Activity 2 – Collectivization

Source 1

Food production in the USSR (1928-32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grain (million tons)</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle (millions)</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs (millions)</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep and Goats (millions)</td>
<td>146.7</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>108.8</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Explain why the numbers of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats fell between 1928 and 1932?

2. At what time did the numbers of animals drop most sharply?

3. How does the fall in grain harvest differ from the fall in the number of animals? How do you explain the difference?

Source 2 – Stalin on Collectivization

In 1943 Churchill met Stalin. Churchill writes about one of their conversations. The topic was the collectivization of agriculture, described here by Stalin:

‘It was fearful. Four years it lasted. It was absolutely necessary for Russia if we were to avoid the periodic famines, to plow the land with tractors. We must mechanize our agriculture. We gave tractors to the peasants; they were all spoiled [ruined] in a few months. Only collective farms with workshops could handle tractors. We took the greatest trouble to explain it to the peasants. It was no use arguing with them… He always answers that he does not want the collective farm, and he would rather do without the tractors.’

‘These were what you call kulaks?’

‘Yes’, he said, but he did not repeat the word. After a pause, ‘It was all very bad and difficult – but necessary’.

‘What happened?’ I asked.

‘Oh, well,’ he said, ‘many of them agreed to come in with us. Some of them were given land of their own to cultivate in the province of Tomsk… but the great bulk were very unpopular and were wiped out by their labourers.’

There was a considerable pause. Then, ‘Not only have we vastly increased the food supply, but we have improved the quality of the grain beyond measure.’

4. Can you suggest any reason why, according to Stalin, ‘they were all spoiled in a few months’?

5. Why did the kulaks ‘not want the collective farm’?

6. What sort of land do you think the kulaks were given ‘to cultivate in the province of Tomsk’ (in Siberia)?

7. What particular problems do you think the source for this conversation (i.e. Winston Churchill) might present to historians?