

Chapter 8

Susan Clark's Friends Ella Bloor and Harold Ware and the Soviet and American Farm Problems

Concessions were troublesome but the Soviets solicited more of them and created additional types during the New Economic Policy (NEP) era—they thought there was little choice. While industrial growth was the immediate goal of Lenin's plans agriculture was critical to the success of all aspects of NEP. Farms had to be modernized as increased production was needed to feed a growing urban population and for generating surpluses to be exported to raise foreign exchange for purchasing industrial goods and hiring technical experts. Although Russia had much surplus but undeveloped land, remaking Soviet agriculture was a greater challenge than modernizing Russia's industries.

Frustration over agricultural output had been building for two generations. Freeing the serfs in 1861 through a system of financial compensation to estate owners led to more private farms and minor increases in productivity, but emancipation in the old sections of Russia had usually led to the creation of the under-producing "mir" form of land ownership. A mir was a version of the old estates and their villages--without the estate owners. Land was held in common with each household having a stake in the land, but one it could not sell. In a mir the ex-serfs established an association that allocated narrow strips of land to each of its members based on the needs of a participant and his family. A strip-holder determined what and when to plant rather than being directed by a manager. That seemed inefficient to observers, as were other aspects of the mir system. Many times, a member's strips were miles apart and surrounded by burrows. That wasted labor time and land as well as preventing mechanization. The inefficiency of the system was compounded by frequently reallocating strips, reducing incentives to invest in

improvements. That, and the burdens on the ex-serfs of paying high redemption fees for their emancipation prevented investing in new tools, advanced seeds, or education. ¹

Beginning in the 1890s the Tsar's advisors attempted to correct the problems by cancelling the redemptions, by allowing residents to buy and consolidate both private estates and mir shares, and by providing loans and technical guidance to private farmers. Mir holdings were reduced by a third by 1913. There was also a program that sponsored settlements in Russia's frontiers, Siberia, and the Ukraine. In those areas private ownership was more common than in historic Russian territory. As well, the government tried to preserve as state-owned farms the remaining large progressive estates and their breeding stocks so they could serve as models and resources for other farmers.

The Stubborn Problem

Advances were made, but not as many as reformers hoped. By World War I only twenty percent of Russian farms were privately held, and their average size was just sixty acres. Individuals' mir holdings typically were less than twenty acres, while the average American small farmer worked one hundred and fifty acres. What progress had been made was soon reversed. World War I and the revolution led to chaos as individual peasants and mirs seized private and government lands. One American expert observer called it an "agricultural revolution" as great as the emancipation of 1861—but not a good one as it deepened the problem of inefficient use of land and labor. The seizures also blocked the Bolsheviks' plans to radically redo Soviet agriculture. Predictably, at the onset of their regime they had seized all large estates and they went further, soon declaring the nationalization of all lands. The most radical Bolsheviks wished to immediately replace all mirs and small individual farms with government directed groups of peasants (collectives and communes) and then with large, mechanized state-owned agricultural factories directed by

government experts and employing a new agricultural proletariat. But there was opposition to such take-overs. In contrast to the Bolsheviks, Russia's socialists demanded the seized lands be converted into individual peasant holdings.²

In 1919, Lenin did not have the power to achieve the Bolshevik's goals. He had to compromise. While others like Trotsky and his Left Opposition faction demanded forcing at least a communist version of the *mir* (collectives) on the peasants Lenin and his allies Bukarin and the Right faction decided to proceed slowly, even encouraging some growth of independent private "kulak" farming. But to promote some collectivization Lenin offered tax and other incentives to farmers who would contribute land, animals, and equipment to consolidated farms. There were to be no strips of land and one crop was to be grown on such collectives so tractors and other modern equipment could be utilized to compensate for the drastic loss of farm animals since WWI began. Collectives' members were to work jointly, following the advice of experts as to what crops to raise and how to raise them-- although in theory all decisions were to be made by members. In the predominate *Artel* type of collective individuals gave their land but kept their homes, possessions, cattle, and small plots, only giving the collective the use of their equipment ("tools of production") for shared tasks. Individuals in *Artels* were to receive payments based on the collective's estimation of their contribution to each year's production -- after all government requisitions, taxes and expenses were deducted. In contrast to the *Artel* were extreme forms of collectives ranging from ones that allowed members to keep private household property, but not individual plots and cattle, to full communes that merged everything and promised all members equal shares in production after government taxes and requisitions.

Significant, all forms of collectives made the more productive farmers forfeit more than others. That was one reason why the first Bolshevik collectivization efforts accomplished little.

Few joined. Only one percent of peasant households were collectivized by 1927 and the size of the average collective's useful land was only one hundred twenty acres, one third the size of the small American grain farm and only twice the size of Russia's average private farm. Worse, the typical collective had ten households—one per twelve acres. Such small acreages were not enough to support mechanization or any productivity leaps. As well, much of a collective's land was needed to support its many households' livestock.³

Frustrating all the Bolshevik leaders, grain production per acre in the late 1920s remained about that of 1913, twelve bushels, a fourth lower than in the United States. Although total farm acreage had grown by thirty percent since World War I, and Russia was importing thousands of tractors and other farm equipment such as combines, total output of critically important grains had stalled. Surprising, and very disappointing, the few large state-owned mechanized farms had meagre results. Despite that, the Soviets maintained their deep faith in communes, mechanization, and large-scale agriculture.⁴

However, no one was ready with a solution to an important puzzle: If the farms were fully mechanized so that needed manpower per 100 acres went from the sixteen to one or two, what would the displaced peasants do for a living before the industrial sector was large enough to employ them? There was another problem: How could farmers be expected to produce more if the economy could not provide consumer goods and if the government continued to pay less than the cost of production for the large share of crops it requisitioned?⁵

As the Bolsheviks consolidated their power in the 1920s Lenin did not have an answer to such puzzles, but he sought them. While initiating his comprise policies he turned to his nation's economic and agricultural experts for a "scientific" solution. The experts' first advice fit with the ideological fervor of the revolution: Nationalize and mechanize all agriculture, immediately!

That was still politically and financially impossible so Lenin set his GOSPLAN advisors to creating a grand and detailed long-term plan, one he knew might take years to complete. However, Lenin tried to mechanize as much as possible during the pre-plan years.⁶ Russia imported 27,000 tractors from the United States alone between 1922 and 1927.

Harold as an Expert

As he awaited the creation of the great National Agricultural Plan Lenin sought and accepted advice from outsiders. Harold Ware was one of the first but not the only foreigner to offer solutions. Harold's work with the Friends of Soviet Russia and his mother's Soviet connections made him aware of Lenin's willingness to accept outsiders. Moscow quickly accepted his proposals and as the NEP was taking hold Harold tried to reshape the Soviet farm, at first as a charity operator, later as a concessioner, then as a state employee.⁷

In 1921, calling himself and his wife "Chris (Clarissa) "experienced agronomists" Harold convinced the Federated famine organization of America (it soon became part of the Friends of Soviet Russia) to give him a million dollars for what he termed The American Tractor Brigade. His step-brother Carl raised additional funds through heart-tugging illustrated lectures on the plight of food-starved Soviet workers. Harold also secured a promise of cooperation and additional funds from Willi Munzenberg's International Workers Relief (IWR). Harold then contacted Lenin with a hard-to-refuse offer of free tractors and a model demonstration farm. Lenin arranged a temporary grant of 15,000 acres of flat, open land like that in America's Great Plains. Such a treeless expanse was necessary for the demonstration of the dry-weather, mechanized grain production techniques Harold had seen on his "hobo" trip.⁸

With the Federated's funds and Lenin's promise in hand Harold convinced the Case Manufacturing Company of Wisconsin to provide twenty-two of its revolutionary new gasoline

powered farm tractors, with lights for night work, at a cut-rate price. Case was already familiar with Russia. The company had been doing business there since 1895. Harold then bought a car, trucks, farm implements, tents and beddings, a portable kitchen, a small Fordson tractor, and the equipment needed for a machine repair shop. He also contracted for enough food, clothing, and medicine to sustain his Tractor Brigade during its time in the Southern Ukraine. The provisions included 80,000 cigarettes . Harold then recruited his team. He returned to the West and offered an all-expense paid trip, and extremely high salaries, to five of the radical farmers and farm hands he met on his earlier visit. Otto Anstrom, one of the two who had been active in North Dakota's Non-Partisan League, became important to Harold's later union work in America's Midwest. Anstrom and the four other famers on Harold's crew were first or second generation Scandinavian immigrants, as were many members of radical organizations in America's agricultural belt. Several of the crew had worked on large, mechanized farms, using tractors and combines.⁹

To ease obtaining passports while the United States was restricting travel to Russia, the Case company listed Harold's team as employees. In addition, the company agreed to finance an onsite engineer-representative. Then, Harold added two young Westerners with engineering experience. He also signed-on a Russian-speaking physician. With Harold now calling himself an "Agricultural Mechanic" his group planned to leave for what he declared to America's passport authorities to be an early May 1922 a trip to Latvia (not then a part Russia).¹⁰ The trip was to last six months (the length of the local growing season). The main goal Harold now stated was to convince Soviet farmers to turn to using modern machines and methods, not famine relief. Also, his demonstration farm was to help feed a mining community with the wheat the model farm produced. Harold's calculations led him to believe the twenty-two tractors

he ordered could prepare and seed all the acreage in less than two months. That would leave much time for demonstrations and training of local farmers. Harold was optimistic and had his step-brother Carl write newspaper article saluting, with many exaggerations and distortions, the project and Harold's past.¹¹

But the brigade's journey began with problems--it continued to have them. At the last moment Harold discovered some critical items, including high-grade seed, had not reached the Baltic-American liner at New York that was also hauling tons of Federated-donated food for direct famine relief. Scurrying, Harold contracted for another Latvia-bound ship to take-on the missing items once they arrived in New York City. He then convinced Chris to leave their three young children and act as a supervisor on the new ship. Harold's children stayed with friends, perhaps in Arden.

