second very serious person soon. This is discussed in section V.

We have not put in sufficient efforts to found an Association of Researchers on Soviet and East European Agriculture. As I stated in an earlier report to the Council I felt that that would be the only way to achieve self-financing, i.e., the formation of an association with a board of directors, affiliate status with the AAASS, and regular dues which would cover a RSEEA subscription. As I reported in 1987 I made a feeble attempt to start a movement toward this but did not follow through. At the Tenth International Conference on Soviet and East European Agriculture I put the proposal to the conference, but it was rejected for the time being. While the formation of such an association would be of value to the discipline, I am now confident that we can achieve self-financing without such an association.

V. THE FUTURE

All future efforts will be directed to insuring a continued life for RSEEA. This will involve the following:

1. The formation of a board of contributing editors.

Mr. Alexander Myendorff (Candidate of Economic Sciences) of Moscow, the author of three Soviet books on agricultural economics has agreed to become a contributing editor. Beginning with Volume 12 he will be contributing a section to each issue.

I am also talking with a very seasoned and serious scholar about editing a

special section on East Europe for each issue. I have not yet received a final commitment, but this scholar is quite interested and if she does give a final commitment she will carry through on it.

2. The "grooming" of a replacement editor.

I am looking for a replacement for myself. I have discussed this with Dr. Robert Koopman, a Soviet specialist with the USDA. He is planning to move to academe and once settled there he will begin working with me. I will be progressively increasing his role, looking toward his eventual taking over as editor in another 3-5 years.

3. Continuation of the RSEEA Newsletter.

In the final analysis, RSEEA's continued existence will depend upon the subscribers willingness to cover the "out-of-pocket" costs for publication and dissemination. The NCSEER must be willing from time to time to provide supplemental funding for the Newsletter. The next editor's host institution must be willing to share other costs, such as, release time for the editor, graduate assistants for the editor, information acquisition and promotion of the Newsletter. The continuation of RSEEA remains uppermost in the minds of Gene Pranger and myself and we both continue to be optimistic. Our optimism stems from our experience with the three conditions mentioned above which have been for the most part realized over the past four and one-half years.

CONCLUSION

I can only reiterate that without the funding provided by the National Council - RSEEA would not have survived.

