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Dec. 1952

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE LAND POLICY OF THE

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

— 1921-1950 —

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Introduction

The significance of the land problem in China is clearly seen by the fact that approximately 80 per cent of the population of China resides in the rural areas¹ and an estimated 70 per cent or more of the Chinese national income derives directly or indirectly from agriculture.²

The vital role of the peasants and the agrarian issue in China is no discovery of the Chinese Communists, but they are the only group in recent decades that realized the tremendous potentialities of the peasantry in the struggle for political power and tackled the agrarian problems at the grass roots. Mao Tse-tung, leader of the Chinese Communist Party and head of the Peking regime, summarized the situation as early as the thirties in a nutshell: "Whoever wins the support of the peasants will win China; whoever solves the land question will win the peasants."³ And this statement may be applied, in varying degrees, to most of the countries in Asia, Middle East and South America, which are predominantly agricultural. In the case of China, there is little exaggeration to say that land policy constitutes the greatest single factor responsible for the Chinese Communist

¹ John Lessing Buck, Land Utilization in China, 365.

² Ta-chung Liu, China's National Income, 1931-1936, 13; and Chia-lung Ke, "The Story Behind 1950's Bumper Crops," People's China, 3.2, Jan. 1951, 9.

³ Edgar Snow, "Mao Tse-tung as I Know Him," The Reporter, Jan. 3, 1950, 14. This statement was presumably made by Mao in the summer of 1936 when Snow interviewed him at Yanan.

Party's phenomenal rise to power. The importance and effectiveness of the Communist land program is even tacitly admitted by the Kuomintang when one of its basic policy statements made public on October 31, 1952 at Taiwan states that "peasants are guaranteed to retain their land distributed by the Communists when the mainland is recaptured."

Land reform is utilized by the Chinese Communists not only as an economic measure aiming to increase agricultural production, develop rural economy, and facilitate industrialization. It is also employed as a political weapon to attain and retain power and a social tool to transform the traditional Chinese villages into the Marxist pattern of rural society and communal life—a highly organized rural community with the peasants engaging in cooperative and then collective farming. ~~with the peasants~~ The political significance of the land program is also reflected in the fact that almost all the countries where Communist movement has succeeded or is very active are predominantly agricultural. The economic and social effects of the land reform in China, although it is too early to evaluate them thoroughly, are already profound and far reaching. To view and analyze the current agrarian programs¹ in Communist China in their proper context and perspective, it is not only desirable but necessary to study the contents, effects and vicissitudes of the Chinese Communist theories and platforms regarding land policy prevailing in the various periods since the establishment of the Party on July 1, 1921. However, due to the meagerness of comprehensive data and firsthand field reports, some of the observations made in this paper are tentative. It is hoped that this preliminary study will be followed by more mature and thorough work on this subject.

¹ Land redistribution is completed on the Chinese mainland in early 1953, except in a few areas where the minority races dwell. For information on the development in current land reform in Communist China, see author's "Land Reform Methods in Communist China," Papers on China, Committee on International and Regional Studies, Harvard Univ., vol. 5, April 1951, 107-174, and "Current Agrarian Reform Policies in Communist China," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 277, September 1951, 113-123.

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It is almost invariably arbitrary to divide history into stages, especially when socio-economic changes are involved. Yet to illustrate the major shifts in the Chinese Communist Party's agrarian theory and program, as well as to clarify discussions, the development of the Chinese Communist land policy between 1921 and 1950, when the prevailing Agrarian Reform Law was promulgated, may be divided into four periods: the pre-Soviet period, 1921-1927; the Soviet period, 1927-1937; the Sino-Japanese war period, 1937-1945; and the post-war transitional period, 1945-1950. Except in the case of the first period when the CCP had no territory under its control to carry out its agrarian theory and programs, each period will be discussed from the viewpoint of the following five topical headings: (1) Party theory; (2) legislation and programs; (3) organization and administration; (4) results and effects; and (5) general comments.

A. The pre-Soviet period, 1921-1927

Until Mao Tse-tung put his theory of agrarian revolution into practice by setting up a Soviet at Chia-lin, Hunan, in November, 1927, the role of peasantry in the Chinese revolution was considered subsidiary by the hierarchy of the CCP. From July 1, 1921, when the CCP was formally organized in Shanghai to August 7, 1927, when the Central Political Bureau was reorganized by an Emergency Conference held at Kiukiang, the Party was under the domination and patriarchal head of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, who was an academician without much contact with the masses.

Thus Ch'en Tu-hsiu maintained that:

The Communist social revolution easily contradicts the interests of the peasants and even the landless tenants....Only when the rural proletariat start organizing itself, then will a social revolution be possible in the Chinese rural areas.¹

This theme was echoed by P'eng Shu-chih, then member of the Central Political Bureau and a right-hand man of Ch'en, who expostulated with disdain in September, 1926: "Don't tell me that the Chinese revolution is a peasant revolution!"² Although one finds a few radical slogans in some of the resolutions between the First National Congress of the CCP in July, 1921, and the Fifth National Congress in May, 1927, such as the "abolition of private property"³ and "nationalisation of land as a basic principle of the Party's agrarian program,"⁴ there was little concrete and practical plans for land reform beyond the calling for "restriction of rent and taxation on land." The Resolution of the First National Congress in July, 1921, mentioned nothing about land policy. The First Manifesto on the Current Situation issued by the CCP on June 10, 1922, merely called for restricted tax on land. The Resolution of the Second National Congress in July, 1922, contained only one brief section calling for the "passing of legislation limiting land rent." In the Resolution of the Third National Congress passed in June, 1922, there was nothing about

¹ Quoted by Ch'u Ch'iu-pai, "On peasantry," Controversial problems in the Chinese revolution, 1927, 138-139.

² Yakhontoff, V., The Chinese Soviets, 124-125.

³ Manifesto of the Second National Congress, July, 1922. The English versions of this Manifesto, as well as the Resolutions and Manifestos of later Congresses of the CCP can be found in A Documentary History of Chinese Communism, written by Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank, and published by the Harvard Univ. Press in October, 1952.

⁴ Resolution of the Fifth National Congress, May, 1927.

an agrarian program. In the Fourth Manifesto on the current situation proclaimed in January, 1925, it was only suggested vaguely that "a top limit should be placed on all forms of taxation...and an equilibrium should be established between the price of farm products and the price of those manufactured goods which are daily necessities." The Enlarged Session of the Central Committee of the CCP in July, 1926, resolved that "class struggle in the rural areas should not be encouraged in order to prevent a premature cleavage (with the bourgeoisie)." Thus the Circular Letter issued by the August 7 (1927) Emergency Conference, one of the key documents in the annals of the CCP, admitted:

Before the Fifth National Congress, the Party's leading organ paid only the least possible attention to the agrarian problem. At the Special Conference at Hankow in December, 1926, which was an important conference convened to decide the tasks of the Party after the victory of the Northern Expedition (1926-1927), not a single word was mentioned on the stand to be adopted by the Party vis-a-vis the agrarian problem...At the Fifth National Congress of the Party (May, 1927), a resolution on the peasant question was passed¹ but the Party leaders, like Ch'en Tu-hsiu and T'ian P'ing-shan, stated that "the task of the moment was to extend but not to deepen the revolution, and that consequently land confiscation must be postponed until some future date."

Even after Chiang Kai-shek staged his coup d'etat on April 12, 1927, when hundreds of workers and leftists were massacred in Shanghai and Nanking, the CCP hierarchy continued its moderate agrarian platform in order to subordinate the peasant movement to the exigencies of retaining the coalition with left-Kuomintang elements in the Wuhan Government. We have the word of no less an authority than Mao Tse-tung that the Fifth

¹ The Resolution of the Fifth National Congress called for "equal distribution of land with nationalization of land as the goal." Its agrarian program included the confiscation of communal land, progressive land tax, abolition of political privileges of the landed gentry.

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National Congress "failed to pass an adequate land program."¹ In an attempt to woo the landowning army officers, the CCP maintained that all land belonging to officers of the army (under the Wuhan Government) should not be subject to confiscation—which, in effect, invalidated the confiscation program as the landlords invariably claimed some family relationship with army officers. Although a policy of confiscating large estates was adopted by the Fifth National Congress, the term "large estate" was defined as one exceeding 500 mou and very few landlords belonged to this category. The conciliatory attitude of the Central Committee before its reorganization in August, 1927, can also be seen from a circular directive of the Propaganda Bureau of the Central Committee on June 1, 1927, which declared that "the Party's peasant policy is to firmly check excesses in attacking the small landlords, revolutionary militarists, and petty bourgeoisie." Another circular dated June 14 of the same year stated that "the failure to check the unorganized actions on the part of the peasants to solve the land problem by themselves has led to many excesses. Such a condition must be rectified." As a matter of fact, when T'an P'ing-shan, one of the three CCP members serving as ministers in the Wuhan Government, resigned in July, 1927, after four months in office, he said that he "deeply regretted his inability to set the peasant movement right from excessive demands and illegal deeds."

The August 7 (1927) Emergency Conference elected Ch'u Ch'iu-pai as Secretary General of the Party to replace Ch'en Tu-hsiu, whose policy was condemned as "opportunist." The political pendulum swung

¹Edgar Snow, Red Star over China, Modern Library, 162.

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sharply to the left. The Conference resolved that "agrarian revolution is the crux of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China" and adopted the following program regarding the agrarian policy: abolition of rental payment to the landlord; redistribution of land; confiscation of the holdings of big and middle bureaucrats; cancellation of usurious debts of the poor peasants; prohibition of exploitative contracts; drastic reduction in taxation; and the shifting of the burden of taxes to the rich. But the new Party leadership under Ch'u Ch'iu-pai and Li Li-san, who had had no experience in the peasant movement, had no patience with mobile peasant partisan warfare. When Mao Tse-tung, despatched by the reorganized Political Bureau in the autumn of 1927 to organize the Autumn Harvest Insurrection, advocated the formation of an army of workers and peasants and the establishment of Soviets, his proposals were turned down by the Central Committee. Mao was reprimanded by the Central Committee for not carrying out a terror policy "to crush the spirit of resistance of the reactionaries." In a directive issued by the Central Committee in November, 1927, he was dismissed from his post as an alternate member of the Political Bureau as well as from his position as Commissar of the Front Committee. However, the August 7 Conference, by resolving to stress the role of the agrarian revolution and by sending Mao Tse-tung to organize the peasant uprising in the autumn of 1927, played an important part in bringing about the next stage of development in the CCP's land policy--the Soviet period.

B. The Soviet period, 1927-1937

This period began formally with Mao Tse-tung's setting up of

a Soviet at Ch'a-lin, Hunan, in November, 1927. Ever since he had become the secretary of the Executive Committee of Hunan Province of the CCP on October 10, 1922, Mao had engaged in organizing peasants in his native province of Hunan and had written a number of articles expounding his views on the significance of agrarian revolution in the Chinese Communist movement.¹ The establishment of Soviets in Hunan and Kiangsi, and the formation of the Soviet Republic in November, 1931, gave Mao and his followers an opportunity to experiment with his theories and programs. To keep the chronology straight, the Central Soviet in Kiangsi was terminated when the main Communist forces evacuated their bases in Kiangsi, Hunan and Fukien and started their "Long March" in October, 1934. But a land policy similar to that which had operated in the Kiangsi Soviets was implemented when the Communist forces settled down in Northern Shensi in October, 1935. This policy was discontinued shortly before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War on July 7, 1937.

1. Party theory on the land question.

During the early part of this period, roughly 1927-1930, there were two Party lines regarding theory on the land question, one of Mao Tse-tung and another of the Party hierarchy. In order to make a comparison, the salient aspects of Mao's basic principles during this period are summarized below:

¹ In the Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan published in February, 1927, one of the earliest works of Mao available, the membership of Peasants' Associations in Hunan was reported to be two million.

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- (1) The peasant fulfills the major task in the national democratic bourgeois revolution and constitutes the crux of the revolutionary movement.
 - (2) The three major classes among the peasantry are the rich, middle, and poor peasants. The last class, which includes the farm laborers, is the core of the agrarian revolution under the leadership of the proletariat. The middle peasants should be rallied around the poor peasants, the rich peasants should be neutralized and the landlord class annihilated. The Peasants' Association will serve as the chief instrument in carrying out the above policy.
 - (3) Soviets should be set up as a political regime independent of the Kuomintang and an army of workers and peasants should be organized to insure the implementation of land redistribution. The Red Army must be thoroughly indoctrinated and disciplined and should engage in mobile, guerrilla warfare without costly attacks on enemy strongholds such as big cities.
 - (4) No mercy should be shown to the landlords and rich peasants in dividing up their land, but wanton killing and burning must be prohibited.¹

Many of Mao's basic premises, especially the tactical aspects, did not meet with the sanction of the Party hierarchy under Ch'u Ch'iu-pai, the Secretary-General of the Party from August, 1927, to September, 1928. The Central Committee at that time maintained that (1) the Party's work among the peasants was only subsidiary to its urban program,² (2) land was to be nationalized and private property

¹ Sources: Mao's Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan (February, 1927); Report of Front Committee to the Central Committee (November, 1928); Report to the Second All-China Soviet Congress (January, 1934).

² Mao also fully subscribed to the theory that "the consolidation of the leadership of the working class and the CCP in the peasant movement is prerequisite to the success of the agrarian revolution" as reaffirmed in the Political Resolution of the Sixth Congress. But in practical consideration, he assigned much more weight to the peasants' role in the revolutionary movement. Thus in his Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan, written in February, 1927, Mao stated that "to give credits where they are due, if we allot ten points

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confiscated, and (3) a terrorist policy should be pursued to "crush the spirit of the reactionaries and to create a greater proletariat." As a result, Mao Tse-tung was accused of being a "reformist" for his "moderate" agrarian tactics and dismissed from the Central Political Bureau in November, 1927.¹

Mao seemed to have received de facto, if not explicit, vindication a year later at the Sixth National Congress of the CCP held in Moscow in September, 1928, and convened to "re-evaluate the revolutionary situation and legislate basic policies." In the Political Resolution of that Congress, agrarian revolution and the overthrow of imperialism were proclaimed to be "the two major tasks of the CCP." In the Resolution on the peasant movement, many key points such as the winning over of the middle peasants, expansion of Soviet areas, emphasis on guerrilla warfare as "a major form of struggle," organization of Peasants' Associations and promotion of the woman and youth movements in the rural areas, coincided with Mao's programs in the Kiangsi Soviet. The Resolution on the land question passed by the Congress also stated that "agrarian revolution is a major content of the Chinese revolution." Ch'u Ch'iu-pai was criticized for his "blind-actionism"² and was replaced

to the accomplishment of the democratic revolution, then the achievements of the urban dwellers and the military units rate only three points, while the remaining seven points should go to the peasantry in their agrarian revolution."