Once at sea there was trouble on Harold's ship. The brigade's men treated the trip as a holiday, one to be filled with drunken parties. The ship's captain had to discipline them. Harold faced more challenges when the ship arrived at Libau, Latvia. He was informed that peasants had taken-over the lands he was promised, ones that fit the needs of mechanized, dry-land farming. He was told he had been assigned as a substitute a prince's abandoned Toykino estate in the Ural Mountain's Perm region.¹² The farm was five hundred miles north-east, not south-east of Moscow. Then, Harold discovered some thirty freight cars of his equipment had been routed to different destinations and that it might take weeks to reassemble them. Fortunately, Harold had connections in Moscow. He met with Felix Dzerzhinsky the transportation commissar. Dzerzhinsky ordered the reassembly of the cars, something that was immediately done. Harold may not have known the reason why Dzerzhinsky's orders were so faithfully obeyed was that he was also headed the Cheka, the political police organization that waged the brutal Red Terror.¹³

When Harold's crew finally arrived at the train station nearest to Toykino there were more disappointments. The farm was fifty miles away with no serviceable connecting roads or bridges. Harold had to pay two hundred locals to help clear roads and construct bridges, an effort that took seven precious days and much money. There was more bad news at the old estate. There was no gasoline available nor was there a good water supply. Worse, the estate had rolling hills and many trees, not flat and open land suited to tractors. Worrisome, the local peasants seemed less than friendly. They suspected the brigade would collectivize their lands.¹⁴

Harold could not abandon the project. He unloaded the tractors, the half-year's supply of food, set up the crew's tents and the mobile kitchen, and began the construction of the buildings needed to house the tractors and repair shop. Then, he recruited young peasants, treating them to the varied foods the Americans brought, ones far healthier than the local carbohydrate-heavy diet. Harold's engineers began teaching the peasant men how to run and maintain the tractors and other equipment while the brigade's farmers trained them in field operations. Harold's crew also demonstrated the use of tractors to nearby peasants and made a 1,000-mile tour on the Trans-Siberian railroad as far as Tomsk displaying their equipment to local farmers.

That trip was successful but there were growing frictions in Toykino. The peasants fought over food and supplies and there was an attempt to sell Harold fake gasoline. In addition, Harold was angered by the local farmers demanding exorbitant prices for the seed and supplies the brigade needed, and Chris disliked the peasants coming into the brigade's camp and let them know it. As well, funds became stretched-thin, forcing Harold to ask for help from Munzenberg's IWR,¹⁵

Potentially embarrassing, there was a serious shortfall in the acreage the brigade processed, although his twenty-men teams had been working two seven-hour shifts.¹⁶ Harold claimed 4,000

acres were completed while another estimate was 2,000. Both acreage estimates were far below the expected 15,000 acres as tractors usually plowed an acre an hour. Critical, neither estimate seemed proof of mechanization's productivity. Harold later explained that an early winter had prevented more work, although the tractor operations began in June and winter usually came no earlier than October. There was an additional and unexpected problem: Chris' discontent grew and she left Toykino months earlier than planned. She didn't rush back to the children. She took time and spared no expense sailing back to the United States. She chose not to leave from a Baltic port but took an upscale liner from London to New York City and returned to her job at Party headquarters.¹⁷ She soon divorced Harold, became involved in romances with two top Party leaders, Jay Lovestone and Charles Ruthenberg, then perished from a botched abortion a year after she left Toykino. Harold's children, including Chris' Judith, were without a mother.

Harold did not let the Chris issue or the shortcomings of the Toykino experiment depress him. Fortunately, few in America or Russia learned of them at the time. At the projects' end, Harold took his crew for a month's vacation in Moscow and met with many Soviet Leaders and visiting Americans such as Anna Louise Strong.¹⁸ Lenin, having some but not all knowledge of the Perm effort, wrote a glowing review of Harold's work, sending it to the American Party and Federated Relief after Harold had returned to New York.

The letter was one of the reasons Harold was put in charge of the Party's new farm initiatives, including the United Farmers Educational League (UFEL) front organization. Harold then polished his public image by authoring exuberant articles on Toykino and the future of Soviet agricultural innovation. Besides salutes to his own work, he praised the plans of Muzenberg's IWR to join with the Soviet government to establish another foreign sponsored collective. It was to be at Cheliabinsk located just east of the Ural mountains and was to have a

start-up fund of \$5,000,000. It was planned as the largest grain farm in the world. Harold also made sure Carl Reeve published another stream of articles on it and the wonders of Soviet agricultural reform. The Cheliabinsk mega-farm plan evaporated but Harold did not back away from his agricultural goals. He soon announced Lenin promised to grant him a new long-term concession in the Ukraine.

Harold's Next Farm

While working on the new project Harold was busy with America's farm problems, frequently travelling west on Farmer-Labor Party and United Farmers Educational League (UFEL) matters. He was also becoming a commuter between Moscow and New York, making one or more trips a year throughout the 1920s, often working as a negotiator for the Soviet's agricultural experts, AMTORG the Soviet purchasing agency, and American manufacturers. At times, he encountered his mother Ella Bloor when they both were in Russia.¹⁹

Harold also found a new wife, returning from Russia in November 1924 with Jessica Smith, not Anna Louis Strong who had thought Harold would make her a fine husband. Harold married Jessica a few months later. The Socialist leader Norman Thomas ministered the wedding. The New York City ceremony was noted in social-set newspaper columns because of Jessica's background. The marriage, along with Harold's growing ties to Roger Baldwin, gave him additional contacts in America's world of elite liberal reformers, even those in New York City's high society. He soon used them for his new Soviet project. Jessica's working for the Soviet embassy, then taking-on an editorship at the government's popular *Soviet Russia Today*, and her work with the Baldwin-Garland financed Vanguard Press helped Harold attract additional sympathetic intellectuals to his new causes. On his own, Harold made another important contact: The United States Department of Agriculture. He was invited to give lectures at its headquarters

and made friends with several of its researchers who secured him a position as an unpaid but prestige-enhancing advisor on Soviet agriculture.²⁰

Harold's new mid-1920a plan was another grand attempt at reshaping Soviet farming. His advertised goal was to demonstrate ways to avoid famines. He called the effort the Ukraine Farm and Machinery Corporation.²¹ It was to be a version of an agricultural concession on the new 15,000 acres Lenin promised. The Soviets were to contribute the value of the existing buildings and equipment, enough to hold a fifty-one percent interest, thus giving the government control if it decided to direct operations at the farm. Harold's group was to operate the enterprise. The corporation was to be separate from the Friends of Soviet Russia but financed the same way as the Amalgamated Union projects. While donations would be accepted, the emphasis was on selling bonds guaranteed by the Soviet government. Quite soon, Harold expanded his vision and created a permanent fund-raising organization to aid all Soviet agriculture. Eager to attract more than Party or union investors, Harold changed the name of the Ukraine farm organization to "Russian Reconstruction Farms" (RRF). He called its initial project The Russian-American Agricultural Association.²²

A difficulty arose. Harold was informed the promised land in the Ukraine was unavailable. He protested, finally receiving an assurance of the use of 15,000 acres of a confiscated private-estate that had been turned into three state farms. It was in the Kuban frontier's black-belt area south of Rostov that he once surveyed. Fortunately, unlike Perm's, the land there was like that of the Great Plains. Unfortunately, the Maslov Kut site was isolated and more than five hundred miles southeast of Rostov. As well, although there were many buildings, flour mills and orchards the Soviet's valued at more than two million dollars, the farm was far from being a showplace.

After developing a more comprehensive plan than Toykino's Harold incorporated the RRF in New York in 1924 and turned to Jessica's society and feminist reform friends, unions, and Roger Baldwin's vast liberal network. They quickly built a nation-wide organization with a glossy fund-raising newsletter and, although Party officials were playing a significant background role, the RRF gained a reputation as a venture in liberal reform, not communism. Boston's RRF branch was led by Robert Cabot, the friend of the Cannon family and of Susan Clark. Those endorsing the project and serving on its advisory board included many prominent reformers such as Norman Thomas, Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University, David Star Jordan of Stanford University, Jane Addams of Hull House fame, and executives at the Department of Agriculture. Bonds were sold across the nation. Direct fund-raising events included Carnegie Hall concerts sponsored by cultural leaders such as Frank Damrosch, the founder of the Julliard School. Those playing major roles within RRF also had liberal credentials, as well as connections to the nation's reform movements. Horace Truesdell of the Department of Agriculture was president, Jessica's friend Lucy Branham was the executive secretary, Stuart Chase was treasurer, and Frank P. Walsh, once the lawyer for the National Women's Trade Union League that Susan Clark worked with was the RRF's attorney.

