

A Guide for 500 Million Peasants Advancing Along the Socialist Road

— Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Publication of Comrade
Mao Tse-tung's "On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation"

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TEN years have elapsed since Comrade Mao Tse-tung, on July 31, 1955, made his report *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* at a meeting of secretaries of provincial, municipal and autonomous region committees of the Chinese Communist Party.

China has experienced earth-shaking changes in that decade. Our socialist revolution has won great and decisive victories on the economic, political and ideological fronts. Our socialist construction has advanced at unprecedented speed and achieved great and phenomenal successes in agriculture, industry, national defence, science and technology.

The most decisive of the factors contributing to these victories was that the whole Party, by holding aloft the banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking and particularly by following the Marxist-Leninist line propounded by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in his report for solving the agricultural question, speeded up the socialist transformation of agriculture and provided a timely solution to the problem of agricultural co-operation, a solution which was followed by the founding of the people's communes on the basis of co-operation.

The solution of the agricultural question in accordance with socialist principles is the key problem of China's socialist revolution and construction. Collectivization of agriculture has not only provided very favourable conditions for the vigorous development of agriculture, but has laid a really solid base for vigorous growth of the national economy as a whole.

China used to be an extremely poor and backward agricultural country. That is why the rapid organization of more than 500 million individual peasants into a socialist collective economy and their advance to a common prosperity along a broad socialist road in such a country is a great event of world significance.

Our country's practice in the past decade has mercilessly refuted the fallacies of the Right opportunists in the Party on the agricultural question. It has thoroughly shattered the vicious attacks of the Khrushchov revisionists on China's socialist transformation of agriculture.

I

Agricultural collectivization is a great and profound revolutionary movement and sharp struggles between the socialist and capitalist roads take place throughout its course. Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out: "To bring our more than 500 million peasants through socialist transformation is a project of earth-rocking, heaven-shaking dimensions which cannot possibly be achieved in an atmosphere of calm seas and gentle breezes."¹ That is the way things stands. It is impossible to finish off an old system and bring a new one to birth without severe class struggles. Such a struggle was reflected within the Party in the form of the Right opportunists' opposition to the movement for agricultural co-operation. Under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the whole Party waged serious struggles against them. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* draws a Marxist-Leninist conclusion about that struggle.

The movement for agricultural co-operation started in China immediately after completion of the land reform. The land reform ended the system of feudal ownership which had restricted the growth of the productive forces; it overthrew the landlord class, weakened the rich-peasant economy and helped restore and develop farm production. The economic position of the masses of poor peasants improved and many of them became middle peasants. After the land reform, however, individual peasant ownership was spread over the rural areas like a vast sea. Such ownership, however, had only a limited vitality and, in a short time, it changed from being a factor promoting growth of the productive forces into a serious obstacle to growth.

Though the economic condition of the peasants was improved or even enormously improved after they got

¹ *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1957, p.253.

land, because of our vast population, insufficient cultivated land and backward farming methods, many of them still had difficulties or were not well-off. Particularly grave was the fact that not long after land reform a new process of polarization began in the countryside. On the one hand, the spontaneous tendency towards capitalism grew: new rich peasants emerged and many well-to-do middle peasants strove to become rich peasants. On the other hand, many poor peasants, lacking sufficient means of production, still lived in poverty; some fell into debt, while others sold or rented the land distributed to them. If this polarization had gone unchecked, a grave situation would have arisen in which capitalism would have engulfed the countryside.

Under such circumstances, the question arose: Should the Party continue to lead the peasants forward and guide them to take the socialist road or call a halt, discard the peasants and let them follow the bourgeoisie and rich peasants? This extremely serious political issue confronted the whole Party at that time.

At this moment of crucial importance, Comrade Mao Tse-tung told the whole Party clearly that the masses had an immense enthusiasm for socialism and that it was necessary to lead the peasants forward firmly. He pointed out in his report *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* that the poor peasants and the lower strata of both the new and old middle peasants, who accounted for 60-70 per cent of the nation's rural population, were enthusiastic to take the socialist road and that this enthusiasm was even stronger among those who had a higher level of political consciousness. The new upsurge of the socialist mass movement in the countryside that took place in the summer of 1955 was a concentrated expression of this socialist enthusiasm of the masses of poor peasants and lower middle peasants.

