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**ON
THE QUESTION
OF AGRICULTURAL
CO-OPERATION**

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I

A new upsurge in the socialist mass movement is imminent throughout the countryside. But some of our comrades are tottering along like a woman with bound feet and constantly complaining, "You're going too fast." Excessive criticism, inappropriate complaints, endless anxiety, and the erection of countless taboos — they believe this is the proper way to guide the socialist mass movement in the rural areas.

No, this is not the right way; it is the wrong way.

The high tide of social transformation in the countryside, the high tide of co-operation, has already reached some places and will soon sweep over the whole country. It is a vast socialist revolutionary movement involving a rural population of more than 500 million, and it has great and world-wide significance. We should give this movement active, enthusiastic and systematic leadership, and not drag it back by one means or another. Some errors are unavoidable in the process; this is understandable, and they will not be hard to correct. Shortcomings or mistakes found among the cadres and the peasants can be remedied or overcome provided we give them positive help. The cadres and the peasants are advancing under the leadership of the Party and, fundamentally, the movement is healthy. In some places they have made certain mistakes in their work; for example, poor peasants have been barred from the co-operatives and their difficulties have been ignored, while well-to-do middle peasants have been forced into the co-operatives and their

interests have been encroached upon. All this has to be corrected by education and not by the crude method of reprimands. Reprimands simply cannot solve any problem. We must guide the movement boldly and must not "always fear the dragons ahead and the tigers behind". Both cadres and peasants will remould themselves in the course of the struggles they themselves experience. Let them go into action and learn while doing, and they will become more capable. In this way, fine people will come forward in large numbers. "Always fearing the dragons ahead and the tigers behind" will not produce any cadres. It is necessary to send large groups of cadres with short-term training out to the countryside to guide and assist the co-operative movement. But also it is by taking part in the movement itself that these cadres sent down from above can learn how to work. One does not necessarily learn how to do a job just by attending a training class and listening to a lecturer explain a few dozen points.

In short, the leadership should never lag behind the mass movement. Yet the present situation is precisely one in which the mass movement is running ahead of the leadership, who cannot keep pace with it. This state of affairs must change.

II

The nation-wide co-operative movement is now taking tremendous strides forward, and yet we still have to argue such questions as: Can the co-operatives grow? Can they be consolidated? As far as some comrades are concerned, the crux of the matter seems to be their worry as to whether it is possible to consolidate the several hundred thousand

existing semi-socialist co-operatives, which are generally rather small, averaging twenty-odd peasant households each. Of course, unless they can be consolidated, growth is out of the question. Some comrades are still unconvinced by the record of the growth of co-operation in the last few years and want to wait and see how things develop in 1955. They may even want to wait and see for another year, and only if more co-operatives are firmly established by the end of 1956 will they be truly convinced that agricultural co-operation is possible and that the policy of the Central Committee of our Party is correct. That is why the work in these two years is very important.

In order to show the feasibility of agricultural co-operation and the soundness of the Central Committee's policy on this matter, it is perhaps not without some value for us to review the history of the agricultural co-operative movement in our country.

In the twenty-two years of revolutionary wars preceding the founding of the People's Republic of China, our Party had already acquired experience in guiding the peasants, after land reform, to form agricultural producers' mutual-aid organizations containing some rudiments of socialism. During that time, there had been mutual-aid working groups and ploughing teams¹ in Kiangsi Province, work-exchange teams in northern Shensi and mutual-aid teams in various places in northern, eastern and northeastern China. In isolated cases, agricultural producers' co-operatives of a semi-socialist or socialist character also came into being. During the War of Resistance Against Japan, for instance, an agricultural producers' co-operative of a socialist character appeared in Ansai County in northern Shensi. But such co-operatives were not being widely promoted then.

It was after the founding of the People's Republic of China that our Party led the peasants in the more extensive organization of agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams and in initiating the formation of large numbers of agricultural producers' co-operatives on the basis of these teams. By now nearly six years have been spent on this work.

On December 15, 1951, when the Central Committee of our Party drew up the first draft decision on mutual aid and co-operation in agriculture² and issued it to local Party organizations to be tried out in various places, there were 300 or more agricultural producers' co-operatives. (The document was not published in the press as a formal Party decision till March 1953.) Two years later, when our Central Committee issued its decision on agricultural producers' co-operatives³ on December 16, 1953, the number had grown to more than 14,000, a 47-fold increase in the space of two years.

This decision indicated that between the winter of 1953 and the autumn harvest of 1954 the number of agricultural producers' co-operatives was to increase from 14,000 odd to 35,800 odd, that is, by only two and a half times. As it turned out, during the year the number actually rose to 100,000, or more than seven times the initial figure.

In October 1954 the Central Committee of our Party decided that the number of co-operatives should be increased sixfold, from 100,000 to 600,000. Actually, 670,000 were organized. By June 1955, after a preliminary readjustment, the number was cut by 20,000, leaving 650,000, or 50,000 more than the planned target. The number of peasant households in the co-operatives was 16,900,000, or an average of 26 households in each.

These co-operatives are to be found mainly in the northern provinces, which were liberated earlier. Most of the provinces which were liberated later also have a number of agricultural producers' co-operatives, but with the exception of Anhwei and Chekiang, they do not have very many yet.

Generally speaking, the co-operatives are small, but a few are large, some with 70 to 80 households, some with over 100, and some with several hundred households.

In general, they are semi-socialist,⁴ but a few have developed into advanced socialist co-operatives.

Along with the growth of the peasants' co-operative movement in agricultural production, a small number of socialist state farms have been established in our country. By 1957 we shall have 3,038 state farms cultivating 16,870,000 *mou*⁵ of land. They will include 141 mechanized farms (counting both those existing in 1952 and those set up in the course of the First Five-Year Plan) with 7,580,000 *mou* under cultivation. There will be 2,897 non-mechanized state farms under local administration, cultivating 9,290,000 *mou*. There will be a big growth in state-operated agriculture during the period covered by the Second and Third Five-Year Plans.