¹ Chou, Mou-chai, Historical development of New China, 1939, 169.

² "Blind-actionism" is the Chinese term for adventurism or putschism. Ch'u, however, blamed the lower echelon of the Party for "misinterpretation of the directives." See Li K'o-chang, "A record of an interview with Ch'u Ch'iu-pai," Kuo-wen Weekly, 12.26, July 8, 1935,

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by Hsiang Chung-fa as the Secretary-General of the Party. Mao himself, when looking back at the Congress in 1936, commented:

The resolutions of the Sixth National Congress...concluded with the approval of the emphasis on the agrarian movement...With the new line adopted at that Congress, the differences between the leaders of the Party and the leaders of the Soviet movement in the agrarian districts disappeared. Party harmony was re-established.¹

However, this "Party harmony" was short-lived. Another intra-Party struggle flared up between Mao and Li Li-san, who was the dominant figure of the Party hierarchy during and after the Sixth National Congress. The gist of the "Li-san line" was the assertion that "a new revolutionary rising tide" had arrived and "the most serious obstacle ...is the guerrilla concept of the past, which (advocates) the attacking, instead of occupying, of cities and lacks the resolution to establish local Soviets in the cities."² Thus rebutting one of the basic tactics of Mao, Li Li-san sent out directives ordering that peasant armies in the Soviet areas should carry out all-out attacks on key cities in Hunan and Hupai. This attempt ended in failures as the attacks on Changsha, capital of Hunan province, turned out to be costly and unsuccessful. Regarding an agrarian program, the Conference of Delegates of Soviet Areas held in May, 1930, in Shanghai under the guidance of

1-7. This personal interview was made in a prison cell after Ch'u's capture by the Kuomintang forces on February 23, 1935. Refusing to reveal information under severe prosecution, Ch'u was shot on June 18, 1935.

¹ Edgar Snow, 171.

² Li Li-san, New revolutionary rising tide and preliminary success in one or more provinces, report to the Central Political Bureau on June 11, 1930.

Li advocated "collectivization of large land holdings" in its resolution. The Third Plenum of the CC, CCP, held in September, 1930, attempted a compromise stand. A report made by Chou En-lai under the pseudonym of Shao Shan criticized Li on one hand, and on the other reiterated that "the nationalization of land is the most thorough form of the bourgeois democratic revolution and one of the requisites for the revolutionary transformation (to Socialism)." When the impracticability of the Li-san line became evident, Li resigned from the Central Political Bureau in November, 1930, and soon went to Moscow "to study." Li's stand was officially repudiated at the Fourth Plenum of the CC, CCP held in January, 1931, in Shanghai,¹ which resolved:

As a result of [Li] Li-san's policy, the rich peasant elements have been able to infiltrate into the directing organs and have seized the fruits of agrarian revolution for their own benefit. The collective farm and all other premature socialistic measures proposed by Li Li-san inevitably would have further consolidated the interests of the rich peasants. The order prohibiting free business transactions and the buying or selling of land made the Soviet economic conditions even more difficult. These errors were detrimental to the alliance between us and the middle peasants.

While the radical policy of Li Li-san was unrealistic at that time, the charge that Li was responsible for the "infiltration of rich peasants into the directing organs" sounds as if the Central Committee was blaming the "fallen hero" for its own failure.

The end of the Li Li-san era also marked the end of any

¹ The Fourth Plenum re-elected Hsiang Chung-fa as the Secretary-General of the Party, but replaced Li Li-san, Ch'u Ch'iu-pai, Li Wei-san (Lo Man), and Ho Chang with Ch'en Shao-yu (Wang Ming), Chang Wen-t'ien (Lo Fu), and Shen Tse-min as members of the Central Political Bureau. It also resolved to hold an All-China Soviet Congress in Kiangsi in 1931.

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serious challenge to Mao's leadership, either as a Party theoretician or political director. The leadership of Mao was further consolidated by the following events: the moving of the Central Committee of the Party to Juichin, Kiangsi, in the autumn of 1932;¹ the election of Mao as Chairman of the Chinese Soviet Republic on November 7, 1932;² and his election to the formal Party directorship as the Chairman of the Central Committee and its Political Bureau at the all-important Tsung-i (Kweichow province) Conference during the "Long March" in January, 1935.

2. Legislation and programs.

The basic law on agrarian policy during the Soviet period⁴ was the Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic passed on December 1, 1931, at the First All-China Soviet Congress at Jui-chin, Kiangsi.⁵

¹ A number of Party leaders in the CC such as Ch'en Shao-yu, who became acting Secretary General of the Party when Hsiang Chung-fa was captured and executed by the KMT in June, 1931, Chang Wen-t'ien, and Chou En-lai still operated in Shanghai. They went to the Kiangsi Soviet in the autumn of 1932. Ch'in Pang-hsien succeeded Ch'en Shao-yu as Secretary-General and the latter went to Moscow as head of a delegation.

² Chang Kuo-t'ao and Hsiang Ying were elected Vice-Chairmen of the Chinese Soviet Republic, and Chu T'ie as the C-in-C.

³ Hsu T'ei-hsin, "Historical development in the CCP's land policy," Land problem and land reform of China, 1948, 16.

⁴ There were, during the early thirties, more than a dozen Soviets scattered throughout China. Little detailed information were available regarding these Soviets except the Central Soviet under the direct command of Mao Tse-tung with its bases in southern Kiangsi, western Fukien, northern Kwangtung and border of Kiangsi and Hunan. It was comparatively stable from 1928-1934 and covered an area of 50 hsien with about 15 million population. Yakhontoff, 146.

⁵ An imperfect English translation of the Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic appears in the Appendix of Yakhontoff's The Chinese Soviets. It contains 8 articles. There also is the Draft Land Law circulated by the Central Committee for comment in February, 1931. It contains 14 articles, the first 8 articles are in the main same as those of the Land Law passed on December 1, 1931.

Before that, however, there were three other pieces of legislation on land policy which are available at present. An analysis of these reveals how the Chinese Communists adjusted their theory to reality. The earliest land law known was the one drawn up by the Hunan-Kiangsi Border Soviet in December 1928. It stipulated, among other points, that (1) all land was to be confiscated and under the ownership of the Soviet government, and (2) purchase and sale of land were to be prohibited after the land was redistributed among the poor peasants.¹ The next legislation on land was the Land Law of Hsankuohsien [county in Kiangsi] dated April 1929. It also prohibited the purchase and sale of land and assigned the ownership of land to the Soviet government, but stipulated that only the land of the landlords and public land were to be confiscated for redistribution.² The third document available and preliminary to the promulgation of the Land Law of the Soviet is the Provisional Land Law passed by the Conference of Delegates of Soviet Areas convened under the leadership of Li Li-san in May 1930.³ The salient aspects of its eight articles were: (1) all lands of the landlords were to be confis-

¹ Full text in Chinese available in Liu Kung's Reference materials for the study of the Agrarian Reform Law (of June 28, 1950), 1950, Shanghai, 66-67. It has nine articles.

² Full text in Chinese also appears in Liu Kung, 67-69. It contains eight articles.

³ A full text, in Chinese, re-translated from a Japanese source, appears in the appendix of The CCP and the agrarian revolution, n.d. (1948?), 45-48. Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, in his article on "The land policy of the Red Areas in China," Hsin Chung-hua (New China), 2.10, May 25, 1934, 13, states that the Provisional Land Law was passed on September 20, 1930 after a Land Program was announced in May, 1930.

cated without compensation to be redistributed by the Soviet government; (2) the purchase, sale, rent, and mortgage of land were to be prohibited; (3) all lands belonging to temples, shrines, churches as well as public land, were all to be confiscated without compensation; and (4) the rented-out land of the rich peasants was to be confiscated but the portion cultivated by themselves was to be exempted from confiscation.¹ The similarities and differences between these three laws on land policy and the operative version of the Land Law enacted by the First All-China Soviet Congress in 1931 can be seen in the following excerpts from the agrarian program during the Soviet period:

a. The confiscation of land and other properties

"All the lands of the feudal landlords, warlords, gentry, temples, and other big private landowners, shall be subject to confiscation without compensation, irrespective of whether they (the owners) themselves work their lands or rent them out to tenants....It is a peculiar feature of the Chinese rich peasant that he is at one and the same time a landowner and a usurer; therefore his land shall also be confiscated. Land of the middle peasants is not to be infringed upon ...The local Soviet government, with the peasants' willingness and without hurting their religious feelings, may take steps to dispose of the land of the religious organizations and temples...The liquid and fixed assets such as houses, warehouses, draught animals, and farm implements of all the feudal landlords, warlords, and gentry and the

¹ This last point (4) may be the basis for the Central Committee's allegation that the Li-san policy resulted in the infiltration of rich peasants into the "directing organs" of the Soviet.

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surplus draught animals and farm implements of the rich peasants, shall be confiscated." (Articles 1, 3, 6, and 8 of the Land Law of the Soviet Republic.)

b. Redistribution of land and other properties

"The Soviets will distribute the confiscated land among the poor and middle peasants. The former owners of confiscated land shall not be entitled to receive any land allotment. Farm laborers, coolies, and toiling laborers shall enjoy equal rights to land allotments, irrespective of sex...Each Red Army man shall be allotted land...Rich peasants, after their lands are confiscated, may be allotted land of inferior quality, on the condition that they work by their own labor... The local Soviet governments shall on no account carry out this measure (of land redistribution) by force or by mere orders issued by higher authorities, but must explain this procedure to the peasants from every point of view...The local Soviets, in conformity with the local conditions in each village, shall choose the method (of land redistribution) most advantageous to the poor and middle peasants—either according to the amount of labor power in a household or according to the number of family members. In dividing up the land, not only the area of the land assigned but also the quality of its soil, especially its productivity, must be taken into consideration...Confiscated houses shall be assigned to poor and middle peasants or village organizations; confiscated draft animals and farm implements may be either distributed to groups of poor and middle peasants, or to households, or, upon the recommendation of the peasants, managed by the cooperatives." (Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 of the Land Law.)

c. Debts, contracts, and interests

"All rent contracts and usurious loans signed by the peasants shall be declared null and void; peasants are prohibited from returning land or paying debts to the landlords or gentry....After land redistribution, new loans are permissible and are to be repaid, but the annual interest is limited to one per cent."¹

d. Ownership of land after redistribution

"Renting, purchase, and sale of land after redistribution are to be allowed, but the recipient must not be a member of the landlord or gentry family. Land after redistribution shall be inheritable by one's descendants. No land is to be added or subtracted on account of births or deaths."²

e. Agricultural taxation

According to a report written by a non-Communist writer in the spring of 1935³ the major points regarding the agricultural tax in the Kiangsi Soviet were described as follows: (1) a unified land tax replaced the numerous taxes and surtaxes of the Kuomintang rule; (2) the tax, progressive in scale, was levied on principal crops, but on each harvest; (3) the tax rates for poor and middle peasants began at three per cent for a per capita income in excess of three piculs of rice

¹ Article 9 of the Draft Land Law and "Resolution of the joint conference of county and district chairmen of Kiangsi Soviet," quoted by Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, 22.

² "Resolution on land confiscation and redistribution in Kiangsi Soviet," quoted by Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, 21.

³ Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, "The land tax in the Chinese Red Areas," Kuo-wen Weekly, 12.16, April 29, 1935, 1-5.

and stopped at 18 per cent when per capita income reached 15 piculs or more. The tax rates for rich peasants began at four per cent when per capita income reached three piculs and stopped at 22 per cent when per capita income reached 15 piculs or more; and (4) taxation was suspended for one to three years for famine, agricultural improvements, reclaimed land, and the families of Red Army soldiers.

f. Status of rural classes

In the two documents "How to analyse class status in the countryside" and "Decisions concerning some problems arising from agrarian reform" issued by the Kiangsi Soviet in 1933,¹ the definitions for various class stratifications were given as follows:

(1) A landlord is a person who owns land, but does not engage in labor or only engages in supplementary labor, and depends on exploitation for his means of livelihood chiefly in the form of land rent, money lending, hiring of labor or the simultaneous carrying on of industrial and/or commercial enterprises. (2) A rich peasant generally owns land...and owns better means of production and some floating capital and takes part in labor himself, but constantly depends on exploitation for a part, the major part, of his means of livelihood. (3) A middle peasant is one who generally owns a portion of the land which he cultivates, has a certain number of farm implements, and depends wholly or mainly upon his own labor for his living. If one's income from exploitation does not exceed 15 per cent of the total annual income of the family, he will be considered as a well-to-do middle peasant. (4) A poor peasant owns inadequate farm implements and a part of the land he cultivates or has no land at all. In general, he has to rent land for cultivation and is exploited by others in the form of land rent, loan interest, and farm labor in a limited degree. (5) A farm laborer generally has neither land nor farm implements and depends wholly or mainly upon the sale of his labor for his living.

g. Other agrarian programs

"Local Soviet governments, if circumstances permit, should promote the following enterprises: (1) reclaim uncultivated land;

¹ These two documents were re-issued with alterations and additions in early 1948 and in August 1950.

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(2) encourage immigrants (to settle in Soviet areas); (3) improve old, and set up new, irrigation facilities; (4) develop reforestation; (5) build new roads; and (6) establish (rural) industries to develop the rural economy. All conserved areas, hills, rivers, lakes, swamps, forests, pastures, and fields are to be managed by the Soviet for the benefit of the poor and middle peasants."¹

Discussion of the results and effects of the above programs will follow in sections 4 and 5.