However, the bourgeoisie and rich peasants were firmly opposed to the movement for agricultural co-operation. The well-off or relatively well-off peasants, who made up 20-30 per cent of the rural population, were vacillating about taking the socialist road and some were trying hard to push along the road to capitalism. Behind the well-off middle peasants, stood landlords and rich peasants giving them support. Standing on the side of the bourgeoisie, the rich peasants or the well-off middle peasants who had a spontaneous tendency towards capitalism, the Right opportunists in the Party did their best to find pretexts to oppose the agricultural co-operation movement led by the Party.

The Right opportunists were stunned by the emergence of several hundred thousand co-operatives in our countryside. They opposed the socialist revolutionary movement of the peasants at that time on the pretexts that the development of co-operatives had allegedly gone "beyond the real possibilities," "beyond the level of the political consciousness of the masses" and "beyond the level of the cadres' experience." Instead of giving warm support to the co-operative movement in

its vigorous development, they poured cold water on it and advanced the so-called policy of "resolute contraction." Comrade Mao Tse-tung sharply criticized these people. He said: "In a revolutionary period those who only know how to follow the routine paths cannot see this enthusiasm at all. They are blind. All is dark before them."² The attitude towards the peasants' co-operative movement—to let it develop or "chop" it off, to help it ahead vigorously or work for its "resolute contraction," to guide it with enthusiasm or to find fault with it—is, in the final analysis, a question of how to deal with the enthusiasm for socialism of the more than 500 million peasants, particularly the broad masses of poor and lower-middle peasants, as well as a question of whether or not we want to give active leadership to the peasants and guide them to take the socialist road.

1955 was a great year of an unprecedented upsurge in our socialist revolution. Why did the Right opportunists spare no effort to oppose agricultural co-operation at that time? This had its deep-going social roots. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "Instead of taking the standpoint of the working class and thinking on behalf of the whole country and the entire people, they always take the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, the rich peasants or the well-to-do middle peasants who have a spontaneous tendency towards capitalism, and think on behalf of the few" and their stand means "seeing only the comparatively small number of well-to-do peasants, and forgetting about the great majority—the poor and not well-to-do."³

Socialist transformation of agriculture was a life-and-death struggle for the bourgeoisie. By transforming the individual small-peasant economy into a socialist collective economy, we eradicated the main root of capitalism in the countryside and left the urban bourgeoisie isolated. In such circumstances, it was by no means strange that certain people in the Party subject to the influence of the bourgeoisie and rich peasants should come forward to oppose the co-operative movement. This was in full accord with the law of class struggle. In the period of the socialist revolution, these people still remained in the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution as regards their attitude towards the peasant question. This showed that they were not proletarian revolutionaries but bourgeois revolutionaries.

With the strategic view of a great proletarian revolutionary, Comrade Mao Tse-tung discerned the essence of the matter and foresaw its lines of development. At this great, crucial moment of change in history, he once again elaborated for the whole Party the programme of socialist revolution, waged a timely struggle against the Right opportunism in the Party, and called on the whole Party to go all out to arouse the masses and give active leadership to the movement for agricultural co-operation.

² *ibid.* p.44.

³ *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1962, pp.21, 17.

Theory once grasped by the masses is transformed into a tremendous material force. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's report *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* has given a tremendous impetus to the upsurge in the socialist transformation of the rural areas and enormously accelerated the progress of our agricultural co-operation. As originally envisaged by the Central Committee of the Party, we planned to complete agricultural co-operation in 18 years — from 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded to 1967. In fact, this task was accomplished ahead of schedule. Co-operation of a semi-socialist character (i.e., the setting up of elementary agricultural producers' co-operatives) was basically achieved around 1956, and co-operation of a socialist character (i.e., the setting up of advanced agricultural producers' co-operatives) was generally achieved in 1957. In 1958, on the basis of these co-operatives, the rural areas switched over to people's communes. That is to say, our agricultural collectivization movement, including the switch-over to people's communes, was completed in just nine years, half the time originally scheduled. The upsurge in the socialist transformation of agriculture has radically changed the situation in the countryside.