Harold's fund-raising received a critical initial boost from Roger Baldwin and Charles Garland. They had the Garland fund give the RRF \$150,000 then bought \$300,000 of bonds. The RRF soon raised another million and a half. Part of that was sent to Russia to finance tractor purchases because the concession agreement was that the Soviets would control most of the initial monies. By the time he left for Russia in early 1925 Harold was seeking another two million dollars.

Before then Harold expanded his vision for the two-year RRF project. It was to be an exercise in social as well as agricultural modernization. People and institutions as well as the were to be changed. He wanted to be part of the Soviet's drive to create a New Man who fit socialist cultural norms. The large team Harold put-together had engineers and, despite the Party's claim of universal health service in Russia, doctors and nurses. Harold's recruits included a sociologist (Karl Borders) and a settlement house administrator, an educator, a house builder, and a home economist. Harold enlisted many who had been on the Toykino trip, including those radical farm hands, and the Case tractor engineer who seems to have fallen in love with Russia. The project was also to be like a family vacation. Harold brought friends and relatives into what became a twenty-five, perhaps forty-person, group. His teenage son Robert was the first enlisted. Harold signed-on Donald Stephens, his ex-brother-in-law, and the Woolsey couple from Arden. Donald took his wife and children with him, as did Karl Borders who had known Jessica since they served with Quaker famine relief in 1922. A dairyman, Philip Smith, a friend from Philadelphia, also joined. In addition, Jessica decided to be a part of the project and took the other children. She also convinced Hannah Pickering, the Quaker feminist who had worked with Jessica on famine relief, to serve as a secretary, statistician, and archivist. Reflecting her many contacts among America's liberals Jessica brought a large donation for the Helen Keller school for the blind in Samara. There would also be many American visitors to Harold's experiment, including Roger Baldwin and the young rich socialist Webster Powell.

Harold initiated the project but began commuting between Russia and America, leaving much on-site supervision to the elder team leader George Strobell, later to George Iverson. Neither they nor Harold recorded a detailed history of the farm's operations, and the sociologist Karl Border's Vanguard Press account is more a salute to progressive reform than a history of

agricultural accomplishments. However, there are hints that all did not go well, that the Soviet's again interfered with a concession, and that Harold disagreed with many government decisions. One indication of disappointments was the farm was never placed on the list of those to be shown to foreign visitors after it became a state farm in 1928. Another was that Harold arranged a special return of \$200,000 (less than one-half of the investment) to the Garland fund in the 1930s, suggesting the farm was not an economic success and could not repay its investors. The payment and Harold's activities after the RRF project imply the problems had been with local Soviet administrators, not those in Moscow, as Harold continued to be a part of Russia's attempts to refashion its farms, including an intensified drive to change them into agricultural versions of mechanized factories.

Abandoning NEP and Harold's Next Experiment

By the time Harold returned from Maslov Kut in 1928 Russia's industrial and agricultural output was growing under NEP, reaching pre-World War I levels--but that was not enough for the nation's leaders. They thought that with more central control and direction factories and farms could reach the productivity of Western nations. However, centralization had enemies as it meant the abandonment of NEP policies and severely restricting private business. So, the government once again had to compromise. A temporary step was the creation of Trusts for each industry and agricultural sector. The Trusts were to prevent damaging and inefficient competition and were given funds to introduce the most advanced technologies. The concerns over productivity also led to a reenergized program to gradually replace the nation's 25,000,000 small farms with collectives.²³

The Soviets, using Trusts for each major crop, began another initiative to modernize the agricultural sector, an effort that soon merged with the country's massive and very costly Five-

Year Plan that Lenin had asked to be developed in 1921. The plan aimed at turning the nation into an industrial giant and its farms into agricultural factories. The initial plan promised a 330% increase in industrial production and a 50% increase in farm output--in a few years. One part of late 1928's Five-Year Plan and its allied National Agricultural Plan was a shift away from concessions to the internal financing of projects. Another was to replace imports with Soviet-made goods, whether industrial or agricultural, as soon as possible through purchasing technical know-how, such as Henry Ford's mass-production techniques.²⁴ The plan was premised on central direction of the economy to a degree far greater than the United States' during World War II.

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On paper the National Agricultural Plan appeared a triumph of economic reasoning. Uniting villages into large collectives seemed the best way into increase output, and to provide education, health care, and steady incomes for the ex-peasants. There were special salutes to the plan's promise to create central tractor and combine stations each to house and maintain at least sixty machines. Each station was to serve thirty or more collectives.²⁵ The Five-Year Plan's administrators sought consultants and skilled agricultural workers to aid them in building the country's new economy. Several thousand responded, including over one thousand Americans. The Soviet's emphasis was on gaining advice rather than machinery and they searched for the famous and most successful architects and engineers, especially ones who would do their work on long-term credit. Albert Kahn, the designer of the huge Ford River Rouge complex in Michigan was hired to build five hundred plants, including huge tractor factories. Hugh Lincoln Cooper who had constructed pathbreaking dams and power plants in the United States, Egypt, and other developing countries, was hired to build Russia's new hydro-power plants and to help electrify the nation and its farms. Henry Ford was persuaded to allow his engineers to erect new

car and truck factories. Charles Seabrook of the New Jersey Seabrook farm family had his engineering group lay-out roads and canals across Russia.²⁶

Despite the emphasis on internal financing, imports had to increase during the initial phases of the plan. For agriculture that meant spending over two billion dollars between 1928 and 1931 on advanced American farming equipment²⁷. The Soviet's agricultural planners also hired world-recognized experts, frequently asking the United States Department of Agriculture for recommendations. Engineers such as Arthur Powell Davis of Hoover Dam fame and John Hays Hammond, a deep mining expert, advised investments in massive irrigation projects like those that had changed California's desert-like central valley into a garden. Only with such grand projects could cotton and flax be grown in Russia's frontiers and end the need to import them, they asserted. The many specialists in other crops also recommend large capital investments.

Harold Ware's Newest Project , Farms Into Factories

Although he was not famous nor a professionally recognized expert, the Soviets continued to use Harold Ware. He was asked to help the Grain Trust and Five-Year Plan's administrators. He continued to work with AMTORG, the Soviet agency that purchased tractor and other farm equipment, and he was called-on to act as a facilitator in dealings with many American agriculturalists. Harold found professors at the University of California, Stanford University, and Iowa State University who were specialist in "agricultural engineering," but he and the Grain Trust's representatives focused on two of the giants in grain farming, America's Milbourne L. Wilson, and Thomas D. Campbell.²⁸In mid-1928, after selling his old truck-farm in Arden and using the stylish title "agricultural engineer", Harold rushed to Montana to convince both men to sail to Russia to help the Trust with Verblud and Gigant, two massive "wheat factories" it was

creating in the frontier area south of Rostov. Verblud (named after the camels local farmers used instead of draft horses) was larger than Campbell's enormous farm. Gigant was the size of the American state of Rhode Island.²⁹

Thomas Campbell was interested but declined the offer, hinting he might visit Russia later. Wilson said he could not immediately travel but agreed to devise a plan for one of the farms. Wilson, Harold, and Wilson's assistants had an intense hotel room session in December 1928, creating a detailed plan for Verblud. Wilson gave invaluable technical advice on how to dry-land farm and recommended the use of the huge new Caterpillar tractors with tracks like those on military tanks. They were much more powerful than Ford or Case tractors, but were expensive. The low-end "Cat" model cost ten times a Fordson but did ten times as much work. Wilson recommended one tractor for each 6200 acres and the use of "combine machines" that replaced dozens of workers during harvesting. As had Harold, Wilson advocated using moveable kitchens and housing so time would not be wasted by field workers going back-and-forth to Verblud's central headquarters. He also advised that salaries be at double American rates and that many amenities be provided if good American workers were to be attracted to the farm and its mills. New electrified apartment buildings were a necessity, as were well-stocked consumer shops, he argued. Wilson agreed with Harold that Verblud should have a research facility and a training center for young Russian agriculturalists.