3. Organization and administration.

The execution of the various agrarian programs during the Soviet period was carried out by the Ministry of Land in the central government of the Chinese Soviet Republic, the Bureau of Land in the provincial Soviet government, and the Department of Land in the local governments. At the village level, a great deal of the actual land reform was carried out through the Peasants' Associations and mass meetings of the villagers. A resolution of the Central Committee dated September 15, 1932, entitled On the present peasant struggle and our tasks, stated:

With the exception that the farm laborers and coolies should organize their own class unions, the basic organization of peasants is to be the Peasants' Association...The Peasant Committee is to be elected by a Congress of all peasants, excluding the rich peasants...All activities of this Committee should follow an open democratic line. Furthermore, it (the Committee) must report its work to the Congress regularly and receive instructions from it. Under the Committee, sub-divisions shall be set up such as those on communication, propaganda, self-defense, etc.

One of the characteristics of the land policy of the Soviet period was

¹ Articles 13 and 10 of the Draft Land Law.

the preferential treatment given to farm laborers and poor peasants. Not only they were given "freedom of action," but an additional number of delegates to the Soviets was provided for the farm laborers in the electoral system set up by the Constitution of the Soviet Republic passed in November 1931.

Regarding the detailed procedure of organizing peasants to carry out land redistribution, a directive issued by the Political Bureau of the Hupai-Honan-Anhwei Soviet entitled "How to redistribute land" in 1931 stated:

Hsiang is the unit in land redistribution, which shall be based on the mixed principle of (distributing land according to) the number of consumers and the number of laborers (in a household). The masses of the entire hsiang are to be mobilized to hold a mass meeting and laboring peasants with a high degree of (class) consciousness are to be elected as land commissioners. From 17 to 21 (delegates) are to be elected from each hsiang to form the Land Committee. Then a survey of the land will follow. The masses are to be called together by the striking of gongs to carry out a land survey together with the Land Committee. The first step is to fix the area of "public land" for the Red Army men.¹ Then all lands are to be equally and fairly distributed among the peasants, taking into consideration various factors such as the quality of the soil, the distance of the field, woods, ponds, bamboo groves, etc. Distribution of land is to be decided by majority opinion of the (village) masses.

After the decisions are passed (at the mass meeting), a list containing all the names of the recipients and the amount of land to be allotted to each is to be posted at public places, soliciting comments and suggestions. If no revisions are proposed, then the land is to be divided according to original decisions...Suitable measures should be adopted to suit peculiar conditions of the various districts and through extensive public discussions.²

¹ The "public land" was cultivated by the peasants for the soldiers of the Red Army. Tools, seeds, and draft animals generally were supplied by the Soviet government. Usually the area amounted to from three to five times of that of the average land allotment in that district.

² Hsi Tung, "How the Chinese Soviet solves the land problem," The CCP and the agrarian revolution, 54-55.

This general pattern of procedure was similarly described in an article entitled "The steps and procedure of land distribution in the Red Areas" written in 1935 by Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, who made some field studies of CCP land reform in the former Soviet areas recaptured by the Kuomintang forces in the summer of 1933.¹ Mr. Ch'i also wrote:

After the distribution of land, those who were allotted land and those whose land was left unchanged (such as that of the middle peasants) had to register anew and apply for new land certificates. The major items for registration were the amount of land-holding, its location, annual production, and the landowner's class status ...There were three kinds of land certificates: those for the rich peasants, those for the middle peasants, and those for the poor peasants and farm laborers.

The particulars contained in the three forms of land certificates, i.e., land title deeds, given as samples in the article by Mr. Ch'i are similar, except for one provision in the land certificates for rich peasants which was as follows:

...In accordance with the policy of dealing a blow to the rich peasants, allying with middle peasants, and consolidating the alliance between workers and peasants, all the land and houses of the rich peasant (holder of the certificate) are hereby confiscated. In accordance with the labor power which his family possesses, mou of inferior land are hereby allotted to him....This piece of land must be cultivated by himself and is not to be rented out or tilled by hired labor.

The above information indicates that the Land Committees at the various levels and the Peasants' Association were the two major instruments in administering land reform in the Soviet areas. They were aided by a number of mass organizations such as the "mutual aid societies," "draft animal teams," and "rural cooperatives." Although popular participation in these organizations was encouraged, control and supervision

¹ Kuo-wen Weekly, 12.16, April 29, 1935, 4.

by the Party were thorough and tight.

4. Results and effects.

The data regarding the achievements on a comprehensive scale of the Chinese Communist land program during the Soviet period are meager, to put it mildly. One obvious cause was the fluid situation in the Soviet areas. The Central Soviet in Kiangsi, comparatively stable for three or four years, had to fight five major campaigns against the Kuomintang attacks between December 1930 and October 1934. In addition, the Communist forces, engaging primarily in mobile warfare, frequently shifted their bases and areas of operation. There was hardly any time for research and statistical survey on a large scale. Some reference materials, like the report by Mao Tse-tung on his investigation on the results of land reform in Hsun-wu, a county in Kiangsi, were lost during the Long March (October 1934-1935). Information on the results and effects of the agrarian reform in the Soviet period, pieced together from a few available sources, are presented in the following sections.

a. Land redistribution

Information available indicates that the amount of land allotted to the peasants in land redistribution during the Soviet period varied in localities and with the class status of the recipient. The work report of the Provincial Committee of the Kiangsi Soviet, dated April 1932,¹ revealed that in 10 hsien of Kiangsi, the total cultivated area with an annual productive capacity of 15,794,294 piculs (of rice) was

¹ Hsi Tung, 58-59.

distributed among the peasants. The per capita allotment ranged from six to thirty-two piculs, and the average quota was 13.4 piculs per person. Calculating from the data furnished by Prof. Lossing Buck in his book Land Utilization in China,¹ which give the average annual production per mou in Kiangsi as 3.7 piculs, the average land holding of the peasants in the 10 hsien in the Kiangsi Soviet should be in the neighborhood of 3.6 mou. The per capita land holding thus seems considerably higher than the figure estimated by Prof. Buck for the general area in 1937, which was 2.16 mou per person.² The possible reasons are: (1) the population in the Kiangsi Soviet region was reduced by war casualties, the fleeing of many people to the "white areas," and the execution of a large number of "counter-revolutionary elements" by the Communists; (2) the expansion of cultivated areas through reclamation and irrigation; and (3) the increase of crop yields as a result of Soviet agrarian programs. The same work report shows that in three of the ten hsien the public land reserved for the Red Army constituted, respectively, 0.3 per cent, 0.25 per cent and 0.06 per cent of the total farm land. But these public lands were of the best quality.

The change of rural class status was reflected in the report entitled Rural investigation of Hsinking (county in Kiangsi Soviet) written by Mao Tse-tung on January 26, 1931. It stated:

¹ Statistics, Land Utilization of China, 210. The figure of 3.7 piculs per mou was the average yield of Te-an county, Kiangsi.

² Buck, 77.

The 18 landlord families constituted one per cent of the rural population and owned 40 per cent of the land before the revolution. After the revolution, two landlords were executed, one imprisoned, two voluntarily divided up their lands and served as local Soviet officials, and the rest fled to the Kuomintang areas....The 32 rich peasant families constituted about five per cent of the rural populace and owned 30 per cent of the land. Twenty-four families were counter-revolutionary and ten of the family heads were executed. Four were imprisoned and ten cooperated with the Soviet, among whom two served as local officials. The rest fled....Middle peasants made up about 20 per cent of the rural community and owned 15 per cent of the land. On the whole they increased their holdings of the land....The poor peasants constituted 60 per cent of the rural population and had only five per cent of the land. They received land, a portion of the hills from which fuels were gathered, cheaper food, relief in economic burdens, better social and political conditions, and rights to elect and serve as local functionaries.... The farm laborers who constituted about one per cent of the rural populace got a share of land and benefits similar to those enjoyed by the poor peasants...

From this report it can also be seen that quite a number of landlords and rich peasants were "liquidated." This seems to support some reports which maintain that the land policy of Chinese Communists during the Soviet period was, compared with later periods, carried out with "much bloodshed and brutality." On the other hand, allegations such as those that the Chinese Communists killed wantonly and all but eliminated the landlords and rich peasants are not substantiated by field investigations. Furthermore, in Mao Tse-tung's Report to the Second All-China Soviet Congress dated January 22, 1934, on the result of the "land investigation movement,"¹ it was reported that:

¹ The "land investigation movement" carried out in 1933 aimed primarily to check the results of the agrarian reform and to fume out the "hidden landlords and rich peasants." For more information, see Ch'i Ch'i-sheng, "The land investigation movement in the Chinese Red Areas," Kuo-wen Weekly, 12.7, February 22, 1935, 1-6.

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According to statistics of July, August, and September 1933, 6988 landlord families and 6638 rich peasant families were found in the Central Soviet of Kiangsi, Fukien, and Kwangtung in the land investigation movement. 317,539 piculs' (rice) worth of land were confiscated from them...

This would indicate that, even though the Soviet regime carried out a ruthless policy toward the landlord and rich peasant classes, the actions taken at the village level were not as severe as the legislative provisions required them to be, possibly due to the traditional Chinese belief in "Golden Mean" and the shortage of trained cadres.

b. Rural economic programs

Rent, usurious loans, and miscellaneous surtaxes that prevailed in the former days were abolished. Unfortunately no detailed information is available regarding the results of these measures so far as the whole Soviet area is concerned. Certain data are contained in the Hsin-kuo Report quoted previously. It reveals that:

On the average, rent before the revolution constituted about 50 per cent of the principal crop yield in the first, second, and fourth districts (of Hsin-kuo county) and 60 per cent in the third district. It was abolished after the Red Army came. Land tax, under the Kuomintang, took away about four per cent of the crop yield....The Soviet government abolished all taxes and installed a unified land tax on a progressive scale....Loans which were formerly made at 30 per cent per annum for cash loans and 50 per cent semi-annually for loans in kind were annulled together with all old debts...

Although the figures reported by Mao do not seem exaggerated, he unfortunately gave no details about the new "unified tax." However, in another report made by Mao from the base of Chingkiangshan on November 25, 1928, he gave 20 per cent as the tax rate at Ningkang in Kiangsi. A Kuomintang journalist who visited some of the Red areas after their recapture in 1933 reported that "the peasants paid a progressive land

tax of from 6 per cent to 42 per cent."¹ One western writer stated that "one-fifth of the rice crop is given to the Soviets."² Evidence seems to indicate that agricultural tax rates varied slightly in different districts and that peasants were required to contribute labor at subsistence wages for the Soviet government. However, compared with the taxes levied by the Kuomintang government and made worse by grafting officials, there is reason to believe that the tax burden of the peasants under the Soviets was considerably lighter.

The increase of agricultural production was made the "primary task in the economic construction of the Soviet," according to Mao Tse-tung.³ Tsai Ho-sheng, one of the CCP Political Bureau members in the early thirties, wrote that "crop produce in 1933 in the Soviet areas increased 50 per cent over the previous year, and in 1934 there was an increase of 100 per cent over 1933."⁴ There is, of course, no way of verifying these figures. Also it is difficult to ascertain how much of these increases, if they occurred, was due to reclamation of new land, newly irrigated lands, and other improvements, and how much to the enhancement of efficiency of the peasants as a result of greater incentive and better rural conditions subsequent to the agrarian reform.

¹ Ch'en Keng-ya, A report of inspection in Kiangsi, Anhwei, Hunan and Hupai, 1935, 50.

² Agnes Smedley, China's Red Army marches, 242.

³ Mao Tse-tung, Report to the Second All-China Soviet Congress, January, 1934.

⁴ Tsai Ho-sheng, "Seven years of the Chinese Soviet," CCP in the united front, 43.

A great deal of attention was also paid to the development of rural cooperatives for the promotion of rural industries and the supply of daily necessities. It was reported that "in September 1933 there were 1,423 cooperatives with a total capital of 305,531 yuan (about 100,000 US dollars at that time) in the 17 hsien of the Kiangsi Soviet."¹

The Red Army soldiers were reported to have played an important role in the agrarian program. One writer states:

Red soldiers worked in the fields with the peasants. They marched in "shock brigades" to the fields and, side by side with the peasants, transplanted the tender rice-shoots...Chu Teh, the Commander-in-Chief, was one of a shock brigade of planters....²

One of the criteria to judge the achievement of the Chinese Communist agrarian reform of the Soviet period is whether the living standard of the peasants was improved or not. Again, there are no neutral field studies available to make an evaluation. According to Mao Tse-tung, the welfare of the peasants in the Soviet areas was improved because of the following factors:

(1) The cost of living was lowered. For example, the price of rice dropped from four (Chinese) dollars a picul before the revolution to one dollar a picul; vegetable oil from 23 dollars per 100 catties to 10 dollars; oxen from 70 dollars per head to 20 dollars; meat from 53 cents per catty to 32 cents. But the price of salt increased from 32 cents per catty to 80 cents and the cotton cloth price rose from 14 cents a foot to 32 cents. This was partly due to the Kuomintang blockade which made it impossible for the peasants in the Soviet areas to sell any surplus agricultural products to outsiders. (2) As a result of social reforms, a number of expenses were saved for the peasants such as marriage expenditure which formerly cost the middle peasants as much as half of their fortune, funeral ceremonies which had cost from 60 to 100 dollars, various tributes to temples, and expenses for rituals. (3) Other economic

¹ Yakhontoff, 272.

² Smedley, 237.

benefits such as reduction of interest, cancellation of usurious loans, etc.¹

Three years later, Mao again announced in his Report to the Second All-China Soviet Congress in January 1934 that:

The living conditions of the peasants have been much improved.... In the past, the peasants lived on tree bark or grain husks for several months a year. This situation no longer prevails and there is no more starvation in the Soviet areas. The life of the peasants is improving year by year. They are no longer in rags. They now eat meat more regularly. It is no longer a luxury to them as in former times. In the past, most of the peasants dressed in rags, but now their livelihood is generally improved, some 100 per cent, some 200 per cent....

