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## COLLECTIVE FARMING IN RUSSIA AND THE UKRAINE<sup>1</sup>

By Sir JOHN RUSSELL, F.R.S.

DIRECTOR OF ROTHAMSTED EXPERIMENTAL STATION

At the outset I must remind you of a few geographical facts in regard to European Russia. It is a vast rolling plain, with no mountains except at its edges, but it has a backbone of higher land in the center so that most of the rivers rise here and wind slowly north, south or east to the sea. Moscow at the center owes its rise and development to the fact that it is near to all of them. The rainfall (including the snow) is highest in the west central part and falls off as you go to the southeast, but it is nowhere high by English standards: not more than 25 inches. In the wetter part there is much forest; coniferous trees and birch in the north, more deciduous trees in the center and to the south, but with much marsh. To the southeast, where the rain suffices for grass but not for trees,

<sup>1</sup> Afternoon lecture, Royal Institution of Great Britain, December 18, 1941.

there is the black earth and the steppe, and still further eastwards the steppe becomes more arid in character. The forest and the steppe have given a distinctive character to Russian life, just as its rivers have played a great part in shaping its history. It is impossible to convey any adequate impression of the vast size and almost endless solitude of Russia: even in 1935 only about 6 per cent. of the land of European and Asiatic Russia was in cultivation; the rest was mostly wild.

From early times the Russians adopted a system of agriculture very much like the old three-field system, with its scattered strips common in northern Europe. Alongside a feudal system very different from ours were the peasant Communes who held in common the land allotted to them, periodically redividing it among themselves. The peasants' share grew steadily, and

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