Harold took Wilson's plans to Russia where they were put into operation, but not as Harold had envisioned. The Soviets made Verblud a Five-Year Plan government owned farm under its direction, not a free-standing demonstration farm. Like others at Verblud, Harold was made an employee.³⁰

Meanwhile, Harold aided the Trust with the negotiations for hundreds more tractors and he recruited a few Americans workers for Verblud, including Lement Harris an idealistic twenty-five-year-old Harvard graduate, Lampoon contributor, and friend of Roger Baldwin. Harry Minster, a Russian born AMTORG agent, and George McDowell, an American carpenter committed to communism and Russia also signed-on. McDowell soon made Russia his homeland and the Soviets later awarded him civilian its highest honors, The Order of Lenin. Harold's team was supplemented by a large contingent of experts from the Caterpillar company, including Harold's friend Professor Leonard J. Fletcher who had been at Stanford University and was president of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers before joining Caterpillar.³¹

This time Jessica stayed home with Harold's three teenage children and David, her new baby. The pressures of her work and family responsibilities led to some frictions. The girls were placed in an exclusive boarding school in upstate New York and Robert left home at sixteen to work as a galley hand on merchant ships. Harold's Russian project also had problems. Harold was disappointed by the family situation and by not being recognized as the official head of Verblud. He was called an assistant manager, often travelling to Moscow and America rather than dealing with on-site issues. M. L. Wilson did not arrive to supervise Verblud's development until April, 1929, staying six months while receiving the kind of salary he had recommended, at a rate twice his annual university pay. Wilson was both pleased and frustrated by what he saw. The new buildings, tractors, and combines fit his plan, but not how labor was being utilized. The Soviets insisted on employing many more men and women than were needed, so many the savings from mechanization were lost. There was more that frustrated Wilson. With Stalin's policy of increased centralization, the Grain Trust was dissolved and power over Verblud was

shifted to bureaucrats in distant Moscow. They gave orders that did not fit with the land and climate of the Rostov region. An entire crop was lost because of a bad decision by an administrator as to when to plant. When Thomas Campbell toured Russia in 1929 he also noticed the reluctance to reduce farm workforces and the impact of decisions by detached bureaucrats. He was very disappointed and when he received an offer from Stalin of one million acres to develop as he might wish, sensing he would not have full control and would have to deal with inexperienced administrators, he refused the offer.

After Wilson's return to the United States in late 1929 Harold was not promoted to be Verblud's expert. He contributed some innovations but at the end of his contract he returned to the United States in December 1930, calling himself just an "engineer."³² Verblud's newest visiting expert had been a professor at the University of California's agricultural school but onsite day to day management was in the hands of George McDowell who was unable to make Verblud match Harold's vision. Visitors in the 1930s remarked that while it was doing much better than Gigant, it seemed unlikely to have its crops pay for the huge investments in machines and buildings. Other Soviet state farms fell short of expectations, frequently producing less wheat per acre than the remaining private farms—as well as many collectives.

By the late 1930s it was clear that while The Five-Year Plans for heavy industry had succeeded those for agricultural had not. Despite that, Harold never criticized Verblud or the National Agricultural Plan, perhaps because he was later given a place of honor at Verblud and because he left Russia with a gift from the Soviet government: He took home some \$400,000 to establish a farm policy center in Washington, D. C. that was to further Soviet interests and help with another attempt to radicalize America's farmers.³³

Besides Verblud there were aspects of Soviet policy that Harold never criticized, although he should have. He and the Party denied having knowledge of the horrors of the revitalized collectivization campaign that began in the late 1920s just as Harold began his Verblud work. Nor did he admit knowledge of the catastrophic famine that followed.

Stalin's "Remedies"

The collectivization campaign of 1929 was part of the ambitious first Five-Year Plan that was saluted by liberals such as John Dewey and Reinhold Niebuhr. They argued that farmers had to be made part of a socialist regime if the plan was to succeed because the industrial part of the Plan was wildly expensive, demanding sacrifices by all. Stalin did not rely on voluntarism for those sacrifices.

To minimize costs, wages in all sectors were reduced and working hours were increased. There also a frantic campaign to gain foreign exchange because the plan called for more imports of technological advice and products. Prisoners were set to stripping gold from religious icons and citizens were told to sell their jewelry to the state at confiscatory prices. Much of the nation's gold mining, lumber, oil, and even grain production was exported to obtain foreign currency. A ban on the production and importation of consumer goods was imposed so resources could be devoted to the development of heavy industry. Basics such as shoes became rarities.

Steps Towards Horror

Critical to the plan's success was a large and inexpensive food supply. As had Lenin, the designers believed increased control of the nation's farms was essential and it could only be realized through the creation of more state farms like Verblud and Gigant---and more collectives. In 1928, just before the official start of the Five-Year Plan, a new collectivization campaign was

launched. Unfortunately, it began as existing collectives' members were joining with private farmers in protests over the high requisition percentages the government was imposing. At minimum sixteen percent on grains and a much higher percent for cattle, sixty-eight percent. During the first months of the new drive the government used positive as well as relatively mild negative approaches. A positive policy was to offer peasants reduced taxes and the use of new government tractor stations that were to provide low-cost services if they joined collectives, followed the dictates of the managers appointed by the central bureaucracy, and accepted the extremely low government prices for their products. A negative approach was taxing private farmers at higher rates and charging them for government tractor services they did not use.

Neither the positive nor negative policies worked. They failed to shift enough households into the collectives. Only four percent of farmers were in them by the end of 1929. As bad, there was a household for every fourteen acres of the collectives, a very inefficient ratio. As frustrating for the Soviet leaders, they failed to recruit farmers into the Party. While urban areas had two percent of the population joining, the rural areas had one half of one percent. Worse, collectivization was not peacefully accepted. The political police recorded 1,207 serious protests in 1928. After an intensified collective drive began in 1929 there were 9,093. The number increased to 13,974 during the next year as the government imposed harsh measures on peasants and harsher ones on the successful private farmers, the kulaks.

There were good reasons for resistance. Joining a collective during the late 1920s meant, at minimum, giving all land (including garden plots) cattle, and farm implements to the group without guarantees of future income. During the first years of the campaign, when local officials believed collectives should be full communes, household goods had to be contributed. Handicraft sales were forbidden and sales of farm products in the private market were

discouraged, depriving households of needed income while governments payments to the collectives barley covered their cost of production.. In all forms of collectives, those with horses and cattle faced confiscation or being reimbursed at far below market value (80% less in some years), leading many farmers to sell or slaughter their animals. One motivation for killing cattle was that collective's bureaucrats paid full price for meat but not live animals. Inept management contributed to problems on the collectives.

The Catastrophe

By late 1929 the collective program was failing, and a drought worsened the situation. The welfare of the entire nation was threatened. The problems soon deepened, and grain production fell below what had been predicted by the bureaucrats. In response, Stalin blamed the farmers, not his government or the mild drought.³⁴ Collective farmers were branded as lazy, private kulak farmers were condemned as selfish for withholding products from the government and selling them on the market where they received as much as ten times more than the government's price. Stalin launched a campaign against the independent "kulak" farmers. Estimates of two million farmers and their families being exiled or sent to labor camps have been accepted.

Despite objections by the Right Opposition, Stalin ordered more direct action. Another round of armed urban worker "brigades" was sent to farms to seize hidden crops and to force farmers to join collectives. The brigades were so aggressive they took the seeds needed for next season's planting. The intense pressure did fulfill the bureaucrats' enrollment goals. The percent of farmers in collectives increased sixfold during 1930 and doubled to fifty three percent in 1931 when the average size of a collective finally reached the minimum goal of 1,000 acres. By 1936, ninety percent of peasants were collectivized. The quest for efficiency remained

frustrated, however. There was household for every sixteen acres and wheat bushels harvested per acre remained at the old level.

There was a more serious problem caused by those distant bureaucrats. They wanted an absolute amount of farm products delivered to them and based their projections on their 'scientific' predictions of crop yields, not on what was harvested. Consequently, the requisition percentage for grains was doubled to thirty percent, despite production dropping by twenty percent between 1930 and 1931. Output remained at that level for four years while requisitions increased, reaching fifty percent in 1935. By 1932 there was little left from the harvests to feed farmers or livestock, leading to indications of a famine. There was a further drop in the numbers of cattle and horses. By Half the horses and cattle were lost, and millions of people were suffering. The Ukraine and the Rostov-Don regions (where Harold had his farms) were the hardest hit. Food became scare and strict rationing was imposed in urban areas.

The overall toll of collectivization was much higher. The seizures and requisitions contributed to a devastating famine in the Ukraine and Don regions during 1932-1934. Ukrainians called the famine the Holodomor, a genocide. Low estimates of deaths are in the seven to ten million range, higher ones near twenty million. There was cannibalism with 2,500 cases recorded by the authorities. The government did nothing of significance to help. In fact, Stalin again made the situation worse. The hardest-hit areas were sealed-off. No one was allowed out (even the starving) and no foreigners allowed in as Stalin tried to hide the famine and the continuing purges of the uncooperative. Unlike Lenin in 1921, he did not call on other nations for help while he was allowing the export of two million tons of grain a year when a year's exports equaled the bread ration for six million laborers, or twelve million office workers.

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Stalin's news blackout worked as he was aided by foreign newsmen such as Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* who brushed aside what news of the famine was reaching the outside world. However, as early as 1930 credible newspapers, even the *New York Times*, reported on Russia's farm problems. While it was easy to dismiss reports in the anti-communist Hearst newspapers as biased, papers like the *Times* were regarded as objective. By 1931, reporters, including Henry Wales and Gareth Jones, began publishing articles that should have made a reasonable person aware the Soviet's farm policies had not succeeded and there was a major human disaster. Those who attended to the hearings held by the U. S. Congress' Fish Commission knew the famine and the anti-kulak campaigns were realities.