Although with the removal of many economic abuses and the promotion of agricultural production and political reforms the peasants could be better off in the Kiangsi Soviet, some of the reasons forwarded by Mao are subject to review. For instance, one of the reasons mentioned for the betterment of peasants' livelihood was the depreciation of the price of rice. If the peasants in the Soviet region had sufficient rice to eat as the Communist sources maintained, the lowering of grain prices would seem to constitute a loss instead of a gain for the farming populace.

c. Other agrarian programs

An important part of the Chinese Communist land policy in the Soviet period consisted of political and social programs. The peasants were encouraged to participate in the local administrations, although the depository of power remained the Communist cadres. The local government, according to Mao Tse-tung's report,² was formed in the

¹ Hsin-kuo Report, January 1931.

² Mao Tse-tung, Report to the Second All-China Soviet Congress, 1934, Yakhontoff, 259-260.

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following manner: (1) The basic administrative unit in the rural areas was the hsiang (a group of villages) Soviet Council. Each Councillor generally lived among and looked after from 30 to 70 rural inhabitants. (2) The quota of delegates was one for every 50 peasants (compared with workers who elected one delegate to higher Soviet governments out of every 15). (3) The names of the electors were written on a large piece of red paper and elections were held (without the participation of landlords and rich peasants) twice each year. (4) Any delegate who committed serious errors could be recalled by one half of the electorate or by the decision of the Council. (5) The local government had to make periodical reports to the village voters and solicit suggestions. Mao reported that in the two elections held in 1932 and another one in the autumn of 1933, "in many places more than 80 per cent of the electorate participated."

While it is true that under the Kuomintang rule the ordinary peasants were given no opportunity to form self-government, many of the provisions stipulated by the Soviet government regarding village administration did not prevail in actual practice. Partly because of the ignorance of the peasants and the lack of trained personnel, a number of irregularities occurred. For example, Mao revealed in his Hsin-kuo Report that "one of the defects was the manipulation of public opinion. Council members were appointed sometimes by a few, and election was only a formality. Once a chairman demanded angrily why some of the persons attending did not raise their hands."¹ It should be mentioned

¹Mao, 103-104.

here that Mao also promised rectification of these abuses. The same report revealed that in one hsiang government, among the ten Councillors, six were poor peasants, two middle peasants, one a rich peasant, and one a student. However, in one ch'u (district) government, among the eighteen Councillors, there were neither poor peasants or farm laborers.¹ Another report showed that out of 200 inhabitants of a village, three small landlords, three rich peasants, and one loafer were killed. Mao remarked at the end of the report that "it is doubtful whether every one of them deserved execution."²

In the social reform program, the emphasis was on the elevation of the status of rural women, mass education, and the elimination of superstitious practices of the peasants. Child marriage was prohibited and women, with reasons for complaint, were granted divorces. Trying to prove that women had greater rights, Mao reported that "in many village Councils, women constituted 25 per cent or more" of the membership.³ But this might be partly due to the shortage of able-bodied men, as the entire Soviet area was on a war footing. It was also reported that in 2,931 villages in Kiangsi and Fukien provinces, there were 3,052 Leninist primary schools with 89,710 pupils and 32,388 reading groups with a total membership of 155,371.⁴ A number of improvised methods

¹ Mao, 102-103.

² Mao Tse-tung, "Mu-kou Village investigation," Rural investigation (reports), 73.

³ Yakhontoff, 259.

⁴ Ibid., 274-275.

such as sign boards with characters which were erected along the roadside and the "little teacher" system were adopted to boost literacy. The indoctrinated boys, called "little devils," were also very active in the campaign to destroy superstition. They demolished idols and threw away incense offered to the spirits by the older peasants. The reduction in the expenses of the peasants for temple sacrifice and other wasteful customs such as elaborate ceremonies for weddings and funerals (which sometimes cost the peasants as much as half their annual income) helped to ease the economic burden of the rural community.¹

5. Comments on the period.

The land reform policy of the CCP during the Soviet period is characterized by its experimental nature: the few facts available show how the Party's theories on the agrarian problem were adjusted and adapted to realities under the prudent guidance of Mao Tse-tung, how blunders were made through the trial and error method, and how the Communists learned a number of lessons and practices which helped the Party later to eventual victory in its political struggle with the Kuomintang.

Between 1926 and 1930, Mao began and developed his theory and movement of armed peasant rebellion as the major instrument in the Chinese revolution while under strong fire from the CCP hierarchy, as well as the Trotskyites. As late as May 1930, the Conference of Delegates from Soviet Areas held in Shanghai under the direction of Li

¹ Mao, 79.

Li-san stated that "this Conference firmly opposes the policy that 'tillers should own their land'....When the land of the landlords is confiscated without compensation and distributed among the peasants, there is not the slightest intention that the land should be the private property of individuals."¹ A little more than a year later, the Land Law of the Soviet Republic made a realistic adjustment and stipulated that "the peasants should not be deprived of their right to rent, purchase, and sell land."

Also at the early stage of the Soviet period, land reform was regarded by many in the Party as being primarily a political instrument for winning the revolution. Thus, in 1930, two resolutions made by the conference of local Party leaders in the Soviet areas stated:

At the present time when no decisive results are achieved in the fight between the Red and the White, the sole question right now is how to win over the broad masses, vanquish the enemy, and secure the revolutionary victory. At this moment, the criterion for all politics is the winning over of the masses, and is not the development of production.²

and,

At the present time of struggle, the development of production is not the major task, and the winning over of the masses is the urgent task.³

¹ Yi Yuan, "Confiscation of the land of the landlords," The Red Flag, (underground publication of the CCP in Shanghai), 117, July 9, 1930, 4. (Text available at Hoover Library, Stanford.)

² "Resolution on the rich peasant question," Joint Conference of the Front Commissars of West Fukien, June 1930; quoted by Ch'eng Sheng-ch'ang in his article "The land problem in the Red Areas," Kuo-wen Weekly, 10.22, June 5, 1933, 3.

³ "Resolution on the land question," Joint Conference of the Front Committee and the Kiangsi Special Committee, October 25, 1930; quoted by Ch'eng Sheng-ch'ang, 3.

There were more practical Communist leaders who realized that without the development of production neither the masses nor the revolution could be won. Fortunately for the Chinese Communists, the realists prevailed. The latter's view may be represented by the following statement:

The confiscation and redistribution of land are not sufficient to settle the agrarian problem to the complete satisfaction of the peasants. The question of scarcity of land remains. Consequently the next measure should be directed toward the amelioration of the peasants' lot and toward improved methods of cultivation by the introduction of modern agricultural machinery, improved irrigation and drainage, and selection of seeds, fertilizers, and above all, the establishment of cheap credit facilities.¹

Provisions in the Soviet Land Law of 1931 also show that adjustments were made by the Chinese Communists in the face of objective conditions. For instance, the law stipulates that the "religious feelings of the peasants must be respected" and the peasants were given the right to decide on the disposal of land belonging to religious bodies and ancestral shrines. (Article 6)

On the other hand, there existed in the Soviet period, a number of measures which were later criticized by the Party leaders themselves as "erroneous and undesirable." For instance, Mao Tse-tung stated in December 1947 that "the policy of 'no land for the landlords and poor land for the rich peasants' was a mistake."² Also the theory and practice of granting privileged treatment to the farm laborers and village handicraftsmen which prevailed in the Soviet period later fell

¹ Resolution of the Conference of Delegates of Soviet Areas, May, 1930; quoted by Yakhontoff, 154.

² Mao Tse-tung, Present situation and our tasks, December 1947.

into disuse, together with such slogans as "the fundamental strength of our Party lies in the working class of the village--farm laborers, coolies, and handicraftsmen." Even broadening the original Marxist term of proletariat to include farm laborers, their number in the rural population was so small that the CCP, for practical purposes, had to rely on the poor and middle peasants as the mainstay of its strength and power.

Many of the basic land reform premises formulated by the Chinese Communists during the Soviet period have remained ever since. An example is the provision that the peasants should be given the satisfaction of owning land and that the central strategy should be to "rely on the poor peasants and farm laborers, and ally with the middle peasants." The Chinese Communists also, through their experiences in land reform in the Soviet period, acquired a better understanding of the mentality of the peasants, became skilled in the technique of mass organization and mass persuasion, and accumulated administrative know-how. Many practices such as the skillful utilization of mass organizations like the Peasants' Association, the youth corps, the women's league; the channeling of individualistic Chinese peasants into cooperative enterprises like the mutual aid teams and the rural cooperatives; and the stimulation of incentive through emulation contests and labor heroes, all became an integral part in the later CCP land policy.

Viewing the land policy of the Soviet period with the benefit of twenty years' hindsight, it may be said that, imperfect and blundering as it often was, the land policy of the Soviet era gave invaluable

experiences to the Chinese Communists. A great deal of insight is revealed in Mao Tse-tung's report to the Central Committee from Ching-kiangshan dated November 25, 1928, which stated:

In the villages under kinship organization, the most serious question lies not in the big landed gentry, but in the middle class (of small landlords and owner peasants)...In order to achieve a rising revolutionary tide, the mobilization and accomplishment of a political, economic, democratic revolution that includes the petty bourgeoisie is a necessary path....In the revolution of China whose economy is primarily agricultural, armed insurrection is its unique characteristic.¹

Also as a general observation, it seems that the political and social features of the Chinese Communist land policy in the Soviet period such as the mobilization of the masses, indoctrination of cadres, betterment of the status of women and the elimination of superstitious practices, achieved far more than the purely economic platforms, such as the increase of agricultural yield and the enhancement of the peasants' standard of living. The physical environment and the military situation, of course, had much to do with the above outcome. Another now well-known factor responsible for the course of development in the CCP land policy--for that matter, of all other policies as well--was the weaknesses of the opponent, the Kuomintang and other militarists, on the political stage of China.

C. The Sino-Japanese War period, 1937-1945

For the chronological record, it should be pointed out that the suspension of land confiscation started in February, 1937, about

¹ Collected works of Mao Tse-tung, Tung-pei Book Co., 531 and 537.

five months before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident which marked the start of the Sino-Japanese War on July 7, 1937. The cessation of the land confiscation policy was officially confirmed in a statement by the CCP on Kuomintang-CCP cooperation made public on September 22, 1937. The war-time program of rent and interest reduction lasted until December 1946, sixteen months after the conclusion of the war against Japan, although some land was redistributed when the land of Japanese and puppet officials was confiscated and in some areas landlords were "encouraged" to contribute "voluntarily" a part of their landholdings.¹

1. Party theory on the land question.

During the war against Japan, the two major objectives of the CCP were the announced goal of final victory over the enemy and the not-so-often-publicized but unhidden aim of expanding the power of the CCP. Land policy, which rallied most of the peasants to support the Party, constituted an extremely effective and popular means to attain such objectives. The CCP's line on the united front at that time was that "there will be several stages of development in the democratic revolution...all under the slogan of the democratic republic and not

¹Mao Tse-tung, "Urgent tasks in the Chinese revolution after the formation of the united front of the KMT and the CCP," Mao, 388. The Communist area at that time covered North Shensi, East Kansu and part of Ninghsia. Yen-an was made the capital in December 1936. On March 3, 1937, the SKN Soviet Government was set up with Yen-an as the capital. It was changed to the Border Region Government after the outbreak of the war. The progress of Communist expansion during the war was roughly as follows: 1937—Shansi; 1938—Hopei, Shuyuan and Jehol; 1939 and 1940—Kiangsu, Anhwei and Shantung; 1941—Chahar; 1943 and 1944—Honan and Kiangsu; 1945—Northeastern provinces, Hupei and Szechuan. However, there were even before 1937 guerrilla forces under Communist direction in various areas such as the Northeast, East Kwangtung and Hainan Island.

under that of the Soviet. The firm ally of the proletariat is the peasantry, next comes the petty bourgeoisie...the bourgeoisie is competing with the CCP for leadership in the revolution."¹

Regarding the land policy in that era, Mao said:

It is not a policy of agrarian revolution in the civil war (i.e., Soviet period), but rather a policy to unite all the people in a common front against Japan. The cessation of land confiscation is not because it is undesirable, but...to rally a greater number of people to fight Japanese imperialism.²

Even at the early stage of the war, Mao wrote in his New Democracy (January 1940):

The peasant problem is the fundamental issue in the Chinese revolution and the peasantry is the major force...The new democratic republic will adopt certain necessary measures to confiscate the land of big landlords and distribute it among peasants who have little or no land....It is not to build up socialist agriculture, but to turn the land into the private property of the³ peasants. A rich peasant-economy will also be allowed to exist.

These passages clearly indicate that the moderate land policy of reduction of rent and interest adopted during the war years was only an expedient measure of a transitional nature.

The resolution of the Central Committee, CCP, on "land policy in anti-Japanese base areas," passed on January 28, 1942, was to remain the basic platform in the Communist areas until the end of 1946. It opens with the following passage:

Since the beginning of the war of resistance (July 7, 1937), the land policy carried out by our Party in the various anti-Japanese bases has been a land policy based on the anti-Japanese national

¹ Mao Tse-tung, On the question of the future of the revolution, 1937.

² Ibid.

³ Mao Tse-tung, "New Democracy," Mao, 247.

united front...that is, a land policy involving reduction of rent and interest on the one hand, and the guarantee of the collection of rent and interest on the other.

Then the document goes on to enunciate "three basic principles":

- (1) Recognize that peasants (including farm laborers), constitute the basic strength in the anti-Japanese war as well as in the battle of production;
- (2) Recognize that most of the landlords are anti-Japanese...that some of the enlightened gentry also favor democratic reforms; and
- (3) Recognize that the capitalist mode of production is the more progressive method in present day China and that the bourgeoisie, particularly the petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie, represent the comparatively more progressive social elements and political forces in China today.

A similar theme ran through Mao Tse-tung's On coalition government, a report he made to the Seventh National Congress of the CCF held at Yanan in April 1945. Under the heading "The land problem," Mao stated that "the policy of 'land for the tillers'¹ is a bourgeois-democratic policy, not a proletarian and socialist one. It is the policy of all revolutionary democratic groups, not of the Communists alone." In the same report, Mao elaborated on the important role of the peasants as follows:

The peasants are predecessors of the Chinese worker, and millions of them in future will go to the cities and into factories...The peasants are a market for China's industry. They alone can supply it with richest food and raw materials, and absorb the vast quantities of industrial products...The peasants are the source of our armies....The peasants, at the present stage, are the main foundation of democracy in China....The peasants, at the present stage, are the main foundation of China's cultural movement. Divorced from the 360,000,000 peasants, are not the illiteracy elimination campaigns, universal education, popular literature, and the national health campaigns all empty phrases?

