

ECONOMICS-AGRICULTURE

200,000,000 Bushels of Wheat To Come From Russia

TWO HUNDRED million bushels of wheat will be exported from Russia year after next, if the Five Year Plan holds up.

This is the prophecy made by Dr. C. F. Marbut, chief of the division of soil surveys of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in a report prepared for the *Geographical Review*. Dr. Marbut returned recently from an extended scientific journey in Russia, after attending the Second International Soil Science Congress, held last summer at Leningrad and Moscow. He took a leading part in the first congress, held in Washington in 1927.

In an exhaustive survey of the wheat-producing possibilities of Russia and the United States, Dr. Marbut points out a number of important advantages enjoyed by this country's great Eurasian rival. The potential wheat-producing acreage in Russia is much greater than that in the United States. Russia has over 482 million acres of first-quality wheat land, as compared with only 99 million acres in the United States. Of second-quality wheat land Russia has nearly 372 million acres, as against somewhat more than 135 million acres in this country.

In transportation facilities, also, Russia enjoys some advantages over America. Our great grain belt, in the plains states, is remote from tidewater ports, and also lacks navigable rivers, so that all its wheat has to be hauled long distances by rail. The European part of the Russian grain belt, on the contrary, runs right down to the Black Sea and is crossed or bordered by three large navigable rivers. The wheat zone in Asiatic Russia, however, is not so favorably situated as regards transportation.

There is a basic similarity between the soil types that are best for wheat in the two countries. The first-quality wheat soil, whether in western America or in southern Russia, is a deep, black earth, known the world over by a Russian name, "chernozem." Second-quality wheat soil is lighter in color and bears the English name "chestnut" or "chestnut brown."

The Russian wheat zone is about two hundred miles wide, extending eastward from the Rumanian border to the region of Lake Baikal, though the best of it stops considerably to the westward, in the valley of the Ob river. The American wheat belt begins in northern

Texas and runs to the Canadian line, whence it continues far "up the map" under the Canadian flag.

In both Russia and the United States, the natural wheat land was originally a natural grassland, used by a nomadic population as pasture or hunting-ground. In both countries, the climate of the wheat belt is moderately dry, which is an advantage, for it permits large-scale outdoor operations for long periods every year. The greater part of each wheat belt is at least moderately level, which permits large farms and the use of machinery on the grand scale.

But whereas the rest of the world has already put most of its possible wheat acreage into actual cultivation, Russia has vast reserves of potential wheat land that have never known the plow. And it is that, coupled with the grandiose schemes for farms as big as whole counties, that is causing uneasiness among the non-Soviet agricultural economists at the present time.

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HYDROGRAPHY

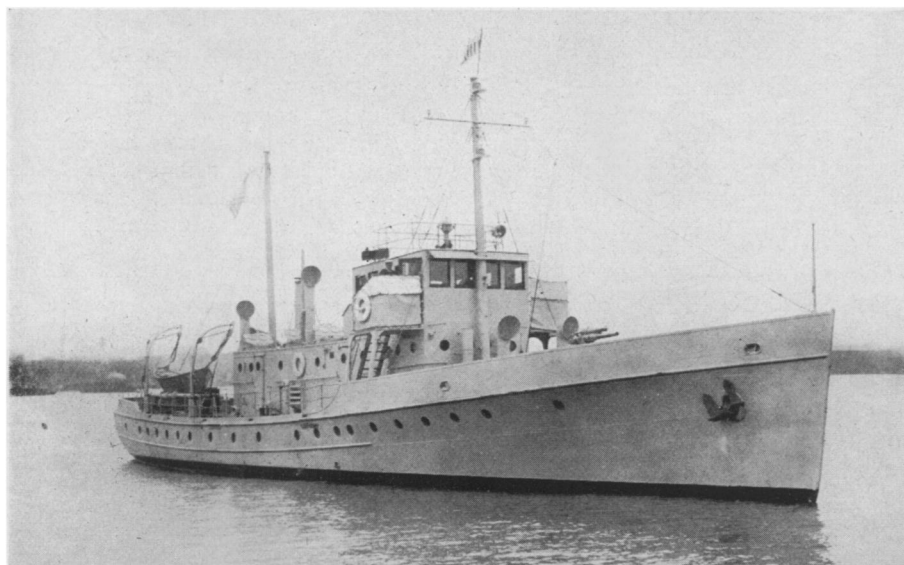
310 Icebergs Forecast By U. S. Coast Guard

ICEBERGS will invade the North Atlantic to the number of about 310 during the coming season, is the forecast of Lieutenant Commander Edward H. Smith of the U. S. Coast Guard. Commander Smith has for several years made a special study of ice conditions, and has worked out a method of forecasting which he believes will be of great value to the International Ice Patrol in its work of protecting transatlantic traffic during the iceberg season.

The number of bergs anticipated for 1931 is not exceptional, Commander Smith states. The maximum recorded during the modern period of intensive study and reporting of icebergs was for the year 1929, when 1,300 came down out of the North. The lowest figure was for 1924, when 11 were reported.

Iceberg prediction has been made possible by a study of the relation between the average atmospheric pressure over the North Atlantic and the amount of ice drifting southward, covering a period of 47 years. If the average pressure is low, the number of bergs is high, and vice versa. During the past winter the average atmospheric pressure over the North Atlantic has been higher than usual; hence a smaller number of bergs is expected.

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MEETING ICEBERGS HALFWAY

The U. S. Coast vessel "General Greene" will serve as a floating iceberg observatory for the assembling of better scientific knowledge regarding these menaces to navigation, and at the same time will supplement the work of the regular ice patrol vessels with advance information from farther north.