Characterising this change at the end of 1955 Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "The first half of 1955 was murky and obscured by dark clouds. But in the latter half, the atmosphere changed completely. Tens of millions of peasants swung into action. In response to the call of the Central Committee, they adopted co-operation. . . . It is as if a raging tidal wave has swept away all the demons and ghosts. Now we can look at every member of society and see exactly who is who. It is the same in the Party. By the end of this year the victory of socialism will be practically assured. Of course, many more battles still lie ahead. We must continue to fight hard."⁴

Life itself has corroborated Comrade Mao Tse-tung's analysis. In the past decade there have been ups and downs in the struggle around the agricultural question. The Right opportunists launched repeated attacks in that period. In 1959, the Right opportunists opposed the movement to set up people's communes alleging that the people's communes were premature and that things were in a mess. In 1962, when our national economy experienced certain temporary difficulties, some people actively advocated "the expansion of plots for private use and of free markets, an increase in the number of small enterprises with sole responsibility for their own profit or loss, the fixing of output quotas based on the household," "going it alone," "liberalization" and so on. Although the manifestations of Right opportunism might vary in form in different periods, their essence was the same.

As we have firmly implemented Comrade Mao Tse-tung's instructions and overcome one Right opportunist error after another, we have carried forward

⁴ *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1957, pp. 159-160.

the socialist revolution unceasingly in the countryside, thus bringing about a steady consolidation and expansion of socialist positions in the countryside. The past ten years' practice proves that Comrade Mao Tse-tung's great work *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* is a powerful ideological weapon for the Party in pursuing socialist objectives in the question of agriculture, and a guide for 500 million peasants advancing along the socialist road.

II

The peasant question is an extremely important one which must be solved in the course of the proletarian revolution. China is a big country in which the peasants make up more than 80 per cent of the population, the peasant question is therefore of paramount importance. Our Party has led the peasants in carrying out the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, and accumulated a particularly rich store of experience on the peasant question. After Comrade Mao Tse-tung's scientific summing up, this experience has greatly enriched and developed Marxism-Leninism.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory on the peasant question is exceptionally rich in content. The report *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation* concentratedly embodies Comrade Mao Tse-tung's new development of Marxist-Leninist theory on the question of the socialist transformation of agriculture. We believe that the following questions are the main ones.

1. On the Question of the Peasants' Place in Socialist Revolution and Construction

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has always attached the greatest importance to the peasant question. As early as the beginning of the democratic revolution led by our Party, he pointed out more than once that the peasant question was the basic question of the Chinese revolution and that the strength of the peasantry made up the main force of the Chinese revolution; he went on to note that the Chinese democratic revolution was in essence a peasant revolution and that the Chinese revolutionary war was essentially a peasant war. However, the Right opportunists within the Party turned a blind eye to the broad masses of the peasants and regarded the democratic revolution as mainly a matter of the bourgeoisie. In another way the "Left" opportunists neglected the special role of the peasants in the Chinese revolution, they stressed work in the cities as the centre of gravity and made the middle-of-the-road forces the main direction of attack, thus pushing the peasants into the arms of the bourgeoisie.

In the course of the Chinese democratic revolution, Comrade Mao Tse-tung thoroughly refuted these erroneous views and defined a Marxist-Leninist line for the Chinese revolution; i.e., that under the leadership of the proletariat, we should give full play to the revolutionary enthusiasm of the peasants, shift the centre of gravity of the Party's work to the countryside, give a

free hand to the development of peasant guerrilla warfare, build revolutionary base areas in the countryside, encircle the cities from the countryside, lead the revolution to victory step by step and finally seize state power throughout the country. By carrying out the correct line of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese Communist Party finally won the great victory of the people's revolution in China with its more than 600 million people. This is a great achievement unprecedented in the revolutionary movement of the world's proletariat.