¹ This was a slogan originated by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China and the Kuomintang.

² ...

has concluded by stating that "the peasant's enthusiasm in production will be increased once land reform--even preliminary reform such as reduction of rent and interest--is carried out. By degrees, when the peasants are organized, on a voluntary basis, into agricultural production cooperatives or other cooperatives, their productive power will develop. Such agricultural production cooperatives at present can only be... built on the peasant's individual economic basis (based on the peasant's private property)..."¹ The above represents the essence of the CCP's theory on the land question during the Sino-Japanese War period.

2. Legislation and programs.

The general principle of rent and interest reduction was announced in the "Ten great policies of the CCP" on August 15, 1937, and again in the statement made public on September 22, 1937, but no detailed program was set forth. In 1938, a directive of the SKN Border Government stated that "in those areas where agrarian revolution (i.e., land redistribution) already has taken place, no changes shall be made. The landlords in exile are welcomed to return and they will receive an equal share of land and property just as the ordinary peasants do. In those areas where land has not been redistributed, the landlords can retain their land."

The general agricultural program for the SKN Border Region announced in 1942 was as follows:

In the economy of the Border Region, a small peasant economy still occupies an important position. Hence, the development of agricul-

¹ Mao, 330-334.

ture must be regarded as a central chain in economic construction and carried out according to a definite policy:

- (1) The development of agriculture should center on the increase of grain production. This requires the continuation of reclamation, irrigation work, the improvement of agricultural techniques, and the enhancement of yield per mou.
- (2) More effort must be exerted regarding the production of industrial raw materials and the export of special products of the Border Region to outside areas.
- (3) Protection and adjustment of labor power and encouragement of immigration (to the Border Region).
- (4) Protection of forests, development of the grazing industry and other subsidiary occupations.
- (5) Provision of low interest loans to the peasants (in order to) stimulate the rural economy.
- (6) Unification of grain control (by the government), and strict prohibition of export of grain in order to guarantee the supply for the military and administrative units as well as food for the people.¹

In the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, a similar program was announced on January 20, 1943. This listed the following aims:

Development of agriculture, more reclamation, prevention of land from being laid waste, expansion of cultivated areas, protection and increase of livestock, improvement of agricultural techniques such as (the use of better) seeds, fertilizer, and farm implements, digging more wells, and irrigation ditches, and repairing dams in a planned manner in order to improve the soil.²

Other basic legislation on land reform which lasted, in general, until the end of 1946 was the "Resolution on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas" passed by the CC, CCP on January 28, 1942, the Rent Law of

¹ Lin Po-ch'u, "Understanding the policy of the united front," Report Work, 1939-1941, 116.

² Article 10, "Present program of the SCH Border Region," Compendium of current laws and directives of the SCH Border Region, 1945, 2-3.

the SHH Border Region Government on December 29, 1942, the Rent Law of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region Government of February 4, 1942, and the "Consolidated progressive agricultural tax regulations" promulgated by the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region Government in 1943. The salient aspects of the various agrarian programs of the CCP during the war period are as follows (their results and effects are discussed in Section 4):

a. Rent

Reduction of rent constituted the crux of the CCP wartime land policy, although land belonging to the "most criminal and notorious traitors" who cooperated with the Japanese was confiscated and redistributed. Rent reduction was listed as a principle in the land policy set forth in the following CCP's documents after July, 1937: Ten outline programs for fighting against Japan, August 15, 1937; Proclamation on KMT-CCP cooperation, September 22, 1937; Proclamation on land policy by the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Government, 1938; Policy outline of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, August 13, 1940; and Policy outline of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region, May 1, 1941. More detailed provisions on rent reduction appear in the Central Committee's "Resolution on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas," dated January 28, 1942, which stipulated:

In the areas where rent has not been reduced, rent should, in principle, be reduced by 25 per cent...i.e., a reduction of 25 per cent from the pre-war rate for rent. No matter whether it be public land, private land, rented land or shared land, and no matter whether it be cash rent, rent in kind, unfixed rent or fixed rent, this rule applies to all. For land shared under various forms, it should not be uniformly ruled that the landlord is to obtain no more than 40 or 60 per cent, but there should be a 25 per cent reduction of the former rent, based on consideration of the labor,

animal power, tools, fertilizers, seed and grain contributed by the parties. In guerrilla areas or places near strongholds, rent reduction may be less than 25 per cent....

No rent should be collected in advance of the harvest.

Rent in arrears for many years is to be exempted from payment.

Payment of fixed rent may be postponed or reduced if all or a part of the harvest is destroyed by natural or man-made disaster.

The collection of rent by the landlord is guaranteed, if rent reduction is duly made according to law.

More elaborations were contained in the Rent Law of the Shensi-Kansu-Hingsia Border Government and the Rent Law of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Government, promulgated respectively on December 29, 1942 and February 4, 1943. The salient features of the two laws on rent were as follows:

Fixed rent which is calculated according to the areas of cultivated land is to be reduced by 25 per cent: share crop which is divided proportionally between the landlord and the tenant with the landlord contributing nothing is to be reduced from 25 to 40 per cent. The amount obtained by the landlord as rent cannot exceed 37.5 per cent. All subsidiary crops are to go to the tenant. (The Rent Law of the SKN Border Government says 30 per cent.) Share cultivation which is divided proportionally between the landlord and the tenant, but with the former providing all or a part of the facilities for farming, is to be reduced from 10 to 20 per cent. The landlords cannot receive more than 40 per cent of the principal crops. The subsidiary produce is to be divided between the landlord and the tenant according to the contract or local customs when there is no contract. Homestead rent, which is similar to share cultivation rent except where the landlord provides additional grain and quarters, is to be reduced from 10 to 20 per cent. The landlord cannot receive more than 45 per cent of all crops, principal and subsidiary. No interest or rent can be charged on grain or quarters lent to the tenant.

Collection of rent in advance of harvest, rent deposit, commissions for rent collectors, compulsory labor rendered by the tenant for the landlord, and exactions are to be prohibited.

Rent in arrears incurred before 1939 is considered as cancelled.

A tenant may negotiate for reduction or exemption of rent if his crops fail entirely or partially due to natural disasters.

After rent reduction is effected according to law, the tenant must pay rent to the landlord in the full amount.

These were the general features in the rent reduction program of the CCP land policy during the war. The degree of their implementation varied with the different areas under the Communist control, and will be discussed in the section on results and effects.

b. Interest rate and debt.

Reduction of interest was also a basic principle proclaimed in the various CCP documents after the Sino-Japanese war began. In the "Resolution of the Central Committee on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas," passed on January 28, 1942, it was stipulated that:

The policy of reduction of interest rates on debts contracted before the war is a necessary policy to meet the needs of the debtors as well as to rally the creditors in the fight against Japan. One and one-half per cent per month is to be the rate in calculating the interest. If the total payment of interest exceeds the amount of the original capital of the loan, interest is to stop, and (only) the capital is to be repaid. If payment of interest is double the amount of the loan, payment on both capital and interest are to be suspended. As to the interest rate for loans contracted since the war, it can be freely decided locally in accordance with local, social and economic conditions. The government should not set too low an interest rate for it may result in a slowing down of credit and harm the people's welfare.

If a debtor is unable to pay the interest of capital on debts newly contracted since the war, the creditor has the right to dispose of the collateral according to contract. All disputes are to be adjudicated by the government....

The "Regulations of mortgage and debt" promulgated by the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Government on September 14, 1943, stipulated that:

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(1) Old debts and mortgage rights are considered null and void in the areas where land has been redistributed; (2) the rate of interest is not to exceed 15 per cent per annum in the areas where land has not been redistributed; (3) if the total interest payments equal or exceed 200 per cent of the loan, only the original loan is to be repaid; if the aggregated interest payments equal or exceed 300 per cent of the loan, the debt is to be considered as annulled.

The "Regulations on rent, debt, and interest" promulgated by the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Government on February 4, 1943, contained provisions similar to those above. In addition it also stipulated that "the interest rate for new debts is to be fixed by the contracting parties." The payment of debt and interest for new loans was guaranteed by law, but the debtor, if unable to meet his obligations as a result of natural disasters, such as flood and drought, could postpone the payment of interest.

c. Agricultural tax.

Chinese Communist sources report that from 1935 to 1937 the Border Government of Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia relied on income from confiscated properties of landlords and gentry for administrative and military expenses and no tax was levied on the peasants. From 1937 to 1943 a tax in the form of "public grain" was levied on a progressive scale in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Area, but no details about the tax scales are available. In the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, which was established in 1938, the Border Government first relied on revenue from the old land tax, customs duties, and an internal loan which was floated in the summer of 1938. Later, most of the revenue was derived from the "reasonable burden system," which was also in effect in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region. The general principle of this

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system was that the total assessment should be allotted among the rural population on the basis of estimates of ability to pay. The Border Government divided out quotas for the hsien (county) which in turn allotted quotas to the villages. Each village then held a mass meeting to decide on what was a fair share for each household as a tax.

In 1941 and 1943, a consolidated progressive tax system was installed in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region and the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region respectively. The principles in this tax system as it was practiced in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei area were as follows. The tax was to be paid on a "point" basis. The matter was complicated by the fact that the "point" was defined differently in different districts and periods. Districts that suffered either from natural disasters or from severe war damage could obtain some reduction of their assessment. The average rate in 1941 was 1.2 to 1.3 tou (about 13 to 14 pounds) of millet and \$1.50 (Chinese currency) plus some straw for animals per "point." In 1942 the rate varied from 1.3 to 1.8 tou per point. In the next two years, it was reduced to 0.93 tou and 0.85 tou, respectively. Peasant households were divided into 16 classes, according to their "wealth power" which was equivalent to 8 piculs of millet for land whose rent was less than 20 per cent of the produce, 10 piculs (one picul, which is ten tou, equals about 110 pounds) of millet for income from rent and agriculture, and 7.5 piculs for other incomes. The tax started with the first class for one-half wealth power at 0.8 points, and progressively increased to 2.1 points for each wealth power up to the sixteenth class which included 81 wealth power or above.¹

¹ One picul was calculated to be equal to 8 kilograms, with an

Details regarding estimated tax burdens on the various rural classes will be discussed in a later section on results and effects. The general range of the tax burden was from 5.24 per cent to 45 per cent of income after paying rent.

In the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, according to "Regulations on the collection of public grain and hay" promulgated on October 23, 1943, the major provisions on agricultural tax were as follows. Tax, in the form of grain and hay, was levied on income from principal crops and subsidiary occupations, with certain exceptions such as cotton planting, weaving, salt, and income of agricultural families of Communist Army soldiers, immigrants, schools, government organs and so forth. Each person, irrespective of age or sex, was allotted a minimum of 0.5 picul of millet or 0.8 picul of wheat which was tax free. The scale of the tax started from three per cent if the average yield was 0.5 picul of millet per capita and ranged up to 35 per cent if the yield per capita exceeded 4.6 piculs. The amount of tax levied was subject to audit and review by the Examination Committee composed of delegates from the peasantry and local governments. The taxpayers could appeal to the village, district and county governments if they deemed the tax levy too high. The decision of the county government was final.¹

average hectare producing 137 piculs. One hectare was calculated to be 17.2 mou. For details, see "Regulations on consolidated progressive tax" of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, promulgated by the Executive Committee of the Shansi-Chahar Border Region Government, Feb. 5, 1943.

¹ The distribution of major crops in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region was approximately as follows: millet, 24.5%; wheat, 21.5%;

No detailed information is available regarding the tax system in other Communist areas during the war, but presumably the program practiced in the above two major Border Regions was followed, with perhaps minor modifications to suit local conditions.

d. Programs regarding certain specific problems.

The "Resolution of the Central Committee on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas" of January 28, 1942, also contains provisions on some "special types of land problems": It stipulated that:

Land belonging to landlords who have fled a given area is not to be confiscated, no matter where the landlord in question may be.

Clan land and society land are to be managed by a control committee organized by the clan or society concerned. The income from such land shall be used for the benefit of the clan or the society or for the local community as a whole.

School land shall be reserved as a source for educational funds, to be managed by an educational fund committee set up by the government or by the local inhabitants.

Land that belongs to a religious group (Christian, Buddhist, Moslem, Taoist or other sects) shall undergo no changes.

Uncultivated public land is to be distributed by the government, to families of Red Army personnel, refugees, and poor peasants...

e. Other agrarian programs.

In addition to the above programs contained in sections a to d, a number of other measures were also implemented to increase agricultural production and to win greater support of the peasants. Peasants were given various incentives, in the form of rewards and emotional

yellow millet, 14%; beans, 11.2%; buckwheat, 7.1%; kaoliang, 6.4%; flax, 5.1%; corn, 3.7%; potatoes, 3.2%; cotton, 1.4%; vegetables and others, 2.2%. Epstein, Israel, 83.

stimuli, to engage in more intensive farming and to raise certain types of crops such as cotton. Peasants were indoctrinated to organize themselves into mutual aid teams and cooperatives to achieve more efficient utilization of manpower and other facilities. Steps were taken to improve credit and marketing facilities. Rural industries, especially weaving, grazing, and salt production were fostered to attain self-sufficiency--especially when the Kuomintang intensified its blockade after the New Fourth Army incident in January, 1941. Certain bio-technical improvements, such as seed selection, pest control, and animal breeding were carried out but on a rather limited scale due to the lack of equipment and technical personnel.

As a part of the land policy, a number of political, social, and educational reforms were implemented. Local governments were elected by popular ballots of the village voters. The Peasants' Association, People's Militia and various mass organizations were organized to give the peasants a greater sense of participation in their own welfare programs and defense. These local organizations, which were under the close supervision of the CCP both through policy directives and through cadres, also gave the Party more effective control of the peasants. Social and educational programs were mainly expressed in the form of village schools, discussion groups, discouragement of superstitious and wasteful practices, and the advocacy of equality rights for women and youth. The detailed results of the above programs will be discussed in a later section.