In the spring of 1955 the Central Committee of our Party decided that the number of agricultural producers' co-operatives should grow to a million. This means an increase of only 350,000 over the original 650,000, or a little more than 50 per cent. It seems to me this may be a bit too small. Probably the existing figure of 650,000 ought to be roughly doubled, that is, increased to something like 1,300,000, so that, except in some of the border areas, there will be from one to several small agricultural producers' co-operatives of the semi-socialist type to serve as models in each of the country's 200,000-odd townships. In a year or two these co-operatives

will gain experience and become "veterans", and people will learn from them. Between now and the autumn harvest of October 1956 there are still fourteen months to go in which it should be possible to accomplish this plan for forming co-operatives. I hope that on their return the responsible comrades of the various provinces and autonomous regions will look into the question, work out appropriate plans in accordance with the concrete conditions and report to the Central Committee within two months. We shall then discuss the matter again and make a final decision.

The question is whether the co-operatives can be consolidated. Some people say that last year's plan to set up 500,000 was too big and too rash, and that this year's plan to set up another 350,000 is also too big and too rash. They doubt whether so many co-operatives can be consolidated.

Then is their consolidation possible?

True, neither socialist industrialization nor socialist transformation is easy. To change the individual farm economy of some 110 million peasant households to a collective farm economy and then to accomplish the technical transformation of agriculture certainly involves a host of difficulties. But we should be confident of our Party's ability to lead the masses in overcoming these difficulties.

On the question of agricultural co-operation, I think we should be confident, firstly, that both the poor peasants and the lower strata of the new and old middle peasants⁶ are enthusiastic about the socialist road and are eagerly responding to our Party's call for co-operation — this being particularly the case among those with a higher level of political consciousness — because the poor peasants are in a difficult economic position and because the lower middle peasants

are still not well off, although their economic position is better than before liberation.

I think we should be confident, secondly, that the Party is capable of leading the people of the whole country to socialism. Our Party has led the great people's democratic revolution to victory and established the people's democratic dictatorship headed by the working class. Therefore, it is certainly able to lead our entire people in basically accomplishing socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce in the course of roughly three five-year plans. In agriculture no less than in other spheres, we already have powerful and convincing proof of this. Witness the first batch of 300 co-operatives, the second of 13,700 and the third of 86,000, or a total of 100,000, all established before the autumn of 1954 and all consolidated since. Why, then, cannot the fourth batch of 550,000 co-operatives formed in 1954-55 and the fifth batch to be established in 1955-56 (the provisional control figure is 350,000, subject to final confirmation) also be consolidated?

We must have faith in the masses; we must have faith in the Party. These are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles, we shall accomplish nothing.

III

To achieve co-operation step by step throughout our rural areas, we must conscientiously check up on and strengthen the co-operatives already in existence.

Great emphasis must be placed on the quality of the co-operatives, and we must oppose any tendency to concentrate

solely on increasing their number and their membership to the neglect of their quality. We must therefore give serious attention to the work of checking up on the co-operatives.

This checking-up should be done not just once, but two or three times a year. It was undertaken in a certain number of co-operatives in the first half of this year (in some places, apparently, very sketchily and without any major effort). I suggest a second check-up of these co-operatives should be undertaken in the autumn or winter of this year, and a third in the spring or summer of next. Of the 650,000 existing co-operatives, 550,000 are new, having been set up last winter or this spring, and they include a number of Class I co-operatives⁷ which are more or less consolidated. Adding the 100,000 old and consolidated co-operatives, the number now consolidated is by no means small. Can these co-operatives help to bring about the gradual consolidation of the others? The answer should be, they definitely can.

We should treasure every spark of socialist enthusiasm shown by the peasants and cadres, and not thwart such enthusiasm. We should identify ourselves heart and soul with the members and cadres of the co-operatives and with the county, district and township cadres, and not thwart their enthusiasm.

Co-operatives should not be dissolved unless all, or nearly all, their members are firmly determined not to go on. If some members are determined not to carry on, let them withdraw while the majority stay in and continue. If the majority are firmly against carrying on but the minority are willing, let the majority withdraw while the minority stay in and continue. Even if it comes to that, it will be all right. In one very small co-operative of only six households in Hopei Province, the three old-middle-peasant households firmly re-

fused to carry on and were allowed to withdraw, but the three poor-peasant households said they would continue whatever happened. They stayed in and the co-operative was preserved.⁸ In fact, the direction in which these three poor-peasant households are moving is the one in which the 500 million peasants throughout the country will move. All peasants now farming individually will eventually take the road resolutely chosen by these three poor-peasant households.

With the adoption of a policy of what was called "resolute contraction" in Chekiang (not by decision of the Chekiang Provincial Party Committee), out of 53,000 co-operatives in the province some 15,000 co-operatives (comprising 400,000 peasant households) were dissolved at one fell swoop. This caused great dissatisfaction among the masses and the cadres, and it was altogether the wrong thing to do. This policy of "resolute contraction" was decided on in a state of panic. Nor was it right to take such a major step without the consent of the Central Committee. Moreover, in April 1955 the Central Committee had already issued a warning: "Do not repeat the mistake of mass dissolution of co-operatives made in 1953, or otherwise you will again have to make a critical examination of your error." But certain comrades preferred not to heed this warning.

Success, it seems to me, often breeds two bad tendencies. One is to become dizzy with success, which leads to swelled-headedness and "Leftist" mistakes. Of course, that is bad. The second is to be scared of success, which leads to "resolute contraction" and Rightist mistakes. That is just as bad. The trouble now is of the latter kind, for some comrades have become scared of the several hundred thousand small co-operatives.

IV

Preparatory work must be done seriously and well before co-operatives are set up.

Attention must be paid from the very start to their quality; we must oppose the tendency to concentrate on quantity alone.