In the period of socialism, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has continued to view the peasant question as an extremely important one. He said: "We have a farm population of over five hundred million, so the situation of our peasants has a very important bearing on the development of our economy and the consolidation of our state power."⁵ The scale of our socialist revolution and socialist construction and the speed of their development depend on the policy we adopt to solve the peasant question and the agricultural question.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung correctly solved the relationship between the socialist transformation of agriculture and the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce in the cities. He views the socialist transformation of agriculture as the key link in the whole chain of the socialist revolution because, with the socialist transformation of agriculture, the ties between the bourgeoisie and the peasants are cut, the source generating capitalism on a mass scale is eliminated, and urban capitalist influences are thus isolated. In our country where small-peasant economy held the upper hand, this thesis is particularly important.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung negated the view that co-operation should develop slowly and stressed that the advance of socialist transformation in agriculture should be quickened. In this way, we would not only be able to solve the question of agriculture more quickly but greatly promote the socialist transformation of urban individual handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce, thereby developing the socialist revolution more smoothly, more extensively and more thoroughly. Subsequent facts have fully proved the correctness of this policy. It was under the impact of the movement for agricultural co-operation that the upsurge in the transformation of individual handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce took place in 1956.

One of the most fundamental questions in socialist construction is how to handle the relationships between the workers and peasants and between industry and agriculture. Some people held that in building socialism it was sufficient to pay attention only to the development of industry. Comrade Mao Tse-tung refuted this harmful viewpoint. He said: "We must on no account look at industry and agriculture, socialist industrialization and the socialist transformation of agriculture, as two things which can be separated and

isolated from each other, nor must we on any account emphasize the one and underrate the other."⁶

Industry is closely interrelated with agriculture. In socialist construction, it is, of course, extremely important to develop industry, especially heavy industry. But that development must take agriculture as the foundation and the problem of food, clothing and other consumer goods must be solved first. Food grains and other foodstuffs come from agriculture; light industry which provides people with clothings and other consumer goods gets most of its raw materials from agriculture too. Moreover, the funds used in the building of heavy industry are mainly accumulated from agriculture and light industry; the labour power necessary for the development of industry has to be furnished by the countryside; and only by taking the countryside as its main market, can industry have broad prospects for development. Agriculture is the foundation of the national economy. Therefore, only by combining the industrialization of the country with the socialist transformation of agriculture, and the rapid development of industry with the rapid development of agriculture can there be a firm and sure guarantee for the development of our national economy as a whole.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has summed up the experience gained in our construction and put forward the general policy of taking agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor in developing our national economy. The nation's plans, he pointed out, should be arranged in the order of priority of agriculture, light industry and heavy industry. By implementing this policy, we will be able to bring about a rapid development of agriculture and a simultaneous development of both agriculture and industry, and achieve a high-speed development of industry on a strong foundation of agriculture, so as to bring about a continuous and high-speed development of our national economy as a whole. Our tremendous achievements in socialist construction have been gained precisely under the guidance of this general policy. This policy, mapped out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, is a profound reflection of the objective laws of the development of a socialist economy and a new and important contribution to Marxism-Leninism in the question of socialist construction.

2. On Applying the Principle of Integrating the Theory of Development of the Revolution by Stages With the Theory of Uninterrupted Revolution in Guiding the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has at all times guided the revolutionary movements in China, including the peasant movement, in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist principle of integrating the theory of the development of the revolution by stages with the theory of uninterrupted revolution. He has pointed out that the aim of the peasant movement led by our Party is not only to

⁵ *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1964, p.22.

⁶ *On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation*, Eng. ed., F.L.P., Peking, 1962, p.20.

fulfil the task of the democratic revolution but to guide the peasants onto the broad road of socialism and communism. These two tasks are different in nature and should be tackled separately in two different revolutionary stages. And yet we must not build a "Great Wall" between these two revolutionary stages but strive to link them together. We must endeavour, during the stage of the democratic revolution, to prepare conditions for carrying out the socialist revolution, and without interruption launch the struggles of the socialist revolution immediately after fulfilment of the task of the democratic revolution.