Harold Sees No Evil

Certainly, Harold Ware, with all his Soviet contacts and having been in the Don region during the first year of the anti-kulak campaign, should have known of the purges and the famine.. He must have been aware of the reports of the famine that appeared in major newspapers in the West.

Yet, after Harold's December 1930 return to the United States he declared Soviet policies successful ones that should be applied to America's farm problems. His wife and his colleagues also refused to recognize Soviet failings. When Lem Harris and Jessica visited Russia in 1935 they must have heard of the famine, if not the war against the kulaks, but they also "saw no evil."

³⁶ They continued to salute the Five-Year Plan's agricultural policies although Stalin tacitly admitted their weaknesses. As the second Five-Year Plan was introduced Stalin recognized some of the problems with his agricultural policies and in 1933 ordered an easing of restrictions on collectives. The Artel model was made the norm and farmers could keep a cow and have a

plot to raise and sell vegetables, even their grains, if requisitions were fulfilled. Reward systems based on productivity replaced equal shares in the collectives. The government also continued to make massive investments in tractors and machinery, but now relying on production by its own factories. There were eighteen times more tractors in 1939 than in 1928, one hundred fifty-three thousand combines and 7,000 tractor stations to serve collectives.³⁷

Problems That Would Not Away

But none of that had solved the farm problem! Not enough policies were changed, and farmers continued to be exploited. Requisition levels remained high, close to forty percent in 1939, and the tractor stations continued to charge fifteen percent of yields. One scholar concluded that after requisitions, fees, and taxes were paid the typical collective had only twenty percent of its production left to distribute among its households. And there was still little to buy. Consumer goods remained scarce so there was no motivation to work. Whatever the causes, the plans continued to fail. Tonnage of grain produced in 1939 was the same as in 1928 and productivity per acre was still just enough to meet the yearly bread ration of a single worker. The vaunted state grain farms accounted for less than five percent of output. Worse, in 1939, there were half the horses and fewer cattle than in 1928.

Several historians have concluded the rural standard of living in 1939 was lower than in 1928. They also assert that urban dwellers suffered in the cause of industrialization. The real wages of urban workers (purchasing power per work-time) being seven, perhaps as much as forty percent lower than before the end of NEP.³⁸ If official Soviet statistics are believed, there was one success for the collectives: The tractor stations were able to serve twice the acres per machine than those operating on the state-owned farms.

Harold and the American Farmer, Round Two

When Harold returned to America in late 1930 he wore an ideological blindfold. He believed the Five-Year Plan was succeeding as he turned his attention to America's many industrial and farm problems. The United States' farmers, and workers, were in trouble but because, unlike in Russia, there was over, not under-production. Domestic and foreign demand had dropped, undermining the historic achievements of the American economy since the Civil War of the 1860s.³⁹ The Great Depression was deepening. Unemployment was at sixteen percent heading toward twenty five percent. Strikes were growing, 342,000 workers participated in 1931, 1,170,00 in 1933.

Important to Harold, farmers were in a desperate situation. Agricultural prices were tumbling. Between 1928 and 1931 wheat prices dropped by sixty-two percent, cotton by seventy percent. The drop in demand for farm products was so great that major farm organizations pressured the federal government to provide the Soviet Union with billions of dollars in loans earmarked for the purchase of American farm products, especially grains.⁴⁰ The commodity price declines meant an inability to meet mortgages, pay debts for farm equipment, and pay farm laborers. Farm foreclosures doubled between 1928 and 1933, when 200,000 farmers lost their land. Farm wage rates plummeted. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers in the American South also suffered as their incomes dropped below what they needed for food and clothing. Significant for Harold, the wheat belt states had foreclosure rates two to three times the national average throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1933, South Dakota had seventy-eight foreclosures for every thousand farms. Its neighbor was not far behind with sixty-three. In Iowa, one of nine farms was foreclosed during the 1920s and early 1930s. Nebraska's farmers also were hard hit.

Harold turned to those problems as soon as he disembarked. He listed his home as Arden, but he was soon with Jessica in the nation's power-centers, New York City then Washington, D.C. Using the monies the Soviet's gave him, as well as some Party funds (a total amount equal to the yearly wages of nineteen American workers) he began planning how to establish his Farm Research bureau⁴¹ that was to be the agricultural version of the Labor Research Association of Boston that Margot Clark helped operate. The bureau was to act as an information center convincing policy makers and the public that America's farm polices had to be replaced by the Soviet versions. There was more than information on Harold's agenda, however.

The bureau was put on hold. Harold did not stay long in Washington. He contacted Lem Harris who had returned from Verblud to live on Fifth Avenue in New York City with his parents and their five servants.⁴² Lem was pondering his future, thinking teaching might be his career. He hadn't decided on a life-path but he was ready for more adventures and his father seemed willing to provide a monthly check for his support. Harold convinced Lem and Robert, Harold's teen-age son, to make a long, nine-month cross-county trip to survey the state of America's agricultural sector. The bare-bones but expensive exploration in Lem's old Model A Ford was a repeat of Harold's 1921 survey. It was aimed at assessing revolutionary potentials more than gathering farm statistics.

Harold made an emergency excursion to Florida when he heard farm workers there might be ready to strike. Then, he rushed to a strike to the Midwest before beginning his" survey." While Harold was in Iowa Ella aided his ambitions by pointing to many farmers who were ready to revolt. Finally, in May 1932, Harold had Lem incorporate Farm Research.

Harold's 1931 trip report was a restatement of his earlier policy paper. Again, using the aka George Anstrom, he described the miseries of the capitalist-exploited American farmers, the

inadequacy of farm polices, and the need to unite to force America to change to the Soviet agricultural and political models.⁴³ Harold did more than write. He soon joined his mother and step-brother as they were following Third Period mandates and were recruiting Midwestern farmers into communist-dominated unions, just as their comrades were launching a new campaign to organize agricultural laborers in the South and Far west. Harold agreed with Moscow's belief in imminent world-wide revolution (The Third Period) and joined Ella and Carl as they demanded an end to cooperation with existing labor- farmer groups.

The Party agreed and closed the "cooperative" Trade Union Education and the United Farmers Educational leagues. They were replaced by the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) for industry and the United Farmers League (UFL) for farmers as the Party committed to forming independent unions. As before, the Party hid its ties to such organizations. Although having less than ten thousand members, the Party quickly went beyond the four unions it had previously established and began founding unions in every industry. If the new unions failed the Party ordered attempts to immediately take-over existing ones. The most important of those take-over battles would be within the United Auto Workers, the United Electrical Workers, and the predecessor of Harry Bridges International Longshore and Warehouse and Union.⁴⁴

The Party's TUUL efforts were not confined to industry. It founded the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union in 1929 as the remake of the old IWW's Agricultural Workers Order for "hobos" and the rural "proletariat". It also created the Share Croppers Union (SCU) for poor Black Southerners while its United Farmers League (UFL) aimed at traditional farmers. During the 1930s the Party also made at least a dozen attempts at controlling other agricultural organizations. Its major control battles were with the Farm Holiday Association, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, and the National Farmers Union.⁴⁵

American “Purges”

Third Period policies dictated the Party had to replace people as well as organizations. At the national level Jay Lovestone was cast out because he thought the Third Period ideas did not fit with America’s social and economic life. John Witta (aka Henry Puro) replaced Harrison George because George had not been radical enough when he guided the Party’s agricultural program. Witta was an aggressive leader of the Party’s Finnish groups and had always criticized the TUEL. He may have been the one who blocked Harold’s being reappointed to head the Party’s agrarian program when he returned from Russia because Witta always disliked Harold’s cooperating with non-Communists. Throughout the 1930s Witta barely tolerated Harold.⁴⁶

Alfred Knutson had been a cooperator but was given a chance to make the transition from his TUEL post to guide the new farm initiative. Knutson found a faithful and energetic helper, Arthur Timpson, a young Russian-Estonian immigrant Wisconsin farmer-timber cutter but Knutson was soon dismissed as head of the new UFL because he had not made enough progress.⁴⁷ He was replaced by Charles Taylor, a three-hundred-pound long-time Party member and radical Montana newspaper editor who had aided the Party’s attempt to take-over the Farmer-Labor Party during the 1920s. Taylor edited the influential *The Provider* in Sheridan county Montana. He had almost been dismissed from the Party when he sided with the Lovestone faction, but had quickly regained influence.⁴⁸

Ella Survives, Again

Unlike Lovestone and Knutson, Ella Bloor, the persistent survivor of Party upheavals, was unharmed by the Third Period changes. She was made chief organizer for the UFL in the Great Plains. One of her first decisions was to appoint her son Carl Reeve as the organizer for Minnesota, a politically crucial state with aggressive radical organizations and people, including

Trotskyites. Carl was labelling himself an independent news reporter although he likely was a staff writer for the *Daily Worker* as well as a paid Party organizer.⁴⁹ Ella concentrated on the UFL's Midwest campaigns but traveled throughout the South and Far West, even the soil-erosion devastated dust bowl, helping with farm-labor battles. She also toured the tobacco areas of Kentucky and participated in the new Cannery-union influenced strikes by California's migratory Mexican and Filipino field workers. Important, she found a new step-father for her children. In 1930, at age sixty-eight, she married the Norwegian immigrant Andrew Omholt. He was a forty-six-year-old long-time Socialist, Non-Partisan League organizer, then Party man. He had a less than successful career as a farmer and stone mason in North Dakota.⁵⁰