Fight no battle unprepared, fight no battle you are not sure of winning. This was the celebrated slogan of our Party during the revolutionary wars. It can be applied to the work of building socialism as well. To be sure of success, one must be prepared, and what is more, fully prepared. A great deal of preparatory work is necessary before a new batch of agricultural producers' co-operatives can be set up in a province, prefecture or county. In the main, this work should consist of the following:

- (1) Criticizing wrong ideas and summing up the experience gained in past work.
- (2) Conducting propaganda systematically and repeatedly among the peasant masses concerning our Party's principles, policy and measures on agricultural co-operation. And in publicizing them among the peasants, we should not only explain the advantages of co-operation, we should also point out the difficulties that may be encountered on the way, so that they may be mentally well prepared.
- (3) Drawing up a comprehensive plan for expanding agricultural co-operation in the entire province, prefecture, county, district or township concerned in the light of actual conditions and working out an annual plan on this basis.
- (4) Training cadres for the co-operatives in short-term courses.

(5) Developing agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams on a wide scale and in large numbers and, whenever possible, getting these teams to join together and form combined mutual-aid teams, thus laying the foundations for further combination into co-operatives.

If all this is done, it will be possible to achieve a basic solution of the problem of combining quantity with quality in the development of co-operatives. But it will still be necessary to follow through with an immediate check-up after a group of co-operatives is formed.

Whether or not a group of co-operatives, once formed, can be consolidated depends, firstly, on how well the preparatory work is done beforehand and, secondly, on how well the work of checking up is carried out afterwards.

In the work of establishing and checking up on the co-operatives reliance must be placed on the Party and Youth League branches in the township. For this reason, both tasks must be closely linked with the work of building and consolidating the Party and Youth League organizations in the rural areas.

Whether in establishing the co-operatives or in checking up on them, the local cadres in the rural areas should be the main force, and they should be encouraged and asked to take responsibility, while cadres sent from above should be the auxiliary force, whose function is to guide and help and not to take everything into their own hands.

V

In the matter of production, the agricultural producers' co-operatives must achieve higher crop yields than the in-

dividual peasants and mutual-aid teams. Output cannot be allowed to remain at the individual peasant or mutual-aid team level, for that would mean failure; what point, then, would there be in having co-operatives at all? Still less can yields be allowed to fall. Over 80 per cent of the 650,000 agricultural producers' co-operatives already set up have increased their crop yields. This is extremely good, showing that the members of the co-operatives are very keen on production and that co-operatives are superior to mutual-aid teams and far superior to individual farming.

To increase crop yields it is necessary:

- (1) to adhere firmly to the principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit;
- (2) to improve management (planning and administration of production, organization of labour, etc.);
- (3) to improve farming techniques (deep ploughing and intensive cultivation, close planting in small clusters, extending the area of double or triple cropping, introduction of better strains of seed, popularization of new types of farm implements, the fight against plant diseases and insect pests, etc.); and
- (4) to increase the means of production (land under cultivation, fertilizer, irrigation works, draught animals, farm implements, etc.).

These are indispensable conditions for consolidating the co-operatives and ensuring increased production.

In adhering to the principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, we must now give our attention to the following problems:

- (1) Whether or not it is better to delay the pooling of draught animals and larger farm implements for a year

or two, and whether or not the prices fixed are fair and the payments to the owners are spread over too long a time when these animals and implements are turned over to the co-operatives.

(2) Whether or not there is a proper ratio between the payment based on land shares and the payment for labour.

(3) How the co-operative should build up the funds it needs.

(4) Whether or not members can devote part of their labour to certain kinds of subsidiary production.

(Since the agricultural producers' co-operatives we are now setting up are generally still semi-socialist, care must be taken to solve these four questions properly so as not to violate the principle of mutual benefit as between the poor and the middle peasants, without which there can be no basis for voluntary participation.)

(5) How much land should be set aside for the private use of members.

(6) The question of the class composition of the co-operative membership.

And so on.

Here I would like to deal with the question of the class composition of the co-operative membership. I think that in the next year or two wherever the movement for co-operation has just begun to spread out or has only recently spread out, that is, currently in most areas, we should begin by getting the active elements of the following sections of the people to organize themselves: (1) the poor peasants, (2) the lower stratum of the new middle peasants, and (3) the lower stratum of the old middle peasants. However, we should

not drag in against their will those members of these sections who are not enthusiastic for the time being. Draw them into the co-operatives in batches only when their political consciousness has risen and they have become interested in co-operatives. These sections are fairly similar in their economic position. Either they are still leading a hard life (*i.e.*, the poor peasants, who, though they have received land and are much better off than in pre-liberation days, are still in difficulty because of insufficient manpower, draught animals and farm implements), or they are still not well off (*i.e.*, the lower middle peasants). Therefore, they all have a certain enthusiasm for organizing co-operatives. Nevertheless, for various reasons, the degree of their enthusiasm varies — some are very keen, some are not so keen for the time being, and others prefer to wait and see. Therefore, we should devote a period of time to educating all those who do not want to join co-operatives yet, even though they are poor or lower middle peasants, and we should patiently wait for their political consciousness to grow, and never drag them in against their will in violation of the voluntary principle.

As for the upper strata of the new and the old middle peasants, that is, the middle peasants who are economically better off, they should not be admitted into the co-operatives yet — except for those who are politically conscious enough to take the socialist road and are really willing to join — still less should these people be dragged in against their will. The reason is that they are not yet sufficiently politically conscious to take the socialist road; they will make up their minds to join the co-operatives only after the majority in the rural areas have joined, or when per *mou* yields of the co-operatives equal or even surpass those of the well-to-do middle peasants and they realize that it is to their disadvan-

tage in every respect to continue working on their own and that they cannot further their interests except by joining.

So the first thing to do is to group the people who are poor or still not well off according to their degree of political consciousness (together they form about 60 to 70 per cent of the rural population) and get them to organize co-operatives in the next few years, and only then should the well-to-do middle peasants be drawn in. In this way we can avoid commandism.

For the next few years, landlords and rich peasants must definitely not be admitted into the co-operatives in any of the areas where co-operation has not been basically completed. In the areas where co-operation has been basically completed, however, the firmly established co-operatives may, on certain conditions and by stages, admit groups of former landlords and rich peasants who have long since given up exploitation, engage in labour and are law-abiding, and may allow them to take part in collective labour while continuing to reform them through labour.