In contravention of the Marxist-Leninist principle of integrating the theory of the development of the revolution by stages with the theory of uninterrupted revolution, the Right opportunists within the Party viewed the two revolutionary stages as being diametrically opposed to each other. After the land reform, they advocated the "four great freedoms": hiring labour, giving private loans, trading, and buying, selling and renting out land in the rural areas in order to guarantee the private ownership of property and consolidate the so-called "new democratic order." These comrades were purely bourgeois revolutionaries. They hoped that the Chinese revolution would come to a halt at the democratic stage.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung thoroughly refuted these views. As early as the period of democratic revolution, he pointed out that the poor peasants must be made predominant politically in the land reform, that the rich peasants must be isolated politically and the rich-peasant economy weakened simultaneously with the wiping out of the feudal-landlord economy; and that active steps must be taken to get the peasants organized into mutual-aid teams (which contain the rudiments of socialism) and co-operatives after the realization of "land to the tillers." All this provided favourable conditions for the subsequent development of the movement for agricultural co-operation.

Later, when the land reform was in the main completed throughout the country, Comrade Mao Tse-tung again warned that the revolution should not be brought to a halt and that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses should not be allowed to cool down. He maintained that the revolutionary consciousness of the peasants must be enhanced continuously and that the movement for agricultural co-operation must follow close on land reform so that the peasants could be guided to continue their advance without interruption and transform their individual economies into collective economies.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung worked out for China's agricultural collectivization all the various forms suitable for a gradual transition to socialism. This is another brilliant example of creatively applying the principle of integrating the theory of the development of the revolution by stages with the theory of uninterrupted revolution.

The movement for agricultural co-operation in China followed the method of setting up typical ex-

amples of organization for the rest to follow and of popularizing them step by step. It was carried out in three stages that differed from one another but were interconnected. The first stage consisted in mobilizing the peasants to form agricultural producers' mutual-aid teams on the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit. These teams contained only the rudiments of socialism. In the second stage, the peasants were called on to set up semi-socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives on the basis of the mutual-aid teams. In the third stage, the peasants were called on to take a further step forward by combining their forces to set up larger, fully socialist agricultural producers' co-operatives. Later, when there was a greater growth of agricultural production, the people's communes were set up in answer to the demands of the broad masses of the peasants. This step-by-step transformation of the small-peasant economy was conducive to the gradual enhancement of the socialist consciousness of the peasants and the realization of agricultural collectivization at a relatively early date. It also avoided the adverse effects on production which might have resulted from cataclysmic changes in the relations of production and thus guaranteed a steady rise in agricultural production.

Can it be said that with the establishment of the socialist economic system in the countryside the socialist transformation of agriculture has been completed? Some persons think so. In their eyes, the socialist revolution in ownership of the means of production is the last revolution in human history, or, at least, the last revolution that involves class struggles. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has repudiated this view. He holds that, while the turning of the individual peasants into collective peasants constitutes a great change in the mode of production and their way of life, the socialist transformation of agriculture is far from being finally completed.

Facts have shown that as long as there are remnants of private economy in the countryside the peasants will retain some of the characteristics of the small producer, and it will hardly be possible to avoid polarization among the peasantry. Moreover, in the long run, the mere attainment of the present system of collective ownership is not our ultimate goal. In the future, when conditions mature, the system of collective ownership which is relatively small-scale and represents a relatively low degree of public ownership must still be turned gradually into a system of collective ownership that operates on a larger scale and represents a higher degree of public ownership, so that the transition from socialism to communism and the elimination of the essential differences between workers and peasants and between town and countryside can finally be achieved. It is quite obvious that in order to fulfil such an historic task it is necessary to continue to push the socialist revolution steadily forward in the countryside in line with the principle of integrating the theory of the development of the revolution by stages with the theory of uninterrupted revolution.

(To be continued.)