Harold's Boys

While his mother was busy in the Midwest Harold settled in Washington, D.C., and began building his Research team and planned its future publications, such as *Facts for Farmers* and, later, *Farmers National Weekly*. After promising his son Robert a mail-boy position, and having the Party provide a secretary-typist, Harold searched for young men to help with the bureau and union work. He already had Lement (Lem) Harris, a Harvard graduate and the scion of a Wall Street, oil, and grain export family.⁵¹ Harold then found a group of bright and idealistic university students who had an interest in agricultural reform. Three had been influenced by Rexford Tugwell, the radical Columbia University professor who became an advisor to Franklin Roosevelt.⁵² Among the university group were Robert Fowler Hall, Jerry Ingersoll, Leif Dahl, and Donald Henderson. Hall was from Alabama and had been a wunderkind reporter, but a disillusioned one because of the human impact of the Great Depression. At age twenty-three he decided to study economics. He earned his way through New York City's Columbia University as a tutor, earning a Phi Beta Kappa while an agricultural economics major. He also became a

Party member and campus activist⁵³. Leif Dahl was from an Iowa farm and milling family. He worked his way through high school then chose to enroll at Columbia University. To pay for his tuition he served as a live-in tutor in a professor's family and, at times, gave blood to pay for his books. Despite being so busy, he was an active campus radical.⁵⁴ Jeremiah (Jerry) Ingersoll came to Harold's bureau by a different route. He was invited by Lem Harris who met him when Lem was giving a speech at Jerry's college.

The Ingersoll Connection

Ingersoll was a Phi Beta Kappa Amherst student from an influential family, one long connected to people in the circles of left-progressivism. Asho, his sister, was on the 1934 student trip to Russia with the Clark-Fields and Ring Lardner Jr. Jerry almost failed to graduate at Amherst because of a minor infraction of school rules, rather than because of radicalism.⁵⁵ His family's influence helped Jerry with his college problem. Raymond, his father, was from a Quaker background but like Noel Field had drifted from religion. After graduating from Amherst College Raymond became a well-to-do lawyer, a leading Progressive reformer and office-holder in New York City and Brooklyn. He had worked while in law school then practiced in New York City, soon becoming involved in the city's intellectual circles and reform politics. His role in the anti-Tammany and anti-boss-politics Fusion Party and the influential City Club led to his becoming a friend of Franklin Roosevelt and other reformers such as John Dewey and Lincoln Steffens. Raymond also served as an arbitrator in union conflicts, managed a relief agency in France during world War I, headed New York City's parks department, and served as the borough president of Brooklyn from 1934 until his death in 1940.

Marion Crary, Jerry's mother, was from a very, very wealthy family, a Smith College student, a leading feminist, and close friend and supporter of Margaret Sanger and Eleanor

Roosevelt-- and she aided organizations such as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Delaying marriage until she was twenty-eight, she had devoted herself to many reform causes, something that continued after marrying Raymond. She then became a founder of the politically powerful Women's City Club and a supporter of the first birth-control clinic in the United States. She was appointed to many government commissions and was invariably called-on to act as the public face of charities. The Ingersolls were also connected to the nation's more-than-liberal elite, including the Hintons and Clarks, though their daughter Asho's attendance at the expensive Packer Institute and the experimental Bennington College, as well as through Marion's work with the Women's Trade Union League. During a 1920s European excursion she made another more-than-liberal connection, the young Alabama college graduate Olive Stone.⁵⁶

But Jerry and Raymond, his brother, went beyond their parents' liberalism becoming involved in radical student politics in New York City, probably joining the Party by mid-1930s.

The Hendersons

Harold Ware's major catch for his farm bureau was Donald Henderson. Donald was older than Harold's other recruits and was from a different background. He had been through a less than happy childhood as his divorced mother supported a large family working as a seamstress while he took jobs as a farm laborer and a railroad telegrapher. Somehow, he gained the funds needed to finance the studies needed for a Bachelor's then Master's Degree at Columbia University, followed by a course in international relations in Switzerland. Donald then taught economics at Rutgers University for two years, joining the then radical American Federation of Teachers that saw professors as "workers", not secure professionals. In 1927-8 he made a trip to Russia with the ultra-liberal economist Rexford Tugwell who was leading a supposed labor group. Donald returned to this teaching post at Columbia University.

When Harold contacted him Donald was married, had a six-year-old boy, and lived in an upscale nine room apartment near Columbia University that overlooked Riverside Park. He could afford that and servants because of his university salary and his very wealthy in-laws' generosity to Elinor their daughter who established a record as an often arrested student activist and a Party member.⁵⁷ Donald had become a perpetual student, as well as an economics instructor at the university. After almost five years he had not completed his graduate work despite being warned several times he would be dismissed from his job, and the graduate program, if he did not finish his PhD thesis. The university attempted to motivate him by offering a scholarship to study in Russia, but Donald ignored his thesis work as he continued to lead radical groups such as the National Students League, worked with Francis Henson in the peace movement, and participated in local strikes. In addition, he was a Party organizer in New York City and an anti-ROTC champion, things that may have led him to be listed as a "deserter" by New York's National Guard.

Donald's Communist activities included managing an ill-fated 1932 college student bus trip to the bloody Harlan, Kentucky coal strike that was being encouraged by the Party's new National Miners Union. Robert Hall, Leif Dahl, and Elinor, Donald's wife, were on the adventure. They were shocked when locals ordered them out of Harlan, threateningly so, as they believed the students were part of a Communist onslaught. They were correct, as Donald and the others were Party members. In 1933, when his university contract was not renewed, and as he was turning thirty-one years old, he, Elinor, and the Party made sure there were wild student protests. One of his comrades later testified that Donald told him he neglected his university work to ensure his would be fired so the Party could have an academic martyr.

Harold Ware received a bonus when he recruited Donald: Donald's wife Elinor (Eleanor) Grenville Curtis. Elinor was from an extraordinarily rich, progressive, and socially prominent New York City family and seems to have benefited from a large trust fund.⁵⁸ She was a Hunter college student and married Donald as soon as she graduated in 1925. They had a son, Curtis, the next year but she did not become a home-bound mother and wife. By 1931, she was in the Party and a devoted Communist. She ran for Congress as a Communist in 1932 and although weighing only eight-five pounds was often arrested during violent demonstrations. As soon as Donald agreed to work with Harold, she made a six-month research trip and returned with her own long report on American agriculture—and its revolutionary potentials. She would later act as editor of some of Harold's farm journals.

Harold's bureau had another unexpected bonus, Olive Stone.⁵⁹ Olive was a self-taught rural sociologist and college professor from Mobile, Alabama. She was also becoming an activist in the movements fighting racial segregation and a leader of those aiding sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Stone became associated with the Communist-influenced Tennessee utopian community that tuned into the Highlander Folk School and she was active with the Southern Conference for Human Welfare that was an early anti-segregation, civil rights organization. She returned from a 1931 Russian trip to begin Marxist discussion meetings in Alabama then went to Washington, D. C. with a group of her young idealistic students, including Minneola Perry, hoping to devise an educational program for farmers, one that would move them to the ideological left. The effort evolved into Harold's 1934 farm bureau's "School on Wheels" tour by Olive, Jerry Ingersoll, Minneola Perry, and a Finnish-speaking farmer. They travelled the Midwest for a few months before being less than politely discouraged by vigilantes.⁶⁰

The other Farm Research recruits did not, as originally planned, focus on education, research, or publishing. Harold and his college men became busy with the Party-ordered, aggressive Third Period union building and general Party work. To compensate, Harold brought in three older and more experienced men to run the research bureau, then rebranded himself as just an “agricultural engineering consultant.” Harold also followed orders from the Party’s head of undercover work and created a cell of young bright radicals working for the Agricultural Administration in Washington in hopes of shaping farm policies and providing information to the Party apparatus.