VI

On the question of developing the co-operatives, the problem now is not one of having to criticize rashness. It is wrong to say that the present development of the co-operatives has "gone beyond the real possibilities" or "gone beyond the level of political consciousness of the masses". This is how things stand: China has an enormous population with insufficient cultivated land (only three *mou* of land per head taking the country as a whole, and only one *mou* or even less on the average in many parts of the southern provinces),

natural calamities are frequent (every year large areas of farmland suffer from flood, drought, gales, frost, hail or insect pests in varying degrees), and farming methods are backward. Consequently, although the standard of living of the peasant masses since the land reform has improved or has even improved a good deal, many are still in difficulty or are still not well off, there being relatively few who are well off, and hence most of the peasants show enthusiasm for taking the socialist road. Their enthusiasm is being constantly heightened by China's socialist industrialization and its achievements. For them, socialism is the only way out. These peasants make up 60 to 70 per cent of the entire rural population. In other words, the only way for the majority of the peasants to shake off poverty, improve their livelihood and fight natural calamities is to unite and go forward along the high road of socialism. This sentiment is growing rapidly among the masses of the poor peasants and of those who are not so well off. The well-to-do or comparatively well-to-do peasants, who make up only 20 to 30 per cent of the rural population, are vacillating, with some trying hard to go the capitalist way. As I have already said, because of their low political consciousness many of the poor peasants and of those who are not well off are taking a "wait-and-see" attitude for the time being and are also vacillating; however, it is easier for them to accept socialism than it is for the well-to-do peasants. This is how things really stand. But some of our comrades ignore these facts and think that the several hundred thousand newly established small semi-socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives have "gone beyond the real possibilities" or "gone beyond the level of political consciousness of the masses". This means that their eyes are on the comparatively small number of

well-to-do peasants to the neglect of the great majority of the poor peasants and those who are not well-to-do. That is one kind of wrong thinking.

These comrades also underrate the strength of the Communist Party's leadership in the countryside and the peasant masses' whole-hearted support for the Party. They believe that it is difficult enough as it is for the Party to consolidate the several hundred thousand small co-operatives already in existence, and that therefore a great expansion of co-operatives is inconceivable. They paint a pessimistic picture of the Party's present work in leading agricultural co-operation, holding that it has "gone beyond the level of the cadres' experience". True, the socialist revolution is a new revolution. Previously, our experience was confined to the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and we had no experience of socialist revolution. Yet how can we gain such experience? By sitting back and waiting for it, or by plunging into the struggles of the socialist revolution and learning in the process? How can we gain experience of industrialization without carrying out the Five-Year Plan, or without pushing ahead with the work of socialist industrialization? One section of the Five-Year Plan deals with agricultural co-operation. If we do not lead the peasants in organizing one or more agricultural producers' co-operatives in every township or village, where will "the level of the cadres' experience" come from, and how will it rise? Clearly, the idea that the present state of development of the agricultural producers' co-operatives has "gone beyond the level of the cadres' experience" shows mistaken thinking. This is a second kind of wrong thinking.

The way these comrades look at problems is wrong. They do not look at the essential or main aspects but emphasize

the non-essential or minor ones. It should be pointed out that these non-essential or minor aspects must not be overlooked and must be dealt with one by one. But they should not be taken as the essential or main aspects, or we will lose our bearings.

We must have faith, first, that the peasant masses are ready to advance step by step along the road of socialism under the leadership of the Party, and second, that the Party is capable of leading the peasants along this road. These two points are the essence of the matter, the main aspects. If we lack this conviction, it will be impossible for us basically to complete the building of socialism in the period of roughly three five-year plans.

VII

The great historical experience of the Soviet Union in building socialism inspires our people with full confidence in the building of socialism in China. However, even on this question of international experience, there are different views. Some comrades disapprove of our Central Committee's policy of keeping the development of agricultural co-operation in step with our socialist industrialization, although such a policy proved correct in the Soviet Union. They consider that the speed of industrialization as it is set at present is all right, but that agricultural co-operation should proceed at an extremely slow pace and need not keep in step with it. This is to disregard the experience of the Soviet Union. These comrades fail to understand that socialist industrialization cannot be carried out in isolation from agricultural co-operation. In the first place, as everyone knows, China's current

level of production of marketable grain and industrial raw materials is very low, whereas the state's need for them is growing year by year, and this presents a sharp contradiction. If we cannot fundamentally solve the problem of agricultural co-operation in a period of roughly three five-year plans, that is to say, if our agriculture cannot make a leap from small-scale farming with animal-drawn farm implements to large-scale mechanized farming, including extensive state-organized land reclamation by settlers using machinery (the plan being to bring 400-500 million *mou* of waste land under cultivation in the course of three five-year plans), then we shall fail to resolve the contradiction between the ever-increasing need for marketable grain and industrial raw materials and the present generally low yield of staple crops, we shall run into formidable difficulties in our socialist industrialization and shall be unable to complete it. The Soviet Union, which had to face the same problem in the course of building socialism, solved it by the method of planned leadership and the development of agricultural co-operation. And the only way for us to solve it is by the same method. In the second place, some of our comrades have not given any thought to the connection between the following two facts, namely, that heavy industry, the most important branch of socialist industrialization, produces tractors and other farm machinery, chemical fertilizers, modern means of transport, oil, electric power, etc., for agricultural use, but that all these things can only be used, or used extensively, on the basis of large-scale co-operative agriculture. We are now carrying out a revolution not only in the social system, the change from private to public ownership, but also in technology, the change from handicraft to large-scale modern machine production, and the two revolutions are interconnected. In

