Foreword

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The scholarly study between the covers of this book bears eloquent testimony on two scores. On one hand, it brings out in forceful fashion the complexities and contradictions, the paradoxes and problems, the achievements and agonies of Soviet agriculture as reflected in its—still surprisingly large, after four decades of "complete collectivization"—private sector. On the other hand, it demonstrates vividly how difficult it continues to be, nearly two decades after Stalin's death, to get at the essential facts of this sector, and therefore also of Soviet agriculture as a whole.

This is Dr. Wädekin's second monographic study of the private sector in Soviet agriculture. But while it builds on his *Privatproduzenten in der sowjetischen Landwirtschaft* (Cologne, 1967), it is much more than a mere translation and updating of the German book; rather, the thorough revision and rewriting that went into the English-language book have turned it into an essentially new work. Even those familiar with the German book—and perhaps especially they—will want to examine the present work; and, incidentally, they will surely appreciate Keith Bush's most competent translation in the face of many terminological difficulties.

This book is dedicated to the memory of the late George F. Karcz, Professor of Economics at the University of California at Santa Barbara until his untimely and suddenly death in December 1970 at the age of forty-nine. Professor Karcz was one of the leading specialists on Soviet and East European agriculture in the West, that is, one of an all-too-small band of dedicated scholars laboring in a vast and difficult field. When Dr. Wädekin's aforementioned German book was about to appear, Professor Karcz perceived its great importance and from that point on gave generously of his burdened time and his boundless energy to the cause of helping bring out this English-language version. He was not to see the fruit of his efforts, and the author's dedication of the present book to his memory is a fitting tribute to a devoted and productive scholar whose work was so tragically cut short in mid-career.

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In undertaking his research Dr. Wädekin was confronted with a formidable problem of evidence. The official Soviet data on the private sector in Soviet agriculture continue to be sparse and often misleading - for reasons that the reader will be able to deduce as he proceeds through the book. The statistical compendia that began appearing again in 1956 after a hiatus of twenty years may have eased the task for many students of Soviet economic problems, but they are of only limited assistance in an investigation of private agriculture. The author was thus forced to resort to the slow and painful "archaeological" method of digging up innumerable bits and pieces of information, sifting them to discard the unrepresentative and the deliberately deceptive, and fitting the pieces together into a rich and broad picture. It is a method that is well known to all students of the Soviet economy who had to confront Stalin's statistical blackout. It was of course also the method employed, say, by the late Naum Jasny in his monumental study, The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR (Stanford, 1949), to break through official secrecy and prevarication in order to arrive at a fair picture of reality in the Soviet countryside since collectivization. Nearly a quarter century has passed since then, much has changed in the USSR and even in Soviet agriculture, but the same tedious "archaeological" digging is still necessary to discover the facts in an area that the Soviet authorities are determined to keep from view. We are all grateful to Dr. Wädekin for his persistence and patience.

The first thing that will probably strike the uninitiated reader of this book is how much private production there is four decades after mass collectivization. As late as the second half of the 1960s, 30 percent of the gross value of Soviet agricultural output was produced on private account. For some products this share was considerably higher — about 40 percent for vegetables, meat, and milk, and more than 60 percent for potatoes and eggs. This private production provides a major source of income, both in kind and in money, for the members of collective farms, for the workers at state farms, and for millions of families whose chief source of livelihood is outside agriculture. By some estimates, in the early 1960s the private sector absorbed about 40 percent of the total labor input in agriculture. It supplies the relatively small but important open (kolkhoz) market, which functions alongside the gigantic official retail-sales network; and in this way benefits the general consumer.

One of the most instructive aspects of Dr. Wädekin's study is the light that it sheds on the intimate and organic links between the private sector and the larger, socialist sector in Soviet agriculture, as well as between the FOREWORD

private sector and the economy at large. Not only has private production been so far indispensable in meeting the food requirements of the country—which of course explains why it has been tolerated by the authorities—but at the same time the *opportunity* to engage in private agriculture has been an important form of remuneration for involvement in *socialist* production. Moreover, private and socialist agriculture are intricately interrelated in resource use, in mutual commodity flows, and the daily life patterns of tens of millions of people. The picture that emerges is one of great complexity and delicate adjustment.

This delicate adjustment occurs paradoxically in a setting that is marked by gross and clumsy management of agriculture by the authorities. However, the shortages and disequilibria that result from this state of affairs only serve to create new opportunities for the millions of private producers. These tiny undertakings are woefully short on resources of all kinds, but they are long on adaptability and resilience in the quest for material advantage when given a chance (which does not always happen). Indeed, one of the most interesting passages in this study is the vivid account of the remarkably swift adjustment of some private producers to changing opportunities for profit making. One cannot help being reminded of the enterprising and energetic peasant Khor' immortalized in Turgenev's Sportsman's Notebook; his ghost must be very much alive in the minds of the Soviet authorities as they perennially battle to contain the peasant's private plot within its miniscule prescribed limits. But lest one obtain from this account the false image of "penny capitalism" at work over the length and breadth of Soviet Union, one should also bear in mind that other powerful fictional portrait: the miserably poor, single and forsaken, doggedly laboring and suffering kolkhoz woman who is the saintly hero of Solzhenitsyn's story Matrena's Home. She, too, is a significant statistic in Dr. Wädekin's book.

The private sector is of course an anomaly in the socialized, centralized, planned economy of the USSR. Economically it is backward, ideologically it is alien, politically it is suspect, and morally it stands in the way of the creation of the new socialist and communist man. But it utilizes labor, land, energies, and drives that would otherwise be largely lost; it produces an important part of the food supply; and it provides income where the socialist economy fails to do so. The dilemmas of this "uneasy coexistence," in the author's phrase, and the ebb and tide of official restriction and relaxation, are fully and judiciously presented in the chapters that follow, especially in the concluding one. The cold war between the Party

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and the peasant goes on, even if the latest phase has been one of greater toleration. The reader will also ask the question that has been constantly asked about the private sector in Soviet agriculture ever since it emerged from the collectivization of the countryside: What is its future? There is no prediction in this book, for that would inevitably have to rest on a much broader vision of the future of the Soviet economy and society, which obviously falls outside the scope of this study. Nor will the writer of this foreword be so bold as to look into the crystal ball. But to understand the Soviet economy as it has been and as it is, one can hardly do without this definitive study.