Saved by Charles Garland and Friends

Somehow, Harold had managed to spend the large fund the Soviets and the Party had provided and by 1933 the bureau was financed and guided by Charles Garland who was still a utopian agrarian who continued to try to create visionary communes.⁶¹ Webster Clay Powell, Charles J. Coe, and Hannah Pickering soon joined Garland at the bureau. Powell was in his mid-thirties and had already led an intriguing life that included degrees from Williams College and Harvard University, service in WWI, spending a year or so as lawyer, trips to and then a honeymoon in Russia where he met Harold, and writing major sociological works on unemployment in Pennsylvania. He and Alice, his very rich and politically liberal wife, moved to the Washington D.C. area in the early 1930s where they became part of the radical group in the National Labor Relations Board. They bought a townhome in stylish Georgetown and a 100-acre farm-estate near the capitol. They called it MacsFolly. Alice founded the ultra-progressive Green Acres school for preschoolers there while Webster conducted field studies for Harold and authored articles with him that condemned the policies of the “capitalistic” Department of Agriculture,

such as those created by Harold's old friend M.L. Wilson who had become a strategist at the department.⁶²

Charles J. (Bob) Coe was much, much farther left than Webster and had been at least a Party sympathizer, as well as an atheist, since his graduate student days at the University of Chicago. He published articles in Party journals using pseudonyms such as Robert Digby while he and Frank, his brother, worked as economists in the Treasury Department. Frank rose to high offices but fled to China after postwar accusations about his Communism. While there he met the Hintons and Susan Frank the long time American Communist who had ties to the American economist Harold Glasser, another Soviet intelligence asset.⁶³

Before then, Harold discovered a new financial angel for Farm Research to replace Charles Garland whose fund had exhausted its monies. Like Garland, the young highly educated forester Robert Marshall used his large inheritance to support many radical and especially environmental programs, including the Wilderness Foundation and *Facts for Farmers*, one of Harold's journals.⁶⁴ Harold's other bureau recruit was Hannah Pickering. Although from a wealthy and influential upstate New York family and a Quaker, she had been a radical feminist and peace advocate and had known Harold and Jessica since the early 1920s. She helped Harold with the Russian Reconstruction Farms project then led student tours of Russia for the Open Road organization that was sponsored by leading American liberals, including Eleanor Roosevelt.⁶⁵

Harold brought-in a very unusual man, and his wife, to the Farm Research Bureau in 1934. John Theodore Herrmann was a struggling author married to Josephine Herbst, a quite successful one.⁶⁶ Josephine had a difficult early career including an affair with Maxwell Anderson that led to an abortion, but she and John were accepted as part of the avant-garde literary circles of

Greenwich Village. Since their expatriate days in 1920s Paris they were friends of the famous writers on-the-left including Ernest Hemingway and John Don Passos. Jessica Smith Ware was also a close friend, as William Burroughs would be. Josephine published money-making novels and wrote for popular magazines and radical journal such as the *New Masses*, leading to contacts with many Party intellectuals, even Whittaker Chambers and Mike Gold. She became entangled with espionage-related Hede Massing and Nathan Gregory Silvermaster and did some intelligence work for them during the 1930s. Through Hede Massing she met Noel Feld.

John had been radicalized by the late 1920s and somehow became a friend of Alger Hiss. In 1930, John and Josephine traveled to Russia and to a Marxist writer's conference in Poland. Then, in 1932 Josephine went to her hometown of Sioux City, Iowa to observe and write about the farmers' revolts, encountering Ella and Harold. That was the contact that led to her and John being asked to come to Washington to help research and write about the farm crises. Josephine soon made another trip west. In 1934, she and Webster Powell toured the farm belt for Farm Research. The heavy drinking John Hermann was asked to do more. He became a member of Harold's underground Communist group, a courier between Washington and New York, and Harold's helper on some clandestine Party adventures including shepherding a member the Party feared was about to reveal secrets about his cell.

The Midwest Campaign Trumps Research

Harold hired the new people for Farm Research because just as he was developing the bureau opportunities arose to directly serve the revolution.⁶⁷ In summer 1932, after an emotional call from Ella, he and his college men turned their attention to the upheavals in the Great Plains and to the United Farmers League's (UFL) efforts, just as the Party-influenced Cannery union was beginning its campaigns on the East and West coasts--and as the Party was making inroads in the

American South. The Midwest involvements came first. Ella, Omholt, and Charles Taylor had worked hard for the UFL in the Grain Belt for two years but had little success in recruitment, even among the radical Finns of North and South Dakota. Frustrating, the transient field workers Harold had seen as the core of a new party had declined in numbers because of mechanization in the Midwest. One estimate for UFL nationwide recruitment was 900, with few members being active. Others claimed 1,500, but even that was a paltry return for all the Party's efforts. Then, the already discouraged Ella and her helpers were caught by surprise when local farmers began acting on their own. There had been talk of peaceful farm strikes, but a sudden grass roots upsurge began in August 1932. Iowa dairy farmers were dumping milk, other farmers refused to sell their produce, and some farmers began blocking roads to prevent anyone from getting to market. The movement spread throughout the Upper Midwest gaining some degree of organization as the Farm Holiday Association (FHA) led by Milo Reno.⁶⁸

Reno had been a National Farmers Union (NFU) official. The NFU began in 1902 representing family farmers and worked as a pressure group achieving many legislative victories including laws furthering cooperatives and banks for farmers. Although more aggressive than the Grange, the union was not radical and when Reno led the FHA his goals and methods were pragmatic, not revolutionary. While not communistic, and representing what Harold called the "petit-bourgeois" rather than an agricultural proletariat, the FHA worried the government. Some Farm Holiday extremists' actions, such as dragging a judge from his courtroom, necessitated calling out the National Guard. The Party had dual worries about the FHA. The more practical members feared the Party would lose a chance to infiltrate and change a powerful movement if the UFL refused to cooperate with a kulak-like organization while Third Period ideologues like Henry Puro (Witta) thought cooperating with bourgeois farmers

undermined any chance for a Soviet agricultural America, and for the growth of the Party's UFL.

Harold and some of his Farm Research team rushed to the Midwest while Donald Henderson and Lief Dahl were assigned to explore UFL/Cannery Union opportunities in New Jersey. When Harold's group reached Iowa they contacted old allies such as Otto Anstrom, who had been at Harold's Russian Perm farm, and Harry Lux, an IWW-Socialist-Non-Partisan League member. Together, they began an effort to take control of the local farm revolt. A first step was to contact Andrew Dahlsten, another of Ella and Harold's acquaintances. Dahlsten was an old-time radical and FHA leader in Nebraska. Ella and Omholt helped Dahlsten, Harold, and Robert Hall draft what they called the Madison Plan. It was a more radical program than Milo Reno supported. It put emphasis on extreme action, such as mobs stopping foreclosures, and called for an immediate end to recent government agricultural policies. The plan condemned the programs of farm efficiency experts like M. L. Wilson that limited production to raise farm prices. Harold's group wanted those programs replaced by more welfare-like ones that served the small farmer rather than giant farms like Thomas Campbell's. As part of the Madison Plan's activities, Harold arranged a proposal for a national convention of all farm protestors to be held in Washington, D.C. before year's end. He gained the Party's approval despite radicals' complaints that the convention broke Third Period rules. The meeting's call avoided anything that might reveal Communist influence.

In December 1932, with Lem Harris as the organizer, two hundred farmers, including many Party members, formed a truck caravan for the Farmers National Relief Conference. With Harold and Ella paying important behind-the-scenes roles the conference established The Farmers National Committee of Action (FNCA) composed a set of demands, then called for a larger

convention for 1933. The FNCA, despite the Third Period policies, was advertised as a “coordinating” body for all radical farm organizations. For Harold, coordinating meant controlling, but he was limited as to how far he could go before he lost his Reno-led Farm Holiday allies. So, the December convention’s demands were just extensions of those of the Madison Plan rather than a call for the end of capitalism. Billions of dollars for immediate cash relief, price fixing of farm products at cost of production plus reasonable profits, a new farm credit program, the cancellation of farm debts, and a moratorium on evictions were among the demands. Harold and his team sensed they would lose their followers if they went further. At the same time, they were facing increasing pressure from within the Party to begin acting as true Third Period militants.⁶⁹

In reaction, as Harold and Lem Harris prepared for the FNCA’s November 1933 Chicago convention they moved leftwards. So did Ella and her group, the Nebraska Holiday Association rump organization that emerged from the Madison Plan. Harold then ordered Robert Hall to begin *The Farmers National Weekly*. It soon became more than just a promoter of the FNCA and the Farm Holiday Association’s left wing. Hall began publishing articles that were communistic.

At the same time, Ella was going beyond merely recruiting for the Chicago gathering. She arranged farmers’ meetings on the East Coast to muster support for the strikes in the West and she applied her skills in organizing “spontaneous rallies” in the Midwest for the FNCA, ones that often turned violent. She also called on the Farm Research recruits, including Leif Dahl, to rush to Lincoln Nebraska to guide a protest march on the state capitol. That was where Leif met, fell in love with, and married Vivian Will, a bright college girl who became a leading union and Party activist. The daughter of a prosperous Nebraska farmer she was so smart and socially poised she graduated from high school at sixteen and immediately found a teaching job. After

two years she had saved enough to enter the University of Nebraska. Just as she was about to graduate she met Leif and moved east with him where he resumed his work with Donald Henderson. She was employed as a statistician by Harold's farm bureau while she and Leif lived in communal housing with other young radicals.

Meanwhile, Ella and Lux continued to lead Midwestern protests against evictions and held more local gatherings promoting the Madison policies. But Ella increasingly talked about more than bread-and-butter issues. She brought-up world peace initiatives, the needs of industrial laborers, and circulated Marxist literature. Soon, some local citizens branded her as an outside agitator, not a friend of the farmer. That is what happened in Loup City, Nebraska in June 1934. A riot broke out and Ella and five allies were arrested.⁷⁰ Ella then did something unusual. Perhaps because of her age, seventy-three, she skipped bail and hid in her daughter Helen's apartment in Washington, D.C., then went to Paris for an international peace and freedom meeting. Harold and the Party's legal arm, the International Labor Defense, were unable to prevent her being sentenced so they convinced her it would be best for the Cause if she returned to Nebraska. She served a thirty-day term and once again became a well-advertised free-speech martyr.