agriculture, with conditions as they are in our country co-operation must precede the use of big machinery (in capitalist countries agriculture develops in a capitalist way). Therefore we must on no account regard industry and agriculture, socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of agriculture as two separate and isolated things, and on no account must we emphasize the one and play down the other. In this matter too, Soviet experience points the way, yet some of our comrades pay no attention and always see these questions as isolated and unconnected. In the third place, some of our comrades have also failed to give any thought to the connection between two other facts, namely, that large funds are needed to accomplish both national industrialization and the technical transformation of agriculture, but that a considerable part of these funds has to be accumulated through agriculture. Apart from the direct agricultural tax, this is done by developing light industry which produces the great quantities of consumer goods needed by the peasants and exchanging them for the peasants' marketable grain and the raw materials for light industry, so that the material requirements both of the peasants and of the state are satisfied and funds are accumulated for the state. Moreover, the large-scale expansion of light industry requires the development of agriculture as well as of heavy industry. For it cannot be brought about on the basis of small-scale peasant production; it awaits large-scale farming, and in our country this means socialist co-operative agriculture. Only this type of agriculture can give the peasants an inestimably greater purchasing power than they now possess. Here again we have the experience of the Soviet Union to draw on, but some of our comrades take no notice of it. Taking the stand of the bourgeoisie, of the rich peasants, or of the well-to-do middle peas-

ants with their spontaneous tendency towards capitalism, they always think in terms of the interests of the few and fail to think in terms of the interests of the whole country and the entire people from a working class standpoint.

VIII

Then again, some comrades have found in the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union grounds for criticizing what they call impetuosity and rashness in our present work of agricultural co-operation in China. Does not the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, tell us that at a certain period many local Party organizations in the Soviet Union committed the error of impetuosity and rashness in the matter of the pace of co-operation? Should we not take note of this international experience?

I think we should take note of this Soviet experience and oppose any impetuous and rash thinking which ignores preparatory work and disregards the level of political consciousness of the peasant masses; but on no account should we allow these comrades to use the Soviet experience as a cover for their idea of moving at a snail's pace.

How has the Central Committee of our Party decided to carry through agricultural co-operation in China?

First, it is preparing to accomplish the plan, in the main, in eighteen years. The period of slightly over three years from the founding of the People's Republic in October 1949 to 1952 was spent on rehabilitating the national economy. In the sphere of agriculture, in addition to land reform and the restoration of agricultural production, we greatly extend-

cd the organization of agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams in all the old liberated areas in this period, and we also began to form semi-socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives, from which we gained some experience. Next followed the First Five-Year Plan, which began in 1953; nearly three years have elapsed since then, and our agricultural co-operative movement is spreading all over the country and our experience is growing. Altogether eighteen years will elapse between the founding of the People's Republic and the end of the Third Five-Year Plan. In that period, simultaneously with the basic completion of socialist industrialization and of the socialist transformation of handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce, we intend basically to complete the socialist transformation of agriculture. Is this possible? Soviet experience tells us that it is entirely possible. The Civil War in the Soviet Union ended in 1920, and agricultural co-operation was completed in the seventeen years from 1921 to 1937, the main part of this work having been done in the six years from 1929 to 1934. Although, as the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, records, some local Party organizations in the Soviet Union became "dizzy with success"⁹ during this period, the error was quickly corrected. Eventually, by a great effort the Soviet Union successfully accomplished the socialist transformation of the whole of its agriculture and at the same time achieved the gigantic technical reconstruction of agriculture. This road travelled by the Soviet Union is our model.

Secondly, the method we are using in the socialist transformation of agriculture is one of step-by-step advance. The first step was to call on the peasants to organize agricultural

producers' mutual-aid teams, which contain only certain rudiments of socialism and comprise from a few to a dozen or so households each, and to do so in accordance with the principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit. The second step has been to call on the peasants, likewise in accordance with the principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, to organize on the basis of these mutual-aid teams small agricultural producers' co-operatives, which are semi-socialist in nature and are characterized by the pooling of land as shares and by unified management. Then the third step will be to call on the peasants, in accordance with the same principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, to unite further on the basis of these small semi-socialist co-operatives and organize large agricultural producers' co-operatives which are fully socialist in nature. These steps make it possible for the peasants gradually to raise their socialist consciousness through their personal experience and gradually to change their mode of life, thus lessening any feeling of an abrupt change. These steps can generally avoid any drop in crop yields during, say, the first year or two; indeed, they must ensure a year-by-year increase, and this can be done. More than 80 per cent of the existing 650,000 agricultural producers' co-operatives have increased their output, while over 10 per cent have shown neither an increase nor a decrease, and less than 10 per cent have shown a decrease. The state of affairs in the two latter categories is bad, particularly so in the case of the last category where production has fallen, and a great effort must be made to check up on and strengthen such co-operatives. Since more than 80 per cent of all the co-operatives have increased their output (by anything from 10 to 30 per cent), since over 10 per cent have shown neither an increase nor a decrease in

their first year but may show an increase in their second year after having had a check-up, and since the less than 10 per cent registering a fall in output may also show an increase in their second year or at least reach the position where output is neither increasing nor decreasing after the check-up, it can be said that on the whole our progress in co-operation is healthy and that generally we can ensure increased production and avoid falling yields. Moreover, these steps are a splendid school for training cadres. In this way administrative and technical personnel for the co-operatives can be gradually trained in large numbers.

Thirdly, a control figure for the establishment of new agricultural co-operatives should be fixed once a year in the light of the actual situation, while during the year there should be several inspections of how the work of co-operation is being carried out. Concrete measures for extending co-operation in each province, county and township can thus be decided upon every year according to changing conditions and the degree of success in the work. Progress may be halted for a while in some places in order to carry out a check-up; in others, expansion and check-up can proceed side by side. In certain co-operatives some of the members may be allowed to withdraw, and individual co-operatives may even be allowed to dissolve temporarily. In some places new co-operatives should be set up in large numbers, while in others there should be no increase except in the number of peasant households in the existing co-operatives. In every province or county, whenever a batch of co-operatives is established, progress must be halted to allow time for a check-up before the establishment of a new batch. The idea of never allowing any pause, any intermission, is wrong. As for the inspection of the work of organizing co-operatives, the Central

Committee and the provincial, autonomous region, municipal and prefectural committees of the Party must take it firmly in hand and make sure that it is done not once but several times every year. Whenever a problem crops up, deal with it right away; don't let problems pile up and then try to settle them all in one go. As for criticism, do it in good time; don't get into the habit of criticizing only after the event. For instance, in the first seven months of this year, the Central Committee alone has called three conferences of leading comrades from various places, including the present one, to discuss the question of rural co-operation. This method of suiting our measures to local conditions and of giving timely guidance ensures that fewer mistakes are committed in our work and that they will quickly be put right if they are made.