3. Organization and administration.

The basic local administrative bodies in the Communist areas

during the war were the hsiang (administrative unit embodying several villages) and the ts'un (village) offices.¹ Hsiang and ts'un officers were elected by the members of the hsiang and ts'un councillors, who in turn were stipulated to be elected by direct, secret ballot of the eligible voters at the villagers' congress (ts'un-min tai-hui). The villagers' congress was the highest depository of power at the village level, meeting usually twice a year.

The tenure of the Council members was one year, with re-election possible. The Council met once a month but extraordinary sessions could be called upon the request of one-tenth of the village voters or by one-fifth of the village Councillors or by the village office. During the period of recess of the Village Council, a Standing Committee served as the executive or gan. The major functions of the Council were (1) election or dismissal of the key staff of the Village Office, (2) formulation of the "Common Pledge" of the villagers, (3) approval and supervision of the execution of the village budget, (4) disposal of the public properties of the village, such as the public land, (5) initiation or termination of village work and public affairs programs, (6) discussion of village problems and petitions from villagers, and (7) supervision of the work of the village office and the implementation of the Council's decisions. The Councillors could not be held responsible for their speeches and enjoyed legal immunity while the Council was in session, unless they committed criminal offense

¹ There were, in 1941, 1065 hsiang consisting of 6703 ts'un with a population of 1,352,175 in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, according to the "work report of the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region Government," 1939-1941, 15.

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or treason. A Councillor could be impeached for delinquency in his duty or illegal deeds by the special group of voters to whom he was responsible.¹ But the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Council who were concurrently the Chief and Deputy-Chief of the village office, and those who were elected as officials of the village office could only be recalled by the decision of the Villagers' Congress or by the resolution of the Council.

The village office was composed of a Chief, a Deputy Chief, and from seven to ten members responsible for various functions such as secretarial, civil, financial, educational, security, industrial and military affairs. They were all, except in the case of the security and military officials,² elected by the village council. The appointment of the Chief and the Deputy Chief, who were concurrently the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the council, had to be approved by the hsien (county) government. The village office met twice a month, generally. Its major functions were: (1) to carry out the instructions from higher administrative organs; (2) to put into effect the resolutions passed by the village council and the villagers' congress; (3) to promulgate and implement the "Common Pledges" of the village; (4) to increase production; (5) to investigate and register land, population, and other social conditions of the village. All members of the village office except the Chief and the

¹ Village voters were, according to their residing locality and personal relations, divided into groups. Each group elected one Councillor who was responsible to the group which elected him.

² The Security and Military officials who were responsible for intelligence and military affairs during the war, especially for the activities of the people's militia, were appointed by the Eighth Route Army.

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Secretary remained engaged in farming and received no remuneration unless it was deemed absolutely necessary. In case administrative funds provided for by the Border Region Government were found to be insufficient, an additional appropriation not exceeding two piculs of grain might be collected by the village council for expenses.¹

The Peasants' Associations that played a key role in the village administration during the Soviet period were not emphasized in the Border Regions during the Sino-Japanese war period. Mutual aid teams, also called labor exchange groups, and rural cooperatives, however, continued to be extensively organized in the Border Regions. The organization of the mutual aid teams, which were especially active in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region where population was comparatively sparse, was described by Harrison Forman as follows:

A group of eight, ten, or a dozen neighbors and farmers get together and exchange their labor power by working together on one man's field today, the next man's field tomorrow, and so on till all have been cultivated. Plowing, sowing, weeding, and harvesting are all done cooperatively. Should one man have more land than his neighbor, the scale is balanced by a supplementary contribution of, say, a son's manpower, or an extra portion of food contributed to the pool. No one is under compulsion to join a labor exchange brigade, but few refuse since the scheme has proven itself profitable. Wives also participate in the labor exchange by taking turns in preparing the group's meals. In this way, the other wives are given time in which to engage in cooperative spinning and weaving.²

This description is generally correct, except that in addition to labor,

¹ Information in the above two sections is gathered from "The revised regulations for organization of the hsiang governments of the SKN Border Region" promulgated October, 1943, and from "Regulations for the organization of the ch'u and ts'un administrations promulgated on February 4, 1943, by the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region."

² Harrison Forman, Report from Red China, 62-63.

animal power, farming equipment, techniques were also pooled together. The "contribution" of each participating unit was decided upon in group discussions by all participants. Labor exchange was also utilized in other rural work such as irrigation, reclamation and fishing.¹

Rural cooperatives consisted chiefly of consumers' cooperatives and producers' cooperatives; the former supplied the daily necessities such as salt, matches, cloth, farm tools and other goods at lower than market prices; the latter included weaving, dyeing, cotton seed oil production, pottery, and other subsidiary industries. The cooperatives also served as agencies for payment of public grain (tax), rural credit, and depositories for savings. Cooperative shares could be bought by cash or by contributing agricultural products or labor. Each member of a cooperative could buy an unlimited number of shares but had only one vote.

At the village level, there were also a myriad of mass organizations, such as the youth corps, women's league and children's corps, aiming to achieve more thorough mobilization of the peasants and effective control of the villages by the Communist administration. Traditional village institutions such as kinship and family organizations and religious establishments were utilized after certain modifications. For example, peasant households were encouraged to form "family councils" to plan and discuss farm work.

¹ For more information regarding the forms, methods, operation, and results of the mutual aid system in the Border Regions, see "The Mutual aid of the Shensi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region" and Typical example and experiences of the mutual aid, two pamphlets published by the Administrative Committee of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region Government, 1946.

4. Results and effects.

a. On rural economic aspects

(1) Land redistribution. Two years before the arrival of the Communist Fourth Army under Mao Tse-tung in Northern Shensi in October 1935, a land program similar to that of the Kiangsi Soviet was carried out in the area by the guerrilla units under Liu Tzu-tan and Kao Kang.¹ Even after the cessation of the land confiscation policy in 1938, land of those who became traitors and public land were distributed among the poor peasants. It was reported that "somewhere between 10 to 20 per cent of the land" in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region had been redistributed.² As a rule, however, landlords, even absentee landlords, were allowed to retain their land, but land that had already been redistributed was not returned. The central program, as pointed out previously, was for reduction of rent and interest.

(2) Rent, interest, and tax. The general feature of rent reduction was a 25 per cent reduction on the amount collectable by the landlord, and the rental after reduction was not to exceed 37.5 per cent of the main crop. There are no comprehensive reports available regarding the results of rent reduction, but some reports seem to indicate that in some areas the stipulated rent reduction was not strictly carried out. A directive issued by the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region government dated October 28, 1943, stated that "in many areas rent reduction has not been realized." Then it urged the Party cadres in the villages "to organize the peasants

¹ See Edgar Snow, 222.

² George E. Taylor, The struggle for North China, 112.

to carry out the provision that rent must not exceed 37.5 per cent of the principal crops."

The regulations limited the interest for old debts to 15 per cent per annum, but for new loans, the interest rate was higher. Mao Tse-tung reported that "in order to encourage the old inhabitants to lend (to the immigrants), for one tou (one-tenth of a picul) of grain loaned in the spring 1.3 tou will be returned after the autumn harvest."¹ This was 30 per cent interest in about eight months. This reflects the fact that the Border Government was not able to supply the peasants all the credit they needed and was aware of the danger of accelerating inflation by extending large amounts of cash credit to the peasants without the backing of capital goods.

The amount of "public grain" collected as tax in kind² by the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region government in the nine years from 1937 to 1945 was reported to be, respectively, 13,800, 17,000, 52,000, 97,000, 200,000, 160,000, 180,000, 160,000 and 120,000 piculs. The annual grain

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 24.

² From 1937 to 1943 an agricultural tax under the name of "public grain for national salvation" was collected. From 1937 to 1940, various quotas were allotted to the taxpaying rural households through public discussions. The major burden fell on landlords and rich peasants. From 1941 on, a system of progressive rates was adopted and peasants paid in accordance with their incomes. The "Regulations for the collection of public grain for national salvation," promulgated in October, 1943, in the SKN Border Region contain the following salient points: (1) the tax applies to all agricultural income, including proceeds from subsidiary industries, and (2) tax rates range from three per cent for five piculs of grain per capita in a household to 35 per cent for a per-capita income of 46 piculs or more. In 1943 the unified, progressive agricultural tax was adopted. The rates start with a minimum base of four per cent and end at 35 per cent. See Collection of policies and laws of the SKN Border Region, vol. 2, 214-239.

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production in the SKN Border Region for some of the war years was reported as follows: 1937, 1,116,381 piculs; 1938, 1,211,192 piculs; 1939, 1,754,284 piculs; 1941, 1,630,000 piculs; 1942, 1,680,000 piculs; 1943, 1,840,000 piculs, and 1944, 2,000,000 piculs.¹ On the basis of the above figures, the percentage of the average agricultural tax in the form of public grain in the annual production would be: 1937, 12.3 per cent; 1938, 11 per cent; 1939, 29.6 per cent; 1941, 12.2 per cent; 1942, 9.5 per cent; 1943, 9.8 per cent; and 1944, 8 per cent. A few remarks that should be made are: (1) the tax was on total agricultural income (with a few exceptional cases), hence the burden on principal crop yields must have been greater; (2) the high tax burden in 1939 (and probably also in 1940) was mainly to meet the tightening of the blockade by the Kuomintang and to pay back the grain "borrowed" in 1938; and (3) "public hay" to feed animals and for other uses was also collected by the SKN Border Region government. In 1941 and 1942, the amount of hay collected totaled, respectively, 11,818 and 7,274 tons (metric).

Regarding the tax burdens of the peasants in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, according to the calculation of Michael Lindsay, the amount of tax burden on the various rural classes, on the basis of the progressive agricultural tax rates of 1944, was as follows:

Tax on small farms (0.84 hectare): 5.24 per cent of the income after paying rent, assuming there were five members in the household. If there were only one member, the tax would be 14.6 per cent.

¹ Data taken from Work Report, 37, 44; Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 202-203; and Li K'un, 11. One picul in the SKN Border Region equals 300 catties, or 343 pounds.

Tax on medium large farm (2.66 hectare and 57.9 per cent of the rented): 15.2 per cent of income after paying rent. With one person in the household, 18.9 per cent.

Tax on very large farm (5.16 hectare, 43.8 of land rented): 20.5 per cent of income after paying rent. With one person, 22.4 per cent.

Tax on landlord (about 17.4 hectare, receiving rent at the maximum rate of 37.5 per cent of the crops): 45 per cent of income.¹

A directive on the burdens of the peasants issued by the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region government on April 28, 1945, stated that the tax burdens on the various rural classes were as follows: landlord, 52 per cent; rich peasant, 18 per cent; middle peasant, 10 per cent; and poor peasant, 4-5 per cent.

From the above we find that the landlords in the Communist areas were most heavily taxed, as they paid about ten per cent of the crop yields as land tax in pre-war days and from 20 to 25 per cent when the land tax was collected in kind after 1941.² Also, the landlords could no longer pass the taxes on to the peasants in various exactions such as rent deposit and increase of rent, as they usually did in the Kuomintang days. The poor peasants and farm laborers, who in the Nationalist areas had to pay 50 to 70 per cent of crops as rent alone,³ were much better off in the Communist areas. In addition, there were no longer any extortions by the gentry-landlord, officials, and military units.

¹ Michael Lindsay, The tax system in a Chinese Communist area, 5-8. Here one hectare is calculated as 17.2 mou which is larger than the usual 15 mou hectare, or the local mou is smaller in area.

² Calculated from Wang Hiao-wen, The land problem of China, 48; China Year Book of 1948, 1338; and Fei Hsiao-tung, Earthbound China, 208.

³ Meng Nan, The problem of land reform in China, 23.

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(3) Reclamation and irrigation. Mao Tse-tung reported that there was an increase in grain production amounting to about 68,182 tons (metric) in the period between 1937 and 1942, and one-sixth of this increase came from the reclamation of waste land which amounted to 3 million mou in these six years.¹ One American reporter stated that "during the last five years (1940-1945) reclamation has added one million acres to the 1.5 million acres of land that had formerly been under cultivation in the entire Border Region. The army alone with its 40,000 to 50,000 garrison troops has contributed about one third of this new source of food and wealth."² However, it should be noted here that most of the areas opened up were marginal lands, which will yield little economic returns in a period of fifteen to twenty years. The opening up of hillside land has a more serious effect as the removal of woods and grasses will cause floods which, in turn, destroy the farms on the plain and in the valley. A great amount of the uncultivated land was opened up by immigrants whose number totaled 125,000 in the period from 1937 to 1943.³ These refugees were helped by the Border Government which supplied them with land, equipment, seeds, and exempted their newly-reclaimed land from agricultural tax for three years.

Irrigation was one of the major agrarian programs in the Border Regions, but unfortunately only scant data are available. It was reported

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 15.

² Gunther Stein, 166.

³ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 13; and Gunther Stein, 166.

that the area of land benefitted by irrigation projects increased from 801 mou in 1937 to 8,010 mou in 1939. The goal of an additional 10,000 mou of irrigated land failed to materialize because of floods.¹

(4) Mutual aid teams and rural cooperatives. In the Border Regions during the war, mutual aid teams were not only desirable as a means to increase efficiency, but a necessity as more and more able-bodied men became engaged in defense activities and a great quantity of farming facilities were destroyed. According to a report by Mao Tse-tung, "the experiences of the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region have shown that two persons working in a labor exchange group equal three persons working individually in productive endeavor. Some labor exchange groups that collectively plowed, winnowed, and harvested, raised their production 200 per cent."² Gunther Stein wrote in 1945 that "in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, 50 per cent of all peasants have already voluntarily organized themselves (into labor exchange groups.)"³ Harrison Forman also reported that "the labor exchange system was encouraged in order to increase efficiency in production. Already 24 per cent of the Border Region's 338,760 agricultural laborers had been organized and it was expected that this figure would be almost doubled by the end of 1944."⁴ One Communist source stated that "In

¹ Work report of the SKN Border Region Government, 1939-1941, 44.

² Mao Tse-tung, On the cooperatives, a report made at the Cadre Workers' Convention of the SKN Border Region, in October, 1943.

³ Stein, 165.