Before then, Harold and Lem Harris' great November 1933 UFL-FNCA-FHA Chicago convention attracted 2,000 attendees, but it was not as productive as expected. It was marked by factionalism and a less than subtle attempt by the Party to take full control. There were some follow-up rallies, but the FNCA lost its energy and soon its major constituency. Milo Reno tired of the ongoing manipulations by the Party and backed away from the FNCA while throwing out FHA's radicals. However, his FHA successors felt kinder towards the UFL's group in the FHA. Harold hoped to be able use them to dominate the FHA.

There had been other battles at the convention. They were between Harold's group and the Henry Puro's backers. Puro demanded and achieved Party visibility at the meeting and was able to shape the convention's reports to include much that looked like Party platform demands. He did more as he fought for a return to a focus on the UFL, the Party's independent farm union. Puro then fired Charles Taylor and let Ella know she was not essential. He appointed Alfred Tiala, another radical Dakota Finn, to head the UFL with orders to shift away from alliances with the likes of Milo Reno and his "kulak" farmers. Tiala went further. He instructed editors such as New York City's Party man Erik Berk who he had assigned to Taylor's *The Provider* to make it clear the UFL was a Marxist organization with aims far greater than the farmers' immediate economic demands.⁷¹

However, just as Tiala launched his battle Moscow made that policy turn and embraced Popular Front strategy. The Party ordered an abandonment of all of its independent unions, including the UFL and the Cannery union. The UFL's members were told to shift to the National Farmers Union's leftwing groups or to the radical remnants of the FHA, and there were suggestions the agricultural field workers could align with AFL unions.

From Alabama to New Jersey

While the Midwest and farmer-owner oriented FNCA's manager Lem Harris was fighting-off adversaries like Puro, Donald Henderson was exploring Party potentials in the American South and the Far West--places where there was something like an agricultural proletariat because fruit, cotton, and vegetable harvesting had not been mechanized and because of so many impoverished farmers.

The plight of Southern agriculture deserved special attention.⁷² The Civil War of the 1860s and emancipation of the slaves had not led to a successful agricultural revolution in America's

deep South. There was no significant land redistribution and by the 1930s no grand technological advances. As a result, the region had an average family income one-sixth of the North's industrial areas. It's version of a peasantry in the form of tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and laborers had less and were suffering from a sharp decrease in living standards because of the Great Depression. The region's problems harmed all types of farmers, including those who owned their land, but those who did not were especially vulnerable. Tenants, Black or White, ran the farms they rented, but were typically poor, insecure, in debt, and often had to change locations. Sharecropping took many forms, but croppers usually obeyed the owners' orders as to what and when to plant in exchange for a fraction of a harvest, usually of cotton. Like tenants, croppers were always in debt to the farm owners and local merchants, and they had no rights to tools or land or buildings. Some well-intentioned 1930's federal policies were worsening the situation. As the government paid owners to take land out of production, tenants and sharecroppers were evicted and labor wages were slashed. Even in the upper South where there were large vegetable and fruit farms, laborers suffered during the 1930s.⁷³

In the Far West there had been a technological revolution in the form of massive irrigation projects leading to the development of huge commercial fruit, vegetable, and cotton farms, the largest located in California. But land and crop types prevented the kind of mechanization sweeping the Great Plains. As a result, a new version of the IWW's "hobos" emerged: Mexican and Filipino itinerant farm laborers who suffered wage reductions as the depression deepened and farm income plummeted.

Expectedly, farm labor protests arose in the South and West. The Party hoped to turn them to its advantage through the creation of independent Third Period unions, the type radicals like Henry Puro demanded. One of the first large Southern protest movements began during 1930 in

Alabama.⁷⁴ The Party had a John Ballam-directed TUUL steel worker and miners' union contingent already in Birmingham, Alabama and its organizers, helped by Robert Hall, took advantage of a spontaneous upsurge and reorganized a local group of Black croppers into the Sharecroppers Union (SCU). Recovering from a bloody attack on its predecessor organization at Camp Hill, Alabama the SCU sought food and debt relief and an end to the federal policies that took acreage out of production, leading to croppers' evictions. While the Party had a degree of control over the SCU it had no success in exploiting a 1931 food riot in England, Arkansas, despite sending Alfred Knutson there. A greater disappointment came in 1934 when liberals and Socialists organized the new Southern Tenants Farmers' Union (STFU) that conducted many large strikes without Party involvement.⁷⁵

The Party had more luck in the Far West during the early 1930s where the then TUUL's Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) sent small teams of devoted young organizers to recruit and direct thousands of migratory farm laborers. The 1929-1930 California strike team included Eugene Dennis, a future Party head, and the young Dorothy Healy. There was a pause, then California had dozens of Cannery led violent strikes in 1933 and 1934. Although few succeeded, the Party was proud of its role and its young martyrs such as Caroline Decker (Caroline Dwofsky) and Pat Chambers.⁷⁶

At the same time, the Party borrowed some of Harold Ware's bureau team to lead Cannery union work in New Jersey and, later, Maryland. A locally directed summer 1934 strike by some three hundred field workers at New Jersey's 5,000 acre technologically advanced Seabrook Farm near Bridgeton (Ella's old hometown) was long and bloody. Donald Henderson had been unable to penetrate a 2,000 workers strike at the nearby Campbell Soup Company plant in April because of an already established union, but in late June with the help of his wife and Leif Dahl

and his wife, Henderson took-over the Seabrook strike. The strike was violent, warehouses were burnt, police injured, and strikers tear gassed. Henderson and Dahl's wives were arrested and jailed for a time. Like most other Party-directed strikes Seabrook's was not a great victory and, typical its end the workers asked Donald and his crew to leave because they felt they had been after more than a settlement, wanting the violence to continue. There was somewhat of a success, however: Vivian Dahl gained some long-lasting fame after she published an article about the strike in a left-wing feminist magazine, *Woman Worker*. Her "Them Women Sure Are Scrappers," would be remembered and reprinted decades later.⁷⁷

Just as the Maryland strike was ending the Party and its young activists were forced to change directions. The Party proclaimed itself anti-fascist, not revolutionary. Puro and Tiala were told to end their crusade to radicalize the Midwest and Henderson was ordered to wind-down his Cannery organization work. As part of this new post-Third Period policy there was to be "cooperation" with liberals and established unions, even the AFL's. As well, there was another shift of leaders and assignments.

Henry Puro was treated like others who failed to adjust to the newest Party policy swings. Puro was given a local organizers job, becoming so frustrated he started a career as a real estate agent. Alfred Knutson was assigned to be a local organizer, one so poorly paid he begged friends for a place to sleep and gas for his car. Charles Taylor was cut-off from the Party and moved to Seattle where he eked-out a living for his family, sometimes working in factories. The Party was kinder to Ella and those in Harold's group, however.

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⁴ Davies, "Economic Transformation," *Op cit*

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⁶ Greenstein, David E. "Fordizm: The Production of Automobiles, Americans and Bolsheviks in Detroit and Early Soviet Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 56 2 (April 2014):259-28 and Dana G. Dalrymple, "American Technology and Soviet Agricultural Development, 1924-1933," *Agricultural History*, 40 3 (July, 1966): 187-206.

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⁸ Wiczynski, Joseph L., *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, vol 1, 1976, pp. 194-197.

⁹ U.S. Census and family history data for Anstrom and the other recruits.

¹⁰ U.S. Passport Applications, 1922

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¹⁴ McMeekin, Sean, *The Red Millionaire*, *op. cit*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ Evans Clark, "Americans to Modernize Russia's Farming System," *NYT* 1 4 1925.

¹⁷ U.S. Immigration and sailings records; Morgan, Ted, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster* (NY: Random House: 1999).

¹⁸ See , also, Feuer, Lewis S "American Travelers to the Soviet Union 1917-1932: The Formation of a Component of New Deal Ideology," *American Quarterly*, 14 2 Part 1 (Summer, 1962):119-149.

¹⁹ "American Farmers in Russia," *Soviet Pictorial Review*, 4 1923.

²⁰ Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1925.

²¹ FBI FOIA, ware; Blevin, *Op cit* .;

²² Facts about what became the Russian Reconstruction Farms are scattered over may sources, none complete, See, for examples, Arden Craft Shop 2-13-2014 ; Stephens, Donald, *Russian Reconstruction Farms* (1 np: nd, 1925); Karl Borders *Village Life Under the Soviets* (NY: Vanguard Press 1927); Samson, Gloria Garrett, *The American Fund for Public Service: Charles Garland and Radical Philanthropy, 1922-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1966); Dyson, Lowell K., " *Red Harvest* ", *Op cit*.; .Wiczynski, *Op cit*.

²³ Gregory, "Before Command", *Op cit*.

²⁴ Link, Stefan J., *Forging Global Fordism: Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the contest over the Industrial Order* (Princeton:: Princeton University Press, 2020).

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