Taking all the above into consideration, can we not say that the guiding policy of the Central Committee of our Party on agricultural co-operation is the right one and therefore guarantees the healthy development of the movement? I think we can and should say so, and that to evaluate this policy as "rash" is utterly wrong.

IX

Some comrades have a wrong approach to the vital question of the worker-peasant alliance, proceeding as they do from the stand of the bourgeoisie, of the rich peasants, or of the well-to-do middle peasants with their spontaneous tendency towards capitalism. They think that the present situation in the co-operative movement is very dangerous, and

they advise us to "get off the horse quickly" in our present advance along the road of co-operation. "If you do not," they warn us, "you are in danger of breaking up the worker-peasant alliance." We think exactly the opposite. If we do not get on the horse quickly, there will be the danger of breaking up the worker-peasant alliance. There is a difference of only a single word here — one says "off" while the other says "on" — yet it demonstrates the difference between two opposing lines. As everybody knows, we already have a worker-peasant alliance built on the basis of the bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism, a revolution which took the land from the landlords and distributed it to the peasants in order to free them from the bondage of the feudal system of ownership. But this revolution is past and feudal ownership has been abolished. What exists in the countryside today is capitalist ownership by the rich peasants and a vast sea of private ownership by the individual peasants. As is clear to everyone, the spontaneous forces of capitalism have been steadily growing in the countryside in recent years, with new rich peasants springing up everywhere and many well-to-do middle peasants striving to become rich peasants. On the other hand, many poor peasants are still living in poverty for lack of sufficient means of production, with some in debt and others selling or renting out their land. If this tendency goes unchecked, the polarization in the countryside will be aggravated day by day. Those peasants who lose their land and those who remain in poverty will complain that we are doing nothing to save them from ruin or to help them overcome their difficulties. Nor will the well-to-do middle peasants who are heading in the capitalist direction be pleased with us, for we shall never

be able to satisfy their demands unless we intend to take the capitalist road. Can the worker-peasant alliance continue to stand firm in these circumstances? Obviously not. There is no solution to this problem except on a new basis. And that means to bring about, step by step, the socialist transformation of the whole of agriculture simultaneously with the gradual realization of socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce; in other words, it means to carry out co-operation and eliminate the rich-peasant economy and the individual economy in the countryside so that all the rural people will become increasingly well off together. We maintain that this is the only way to consolidate the worker-peasant alliance. Otherwise, this alliance will be in real danger of breaking up. The comrades who advise us to "get off the horse" are completely wrong in their thinking on this question.

X

We must here and now realize that there will soon be a nation-wide high tide of socialist transformation in the countryside. This is inevitable. By the spring of 1958, at the end of the final year of the First Five-Year Plan and the beginning of the first year of the Second Five-Year Plan, co-operatives of a semi-socialist type will embrace some 250 million people, about 55 million peasant households (averaging four and a half persons each), which will mean half the rural population. By that time many counties and some provinces will have basically completed the semi-socialist

transformation of the agricultural economy, and in every part of the country a small number of semi-socialist co-operatives will have become fully socialist. By 1960, during the first half of the Second Five-Year Plan, we shall in the main have achieved the semi-socialist transformation of the remainder of the agricultural economy involving the other half of the rural population. By then the number of fully socialist co-operatives formed from the semi-socialist co-operatives will have increased.¹⁰ All through the First and Second Five-Year Plans, this social transformation will continue to be the main feature of the transformation of the countryside, while technical transformation will take second place; the number of big farm machines will certainly increase, but not to any great extent. During the Third Five-Year Plan, the social and the technical transformation of the rural areas will proceed side by side; more big farm machinery will be employed year by year, but in the field of social transformation, from 1960 onwards the semi-socialist co-operatives will be gradually developing into fully socialist ones, group by group and stage by stage. The social and economic physiognomy of China will not undergo a complete change until the socialist transformation of the social and economic system is accomplished and until, in the technical field, machinery is used, wherever possible, in every branch of production and in every place. The country's economic conditions being what they are, the technical transformation will take longer than the social. It is estimated that the basic completion of the nation-wide technical transformation of agriculture will take roughly four or five five-year plans, that is, twenty to twenty-five years. The whole Party must fight for the fulfilment of this great task.

XI

There must be comprehensive planning and more effective leadership.

There must be national, provincial, prefectural, county, district and township plans for the stage-by-stage development of co-operation. And as the work proceeds, these plans must constantly be revised in the light of actual conditions. All Party and Youth League organizations, whether at provincial, prefectural, county, district or township levels, must pay serious attention to rural problems and earnestly improve the leadership they give to rural work. All the leading comrades of local Party and Youth League committees should immediately apply themselves to studying the work of agricultural co-operation and become expert at it. In short, we must not remain passive but take the initiative, not abandon leadership but strengthen it.

XII

In August 1954 (this, of course, is no longer news), the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China reported:

With the rise and spread of rural co-operation, the mutual-aid and co-operative organizations and the various sections of the people in the rural areas are all on the move to a greater or lesser degree. Existing agricultural producers' co-operatives are planning and preparing to enlarge their membership, and the agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams which are scheduled to become co-opera-

tives are planning and preparing to draw in more households, while those which have not yet reached that level also want to go forward. Some people are busy preparing to join new co-operatives, others to join existing ones. Those who are not ready to join co-operatives this year are actively considering joining mutual-aid teams. The movement is very broad in its scope. It has become a mass movement. This is a new and striking feature of the great development of agricultural co-operation. But because some of the leading comrades in certain counties and districts have not kept abreast of this new feature and have not given more effective leadership in good time, certain unhealthy phenomena have begun to appear in a number of villages and *tun* [N.B. In Heilungkiang Province the village is the administrative unit corresponding to the township in the provinces south of the Great Wall, while the *tun*, which is not an administrative unit, is equivalent to the village in the provinces south of the Great Wall]. For instance, when people start looking for fellow members, the strong seek out the strong and elbow the badly-off peasants aside, there are squabbles over cadres and members which give rise to disunity, there is blind concentration of cadres in one place, and the rich peasants and those well-to-do peasants with fairly strong tendencies towards capitalism seize the chance to set up low-grade mutual-aid teams or rich peasants' co-operatives of their own. All this clearly demonstrates that, with the immense growth of agricultural co-operation, it is not enough to think only in terms of setting up new co-operatives when carrying out the Party's policy and guiding the movement; but that it is necessary to think in terms of the whole village [*i.e.*, the whole township] and of the

promotion of the agricultural co-operative movement as a whole, giving consideration both to enlarging the old co-operatives and to setting up new ones, both to developing the co-operatives and to bringing the mutual-aid teams to a higher stage, both to what is happening this year and to what will happen next year, and even the year after. This is the only way to carry out the Party's policy to the full and to ensure the healthy growth of the agricultural co-operative movement.

Is it only in Heilungkiang Province that "some of the leading comrades in certain counties and districts have not kept abreast of this new feature and have not given more effective leadership in good time"? Is it only in certain counties and districts? I think it is very likely that in many leading organizations all over the country there are people who typify this serious state of affairs in which the leadership lags behind the movement.

The report of the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee went on to say:

Hsichin Village, Shuangcheng County, has worked out a comprehensive plan for the whole village on the basis of guidance by the leadership combined with the voluntary participation of the masses. This is an innovation in the leadership given to the great expansion of co-operation. Its importance lies first and foremost in the fact that through this kind of planning the Party's class line in the countryside has been fully translated into life, so that the unity between poor and middle peasants has been strengthened and a vigorous struggle has been waged against the rich-peasant tendency. Cadres have been properly

allocated to serve the general advance of agricultural co-operation. Relations between the various co-operatives and between the co-operatives and the mutual-aid teams have been readjusted and strengthened, and the agricultural co-operative movement has consequently advanced along the whole front according to plan. Secondly, through this kind of planning the work of expanding agricultural co-operation on a large scale has been specifically assigned right down to the leading bodies at the basic level and to the masses, so that the village Party branch knows how to lead, the old co-operatives how to go forward, the new co-operatives how to establish themselves and the mutual-aid teams how to find their particular path towards further advance. In this way, the initiative and enthusiasm of the village Party branch and of the broad masses have been brought into full play, and the correct principle of relying on the Party branch and on the experience and wisdom of the masses has been fully demonstrated. Finally, it is precisely through this kind of planning that we have been able to ascertain the true situation in the village better and to carry out the Party's policy concretely and fully. Therefore, it has been possible to avoid impetuosity and rashness on the one hand and conservatism and drifting on the other, and thus correctly to apply the Central Committee's policy of "active leadership and steady advance".

How were the "certain unhealthy phenomena" mentioned in the report of the Heilungkiang Provincial Committee actually dealt with? The report itself does not give a direct answer to this question. But the report of the Shuangcheng

County Committee of the Party, appended to the Provincial Committee's report, does. It says:

As a result of the comprehensive planning based on the combination of leadership by the Party branch and voluntary participation by the masses, the deviation as a result of which badly-off peasant households were barred from the co-operatives has been corrected, the practice of concentrating too many cadres in one place has been stopped, the squabbles over cadres and new members have disappeared, the links between the co-operatives and the mutual-aid teams have grown closer, the attempts of the rich peasants and the well-to-do middle peasants to organize rich peasants' co-operatives or low-grade mutual-aid teams have failed, and the plans of the Party branch have in the main been carried into effect. The membership of the two older co-operatives has gone up 40 per cent; skeleton organizations for six new co-operatives have been set up; and two mutual-aid teams have been given a check-up and strengthened. If things are done well, we estimate that next year [that is, in 1955] the whole village will go co-operative. At present, it is working energetically to fulfil this year's plan for agricultural co-operation, increase output and insure a good crop. The general opinion among the village cadres is: "It is fortunate that we did all this, or things would be in a mess. There would have been trouble not only this year but next year as well."

Let us all work in this way.

Comprehensive planning and more effective leadership—that is our policy.

NOTES

¹ Mutual-aid working groups and ploughing teams, based on individual farming, were formed during the Second Revolutionary Civil War period by peasants in the Red areas to facilitate production through a better organization of labour power. On the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, the members did an equal amount of work for each other, or if one could not give another as much help as he received, he made up the difference in cash. Apart from helping each other, the members of the groups gave preferential treatment to the families of Red Army soldiers and worked for bereaved old folk without any pay except for meals during the work. As these measures of mutual aid were of great help to production and were carried out on a reasonable basis, they won the warm support of the masses.

² On December 15, 1951 this decision was distributed in draft form by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to the local Party committees at various levels for trial implementation. After partial revision it was adopted by the Central Committee on February 15, 1953, as a formal resolution. The decision pointed out that, after the completion of the land reform in the rural areas of China, it was necessary actively to lead the peasants onto the road of mutual aid and co-operation, in accordance with the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit. It laid down three principal forms for the mutual-aid and co-operative movement, namely, the temporary mutual-aid team, the all-the-year-round mutual-aid team, and the agricultural producers' co-operative characterized by the pooling of land as shares.

³ This decision summed up the experience in agricultural mutual aid and co-operation in different parts of China, and especially the experience in the development of agricultural producers' co-operatives after 1951. It stipulated:

The fundamental task of the Party in its rural work is to educate the peasants by the skilful use of reasoning and measures which are easily understandable and acceptable to them, and to encourage them to organize themselves step by step and gradually carry out the socialist transformation of agriculture, so that the backward individual economy of small-scale production can be transformed into the advanced co-operative economy of large-scale production, thereby gradually resolving the contradiction manifested in the discrepancy of development between the two branches of the economy, *i.e.*, industry and agriculture, and enabling the peasants, step by step, to achieve complete

freedom from poverty and to live a life of common prosperity and abundance.

At the same time, it pointed out:

According to China's experience, the gradual association of the peasants in production proceeds along a specific road leading from the simple, temporary mutual-aid team with labour in common, and then the all-the-year-round mutual-aid team with labour in common, some division of labour and a certain amount of property in common, to the agricultural producers' co-operative in which land is pooled as shares and there is unified management and still more common property, and then to the fully socialist, higher-stage agricultural producers' co-operative with collective ownership by the peasants.

⁴ The semi-socialist co-operative was the lower-stage agricultural producers' co-operative. It was semi-socialist because, on the one hand, it made unified use of land and rational use of farm tools, carried on collective labour and practised distribution according to work and had a fair amount of common property, and thus had its socialist aspects; on the other hand, the members still retained their private ownership of land and other means of production and received dividends on their land shares and certain payments for the pooling of their farm tools and draught animals. This kind of agricultural producers' co-operative was a transitional form on the road to the fully socialist co-operative with collective ownership.

⁵ One *mou* equals one-sixth of an acre or one-fifteenth of a hectare.

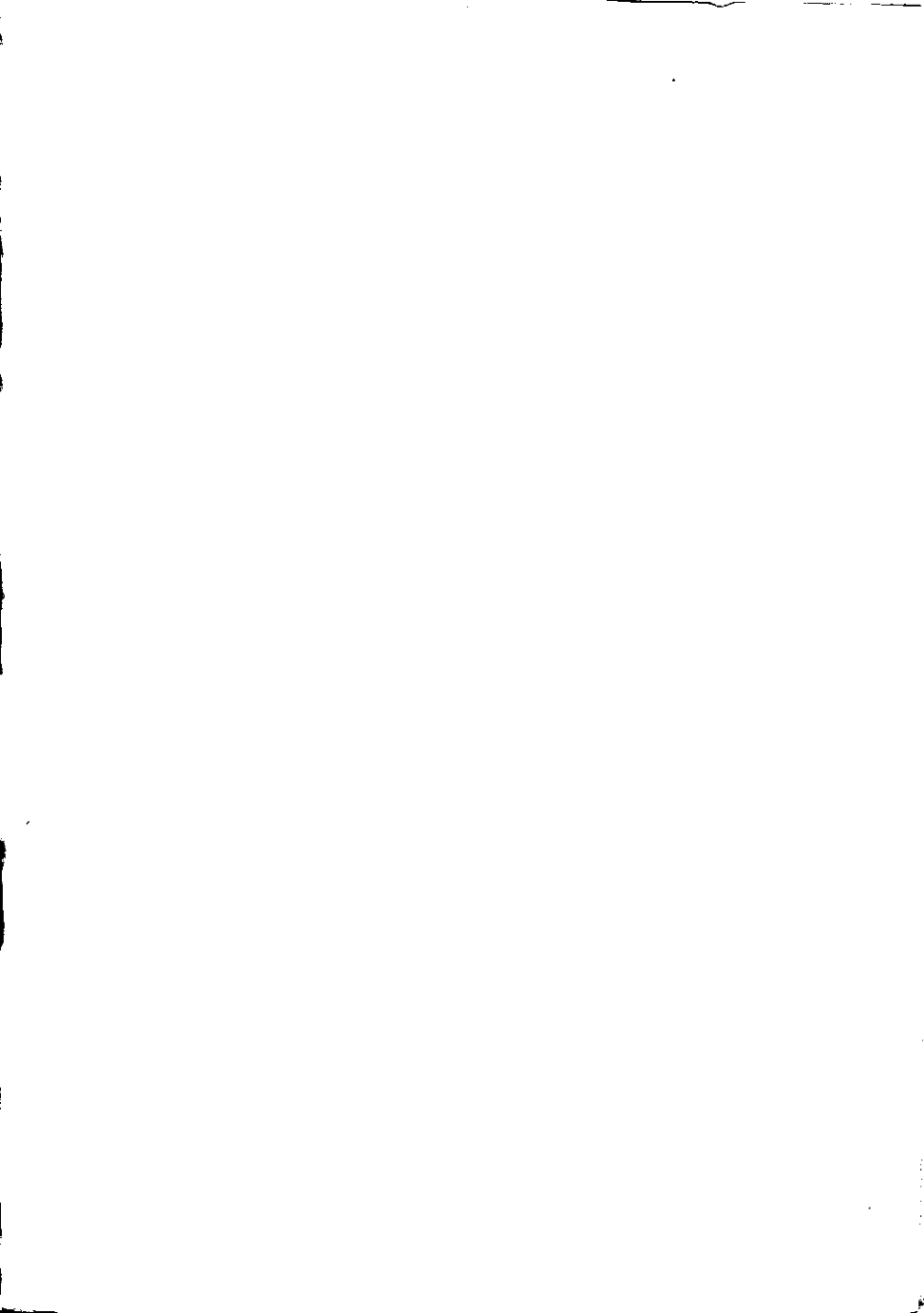
⁶ The old middle peasants are those who were middle peasants before the land reform. The new middle peasants are those who rose to the status of middle peasants after the land reform.

⁷ Class I agricultural producers' co-operatives were those which were comparatively well run; those run passably well were called Class II; and those run badly, Class III.

⁸ The agricultural producers' co-operative was the one formed by the three poor-peasant households of Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang in Nanwangchuang, Anping County, Hopei Province (this county was combined with Shenhsien County for a time after 1958). In 1958 the co-operative developed into the Nanwangchuang People's Commune with 140,000 *mou* of land. Since 1959, it has had a grain surplus instead of a deficit, and it has basically completed the construction of water conservancy works and a network of irrigation canals and the mechanization of its water supply.

⁹ See *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1951, p. 472.

¹⁰ This estimate was later realized ahead of time. Thanks to the thorough implementation of the correct policy which Comrade Mao Tse-tung put forward in this report and the more effective leadership given to the agricultural co-operative movement by the Party committees at all levels, there was a further rise in the socialist enthusiasm of the poor and lower middle peasant masses and the movement developed rapidly. By and large the transition to semi-socialist, lower-stage co-operation was completed in the second half of 1955, and that to fully socialist, higher-stage co-operation was basically accomplished in the year immediately following.



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