⁴ Forman, 85.

the 26 hsien in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, there were 38,500 labor exchange groups with 230,000 peasants in 1944 which amounted to about 28 per cent of the rural labor. These groups not only engaged in farming, rural industries, trade, transport and household work, but also in education and public health, and propaganda activities."¹ Another report stated that "in Northwest Shansi in 1944, 146,550 peasants out of 391,788, or 37.4 per cent, joined labor exchange groups. In some villages, the percentage was as high as 96 per cent."²

Li K'un, in his pamphlet, The productive movement in the liberated areas, stated the effects of mutual aid teams in the Border Region as follows: (1) men work more enthusiastically and efficiently in groups and with division of labor; (2) draft animals and farm equipment are better utilized; (3) seasonal requirements of fast, concentrated work in farming are met; (4) more incentive and less time consumed when peasants are imbued with competitive and group spirit; (5) the organization of peasants into mutual aid teams affords training for peasants to participate in community life and also facilitates other group activities.³

One of the important aspects of the Communist land program in the Border Regions was the cooperatives whose activities covered a wide range of enterprises. Their major operations centered on the production and distribution of essential goods for the peasants such as cotton yarn and

¹ Lien-tse Chao, The mutual aid of labor in a New Democracy, 19.

² Mu Hsin, Bird's-eye-view of the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area, 65.

³ Li K'un, 26-31.

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cloth, salt, vegetable oil, flour, towels, farming equipment, and seeds. No over-all information is available regarding the activities of the cooperatives in the Communist areas during the war. Lin P'ao-ch'iu reported in January, 1944, that "24 per cent of the productive labor in the villages (in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region) joined the rural cooperatives in 1942 and there were 260 such cooperatives in 1943."¹ In the SCH Border Region, it was estimated that "there were over 9,000 cooperatives in Hopei province (in 1942), east and west of Peiping-Hankow Railway."² A directive on cooperatives issued by the SCH Border Region Government on February 10, 1944, stipulated, among other things, that "the capital of the cooperatives is supplied by the government in the form of grain to be returned by installments in five years. Peasants may buy cooperative shares with cash, savings bonds, or commodities such as grain, farm produce, and livestock. More than half of the capital of a cooperative must be invested in productive enterprises."

The "main achievements" of cooperatives in the Border Regions were described by Gunther Stein as follows:

They have helped to raise agricultural production and the output of clothing sufficiently to contribute in a decisive manner to the growth of the anti-Japanese fighting forces.

They have helped to develop industrial enterprise, instead of first getting aid from it.

They have done much to...promote democratic activities in the villages...

¹ Lin P'ao-ch'iu, Report to the Border Region Government, January 6, 1944, 27 and 30. The membership of cooperatives in the SKN area was reported by Mao Tse-tung as 140,218 in 1942. Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 57.

² Stein, 215-216.

They are spreading out into other fields, doing some pioneer work for the social and educational policies.

The major functions of cooperatives in the Border Regions can be classified into four general categories: (1) to provide daily necessities such as cloth, vegetable oil, and matches to the peasants at a discount price; (2) to foster subsidiary occupations in the rural areas; (3) to extend loans in the forms of grain, seed, and farm implements; and (4) to organize transport teams, in order to effect a better distribution of needed commodities and an adjustment in market prices. The last two functions were a part of the credit and marketing systems in the Communist areas, which will be discussed in the following section.

(5) Credit, marketing, and subsidiary industries. Although comprehensive data are lacking, isolated reports indicate that the credit and marketing facilities in the Communist areas during the war were primitive and imperfect, due partly to the war situation.

Rural credit was offered both in cash and in kind and mostly managed through cooperatives. There were four types of rural credit according to the "Regulations on rural credit" promulgated by the SKN Border Region Government in March, 1943: (1) credit for farm production for the purchase of oxen, tools, seeds, fertilizers, cotton and for the promotion of commercialized crops; (2) credit for farm supplies, transport of daily necessities for the villagers, and transport of agricultural products; (3) credit for subsidiary occupations, or the development of rural subsidiary industries such as weaving, vegetable oil pressing, grazing, and trade; and (4) credit for irrigation and the building and maintenance of dikes, wells and canals.

Interest for long term loans (more than one year) was ten per cent per annum, and that of short-term loans, one per cent per month. The ordinary time limit for loans was generally one year, but repayment could be extended or exempted if natural disaster made repayment impossible. The "Regulations on grain loan for production" promulgated by the SCH Border Region on February 4, 1941, stipulated that peasants could apply for loans in grain to develop production. Interest rate for such loans for cooperative members was fixed at ten per cent per annum and for ordinary peasants at one per cent per month. Repayment was to be made in grain by installments after each harvest.

According to a report of Lin P'ao-ch'u, the total amount in cash loaned to peasants exceeded 30 million dollar pien-pi (Border Region currency; the rate of exchange with the Nationalist currency in July 1944 was eight pien-pi to one CNC dollar) and "together with credit in kind, the difficulties in agricultural production are greatly eased."¹ Mao Tse-tung reported in his Economic and financial problems that in 1942, 1.58 million pien-pi were lent to the peasants in the seven hsien in the Border Region. This sum, together with one million pien-pi contributed by the peasants themselves, bought 2,672 oxen and 4,980 pieces of farm tools for farming. The total amount of rural credit scheduled for 1943 was 20.1 million pien-pi. Mao also emphasized the following points in the extension of rural credit:

¹ Lin P'ao-ch'u, Report to the Border Region Government, January 6, 1944. In 1943, millet was sold at 2,100 pien-pi a picul, which was 300 catties (about 330 pounds) according to the weight system in Northern Shensi.

- (1) Preference should be given to those households that possess labor and land but are short of oxen or equipment;
- (2) Farm implements and oxen should be purchased by the Border Government from outside of the Border Region and loaned to the peasants in kind;
- (3) Credit should be extended in a planned manner to those areas where there are lands to be reclaimed and to peasants who have labor power and are in urgent need;
- (4) Credit should be managed by the local administration or cooperatives that are popular among the villagers;
- (5) The procedure for obtaining loans should be simplified, and complicated steps such as the filling of applications should be avoided;
- (6) Three million of the twenty million pien-pi earmarked for rural credit (in 1943) should be for cotton and wheat planting;
- (7) Rural credit should be granted to meet the timely needs of the peasants, i.e., when planting is about to start.¹

Like rural credit, many operations of storage, transportation and distribution were undertaken in a crude manner by the cooperatives. There were no modern methods of storage and packing. Transportation facilities in the modern sense were non-existent in the Border Regions, as the Communist forces destroyed as much railway and highway as they could to harass the Japanese. However, there did exist an underground network of communications and a small quantity of medical supplies, tools, information, and even ammunition trickled in from enemy-held territories. On the whole, transportation between villages and areas was in the traditional style--by wheelbarrows, carts, beasts of burden, and more often, by human carriers. This plight of inadequate transportation and communication was reflected by a report of Lin P'ao-ch'iu in 1942 where he said:

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 39.

Communication facilities in the Border Region are too primitive. It is difficult to make use of materials that are even a few score of li (one li is about one-third of a mile) away. The transport expenses for salt and foodstuffs often exceed their cost. Although we are not yet in a position to use modern transportation, at least roads should be built extensively for (mule-drawn or bullock) carts.¹

In 1945 there were only twenty trucks in the SKN Border Region, according to one report.² Here cooperatives again played an important part by organizing caravans of donkeys, mules, horses, and bullocks for salt-mine hauls and for the transportation of other essential goods and raw materials. In 1943, 530,000 loads of salt were handled by the cooperatives. Conditions in less stable guerrilla areas were even worse; there an inter-regional flow of goods was at a minimum. The double blockade of the Border Regions by the Japanese and the Kuomintang made smuggling a very dangerous undertaking.

This difficult situation, however, helped the development of those rural subsidiary industries that produced daily necessities. Forced to choose between self-sufficiency (often on a subsistence level) and destruction, and driven by the desire for self-preservation reinforced with a Messianic zeal for a "cause," the Communists made amazing progress in supplying themselves with essential commodities such as grain, cotton cloth and vegetable oil. For instance, in 1940 only 55 per cent of the cotton yarn used in the SKN Border Region was locally produced, but in 1943, no more import of cotton yarn was needed.³ In the Shansi-Shuiyuan

¹ Work report of the SKN Border Region Government, 1939-1941, 53-54.

² Israel Epstein, The unfinished revolution in China, 269.

³ Epstein, 269.

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Liberated Area, cotton weaving looms increased from 13,000 in 1941 to 81,762 in 1945 together with 12,834 native-style looms. Peasant women engaged in weaving and textile manufacturing numbered 125,180 and supplied about 75 per cent of the needs of the area.¹ About 470,000 pounds of cotton seed oil were produced in the SKN Border Region in 1942.² Sixty-six million pounds of vegetable oils were produced in the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area by 700 oil factories in 1945.³ About sixty-three million pounds of wool were planned to be produced in 1942, partly for export.⁴ The grazing industry's progress in the SKN Border Region was reported by Mao Tse-tung as follows: oxen, donkeys, and sheep increased from the respective number of 70,000, 50,000 and 500,000 head in 1937 to 202,914, 137,001, and 1,724,203 head in 1941.⁵ The export of salt which was a special product of the SKN Border Region, increased from about 7,000 tons in 1938 to 38,000 tons in 1943, and 3,700 donkeys were engaged in full-time salt transportation in 1943.⁶ Silk industry had considerable importance in the rural economy in the SKN Border Region. In An-ting hsien alone, 3,585 peasant families were engaged in the silk industry in 1942. They produced about 140,000 pounds of silk cocoons in the same year, valued at \$600,000 pien-pi.⁷

¹ Mu Hsin, 74-75.

² Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 53.

³ Mu Hsin, 77.

⁴ Work report of the SKN Border Region Government, 1939-1941.

⁵ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 8-9.

⁶ Lin P'ao-ch'iu, 26.

⁷ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 54.

Some of the other important subsidiary occupations as illustrated in the First and Second Agricultural Exhibitions held respectively in January, 1939, and January, 1940, at Yanan were: timber, fruits, preserved food and wild animal hides.¹

(6) Agricultural production and productivity. As a result of war destruction and the blockade, the levels of production and productivity in the Communist areas during the war fell far below the pre-war average as a whole. The only exception, perhaps, was the SKN Border Region which was comparatively stable between 1937 and 1945.

The degree of general decrease of productive facilities and production in the guerrilla areas was reflected by a report by Mu Hsin on the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area in which he said:

When the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area Administration was set up (in 1940), the conditions in Northern Shansi as compared with pre-war period (1937) were as follows: rural labor was reduced by 33 per cent; oxen, 60 per cent; donkeys and mules, 80-90 per cent; sheep, 60 per cent; cultivated land, 33 per cent; and cotton production, 97 per cent. Other rural industries were all badly mauled.²

The North China Year Book of 1945 reports that the cultivated area of wheat, millet, and nine other crops in Hopei, Shansi, Shantung, and Northern Kiangsu was reduced 16 per cent between 1937 and 1941. In some of the Japanese occupied areas, as much as 25 per cent of the cultivated land was abandoned. The cotton area in North China had decreased 78 per cent by 1940, and the yield per mou of dry land had declined by 30 to 60 per cent between 1940 and 1942. The decline of productivity per mou of dry

¹ Work report of the SKN Border Region Government, 1939-1941.

² Mu Hsin, 62.

land had declined by 30 to 60 per cent between 1910 and 1912. The decline of productivity per mou of irrigated land was 60 per cent in those three years and as much as 80 per cent as compared with 1937.¹

The above clearly indicated that during the war, the agricultural production and productivity in Communist areas, except in the SKN Border Region, were far below the pre-war average. In the SKN Border Region, grain production reportedly almost doubled from 1937 to 1944 (from 1.1 million piculs to 2 million piculs). As no pre-war average was given, there is no means of comparison. A number of factors contributed to this increase of agricultural produce in the SKN Border Region. The role played by reclamation, irrigation, immigration and the organization of peasants into mutual aid teams have been mentioned previously. Two other important factors that helped to increase food production were the Eighth Route Army and the expansion of the territory of the Border Region. According to one American writer, the Border Region garrison in 1943 achieved 79.5 per cent self-sufficiency in grain, vegetables, uniforms and paper. By 1943 the Army had reclaimed 215,000 mou of land and it hoped to have 821,034 mou under the plow by the end of 1944.² Communist forces in other areas were also engaged in production work. In Shantung, for instance, the Army in 1943 supplied its own needs to the value of Chinese \$56,156,000 or about 1,000 U.S. dollars for each regular soldier. In Central Hopei, each soldier was required to cultivate one mou of land

¹ Quoted by Chang Hsi-chang, Land policies in Communist China (mimeographed pamphlet in English, 1947), 4.

² Harrison Forman, 74.

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annually. All troops on the move pledged themselves to help the peasants by working in their fields for at least three days of each agricultural month.¹ Other government institutions also raised farm produce. In Yenan, alone, government organizations cultivated 35,893 mou of land, and produced 6,011 piculs of grain and 19.2 million pounds of vegetables in one year. The area of land reclaimed by various government organs, excluding the army, totaled 113,411 mou in 1939.² In the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area, the total area reclaimed by the army and other government institutions in 1944 was reportedly 150,000 mou.

From the spring of 1940 until the end of the war in August, 1945, there seemed to be little territorial changes in the SKN Border Region. But between 1939 and 1940, the population jumped from 600,000 to 1,400,000. In 1945 the population was reported to be 1,500,000.³ Of course this additional population included the influx of students and other non-agricultural personnel.

From the data furnished by the Work Report of the Border Region Government in 1941, total grain production in the period from 1937 to 1940 increased by 53 per cent while the area of cultivated land increased by 16.8 per cent.⁴ At present we have no way of ascertaining the contributing cause for the 41 per cent increase in agricultural production.

¹ Israel Epstein, 278-279.

² Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 168-174.

³ Work report of the SKN Border Region, 1939-1941, 57; Stein, Gunther, 177.

⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

(7) Bio-technical improvements. Scattered reports indicate that the Chinese Communists did not achieve any spectacular results in the field of bio-technical programs. Although the importance of bio-technical improvements was realized by the Border Region government, factors such as war, blockade, shortage of technical personnel and industrial backwardness made any substantial progress all but impossible. As mentioned previously, considerable work accomplished in the Border Regions regarding irrigation involved primarily human labor. As a part of the conservation program of the SKN Border Region, 292,535 trees were planted in 1937, 482,852 in 1938, and 1,392,160 in 1939. In 1940, 524 "public forests" were set aside for preserves.¹

The Agricultural Exhibitions held at Yen-an from 1938 to 1945 showed many "improved crops"--more than seventy types of millet, seventy types of beans and a number of improved cotton seeds, fruits and vegetables.² There was also in Yen-an an experimental farm which had 300 mou of land and **fifty employees**. The farm was divided into three departments: experimentation, veterinary, and dairy products. Animal vaccines were made at the farm and several improved crops were developed. It was reported that one type of millet was pest-resistant and 10 per cent higher in yield than ordinary millet; one breed of corn was a 50 per cent increase in yield; some improved potatoes were 25 per cent higher in yield; and several new types of vegetables and fruits were produced.³ Animal breeding stations

¹ Work report, 44-50.

² Ibid., 51-52.

³ Huang Yen-pe1, Return from Yen-an, 33-34.

were set up to develop and distribute improved breeds of donkeys and sheep. Technical advice regarding pest control, prevention of animal diseases, and farming techniques was given to the peasants through government agencies.¹ In the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, 344,229 agricultural implements were produced by arsenals and cooperative workshops in 1940 and 1941.² Fragmentary as the above reports are, they are given here to indicate the general line along which the Chinese Communists worked in the bio-technical field during the war.

(8) Effects of Chinese Communists' war-time land policy on rural stratification and standard of living. Although no land redistribution policy was carried out in wartime in the various Communist areas (except in the SKN Border Region from 1935-1937), the Communists reported that their rent and interest reduction program had resulted in an increase of the middle class in the rural areas. An investigation of a "typical village" in the SKN area showed that in the war years, the number of rich and middle peasant households increased from 68 per cent to 88 per cent, while poor peasants and farm laborers decreased from 32 to 12 per cent. Per capita land holding of the various rural classes was shown as follows:³

<u>Class</u>	<u>Average land holding in acres</u>	
	<u>1936</u>	<u>1942</u>
Farm laborer	0	1.3
Poor peasant	4.7	6.7
Middle peasant	7.0	17.0
Rich peasant	10.0	18.0

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 47.
² Epstein, 286.
³ Epstein, 271.

One American observer reported that "in a typical village (in the SKN Border Region) from 1936-1942, the number of families of landless laborers decreased from 14 to 1; the number of poor peasant families fell from 48 to 15; that of middle peasant families rose from 44 to 94; and that of rich peasant families from 2 to 15; while the total number of households in the village increased from 108 to 125."¹ In the Shensi-Chahar-Hopei Area, an investigation of 35 villages in 1943 showed the following changes in class composition:²

<u>Class</u>	<u>1937</u>		<u>1942</u>	
	% in house- hold	% in land- holding	% in house- hold	% in land- holding
Landlord	2.42	16.43	1.91	10.17
Rich peasant	4.50	21.93	7.88	19.56
Middle peasant	35.42	41.69	44.31	49.14
Poor peasant and farm laborer	47.53	19.10	40.95	20.12

Although comprehensive data are lacking, available information indicates that there was a gradual trend toward equalization of landholding in the Communist areas during the Sino-Japanese War.

In addition to political and social reforms which will be discussed later, the Communists claimed that the majority of the peasants in the Border Regions improved their lot economically. This statement, so far as the SKN Border Region is concerned, seems to have been confirmed by foreign observers. One of them wrote that:

Journalists visiting Yen-an in 1944 found higher living standards in

¹ Stein, 163.
² Ti Ch'ao-pei, Peasant problem in post-war China, 7.

terms of food, clothing, etc., than in Central (Kuomintang) areas. The Yen-an area, according to Brooks Atkinson, had a 100 percent food surplus, for the year 1944...and the Border Region was mostly self-sufficient although it had to import cotton cloth, iron, paper, and medicines....Similarly, Maurice Votaw, correspondent for the Baltimore Sun and an advisor to the Chinese Ministry of Information, found that the people's livelihood had improved, largely as a result of a better diet and increased weaving of cloth.¹

Another reported that:

My observations proved that Wu Man-yu's (a labor hero of the SKN Border Region) claims about the improvements in village life in the Border Region were well founded. I talked with many people about the changes that had taken place during the last few years with the peasants and officials; with doctors who judged from their experiences in hospitals and outpatients' departments; and with shop-keepers whose yardstick is the rising purchasing power of their rural customers. Their accounts all checked....The increase of popular food consumption, shown district by district, ranged from a minimum of 33 per cent to fully 100 per cent, comparing the last year of KMT rule with 1943. The increase of per capita grain reserves held by the peasants of typical villages increased two and a half times from the period immediately before the 1940 harvest to that of the 1943.²

Information available from Communist sources indicates that the living conditions in the SKN Border Region were not without difficulty. In 1940 and 1941, the situation was especially trying as a result of blockade. Mao Tse-tung described that period as follows: "We were almost without clothes, vegetable oil, paper, or vegetables. The soldiers had no shoes or socks, and the cadres spent the winter without blankets."³ Harrison Forman also reported there was a drop in the level of living among the Communist army from 1939's 100 per cent to 88 per cent in 1940 and 84.2 per cent in 1941. The turning point seemed to be in 1943 when the army's living standard went up to 125 per cent and general improvements

¹ Rosinger, 210.

² Stein, 162-163.

³ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 2.

were made.¹

Other reports, undoubtedly inspired by idealism, praised the "betterment of the peasants' lot" in other Communist-held territories during the war. Although one Communist writer stated that "in the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area, from 1940 to 1944, 100 out of 1961 middle peasant households were raised to the status of rich peasants and 1993 out of 3378 poor peasants became rich or middle peasants,"² we must assume that no spectacular rise in the peasants' living standard was realized under the strain of fighting and blockade. If the peasants were happier as human beings in the Liberated Areas compared to the lot of their compatriots under the Kuomintang misrule, the chief reasons were due to political and social reforms carried out by the Chinese Communists. The next section will discuss briefly the salient accomplishments in these fields.

b. On other agrarian programs

(1) Village administration. The organization and functions of basic local administrations like the hsiang and ts'un Offices and Councils have been discussed previously in section II.C.3. It was reported in April, 1941, that in the SKN Border Region, in the first election of Councils of the various levels (regional, hsien and hsiang levels) in 1938, 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the voters in Yen-an and its neighboring districts participated. On the average, more than 70 per cent of the voters in the Border Region went to the polls. The administration at the various levels made detailed reports to the voters on the plans and achievements of their

¹ Forman, 74.

² Mu Hsin, 40.

work and received numerous suggestions and criticisms. When the lists of candidates were posted, there were many discussions on the merits and demerits of the candidates.¹ Another report in March, 1943, stated that the three-thirds system² had been strictly carried out at all levels of the government. In the hsiang Councils in the eight hsien, Communist councillors constituted only 19.8 per cent of the membership. After the 1942 hsiang Council elections, the three-thirds system prevailed everywhere.³ Israel Epstein reported that in 1944, among the 9,967 elected to the district Councils, 7,490 or 75.6 per cent were non-Communists. The class composition of these councillors was reported to be as follows: landlord and gentry, 1.8 per cent; rich peasants, 7 per cent; middle peasants, 24.4 per cent; poor peasants, 55.6 per cent; tenant farmers, 0.5 per cent; farm laborers, 5.1 per cent; handicraftsmen, 3.9 per cent; and merchants, 1.7 per cent.⁴ In the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, it was reported that in the 1940 election, the results in seven hsien in Central Hopei showed that 87 per cent of the middle peasants, poor peasants, and farm laborers participated in the voting and that they constituted 90.9 per cent of the chairmen of ts'un councils; 87.2 per cent of the landlords and rich peasants participated in the election and constituted 7.6 per cent of the Chairmen of ts'un Councils.⁵ Another report stated that in

¹ Work report, 23-24.

² The three-thirds system provided that in all levels of government in the Border Regions, one-third of the officials should be Kuomintang members, one-third Communist, and one-third non-partisan.

³ Regulations and policies of the SKN Border Region, 20-21.

⁴ Epstein, 247.

⁵ T'i Ch'ao-pai, 11.

forty-four administrative villages in the fourteen hsien of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area, election results in March, 1941, showed that 70.3 per cent of the male voters and 70.8 of the female voters cast their votes. In the fifty-five administrative villages investigated, the average percentage of rural classes represented in the ts'un Councils was as follows: middle peasants, 44 per cent; poor peasants, farm laborers and rural workers, 38 per cent; landlords and rich peasants, 17 per cent; and merchants, 1 per cent. Among the ts'un Chiefs, 32 per cent were middle peasants, 54 per cent poor peasants, and 14 per cent landlords and rich peasants. Women councillors constituted about 10 per cent. The three-thirds system was strictly observed.¹ Western observers who visited the Border Region reported "frank and thorough discussions regarding questions of land rent and tax regulations were held in public" in councils of various levels.²

Regarding the details about village elections in the Border Region, one American observer gave the following eye-witness account:

The Election Committee of eleven sat in a clearing examining the voters' qualifications. The Committee was composed of one rich peasant, one middle peasant, three poor peasants, two farm laborers, three women, and a primary school teacher. Of the 620 prospective voters whose names were posted on a bulletin board, only three were declared unqualified. One was feeble-minded and the other two were not yet 18 years old.³

The Chinese Communists might have encouraged popular participation in administration and allotted one-third of the representation to the

¹ Mu Hsin, 19-20.
² Reported by Michael Lindsay, quoted by Gunther Stein, 371-372.
³ Harrison Forman, 98-99.

Kuomintang members, but controlling power lay firmly in the hands of the Communist Party men. Whether through sympathy with the Communist program or the Communists' control of the mass organizations from which most of the "non-partisan" members were elected, the Communist Party never had to worry about the disapproval of the basic platforms in the various administrations. The cadres at the village level were mostly new recruits after 1937.¹ They generally had schooling not higher than the middle school level and their inexperience often lowered their efficiency. But honesty and hard work enhanced the effectiveness and popularity of the administration.

(2) Village mass organizations. There are no statistical data available regarding the organizational strength of the mass organizations in the village such as the youth corps, the women's league, the mutual aid teams,² the people's militia, and others. But reports indicate that they were extensively organized. The people's militia, consisting of several million men, because of the wartime needs played an especially important role in the Border Regions. These village forces served not only as auxiliary and guerrilla units, but as a core in the agrarian program, as in the production-increase movement. They were backed by about 1.5 million regular Communist troops. This paper does not intend to cover the military

¹ In 1944 there were 11,500 on the government payroll in the SKN Border Region, including 3,300 in the educational institutions. Seventy per cent of the lower class cadres joined after the war (July 7, 1937). Collection of policies and regulations of the SKN Border Region, Vol. 2, 9 and 17.

² In 1943, 81,128 out of a total of 338,760 "whole labor power" in agriculture in the SKN Border Region were organized into mutual aid teams--about 24 per cent. Ibid., 30.

aspects of the CCP. Suffice it to say that the Red soldiers, by their extraordinary discipline, their fighting against a ruthless invader, and their constant effort in helping the local peasants in farming activities, greatly enhanced the popularity of the CCP and the implementation of the land policy among the peasantry in the Communist areas during the Sino-Japanese War.

(3) Social and educational reform programs. The social reforms in the rural areas under Communist control during the war centered on the improvement of the status of peasant women, the abolition of undesirable customs and habits such as superstitious practices, opium-smoking and gambling, and the reform of loafers in the villages.

As a rule, the reform methods were gradual and moderate—mainly through persuasive approaches. Women's right to inherit property, chiefly in regard to land, was guaranteed.¹ They were given equal rights with men to participate in political activities, and many of them were elected to village administrative offices. Monogamous marriage was made the rule, as in the Kuomintang areas; but unlike the Kuomintang, Communist officials kept no concubines or mistresses. Divorce was made easier for the peasant women, but it was not encouraged.² Also discouraged were the practices in the rural districts of keeping slave-maids and child daughters-in-law. The elevation of the status of peasant women came mainly from their better economic position as a result of property inheritance, through subsidiary

¹ For more details, see Regulations on the women's rights to inheritance, SKN Border Region Government, June 15, 1943.

² For more details, see Marriage Law, SKN Border Region Government, March 20, 1944.

occupations as weaving, and a greater opportunity to receive education. Girls and even adult women were given every encouragement to join the village school or reading classes. Literacy enhanced both their ability and prestige.

Young peasants also had greater freedom but they were exhorted to respect the advice of their parents and elders. The strengthening of the position of village youth had a great deal to do with the important role played by the people's militia and the hard and often dangerous work undertaken by young village officials. Old peasants were generally too weak or timid for such jobs and the power gradually shifted into the hands of the more vigorous young peasants. Even village children joined in defense and productive work when they were not at school. Many of the "little devils" distinguished themselves in village security work and in agricultural odd jobs such as the removing of pest insects and picking up of animal manure for fertilizer.

Another social program in the Border Region publicized both by the Communists and outside observers was the reform of Erh-liu-tse. Erh-liu-tse is a general term for the "loafers" in the Border Region who were undesirables because of their bad habits such as opium smoking, gambling, and thieving. Harrison Forman gave a vivid description of the measures used by the Communists to transform these social "incurables" into productive peasants. One report stated that the number of Erh-liu-tse in the SKN Border Region was reduced from about 30,000 in 1935 to 400 in 1945.¹ Mao Tse-tung describes the methods used to "mobilize" these

¹ Harrison Forman, 71.

loafers in the following manner: (1) educate and convince them that production work will result in a better living for them; (2) assign each of them a definite task and check them regularly; (3) organize peasants to offer them assistance and supervision; (4) mobilize the villagers to encourage and persuade them; (5) give them the income and products from their work; and (6) offer every help in solving their difficulties through the government.¹ Side by side with the reform of these "social wastrels," steps were taken to weed out some of the factors responsible for their bad habits, such as opium-smoking, gambling, prostitution, and superstitious practices. The belief in idol worship and in witch doctors among the peasants of the SKN Border Region was strong, and many fortune tellers and witch doctors thrived on the peasants' ignorance. Reports available indicate that education and propaganias effected by the Communists greatly reduced, but did not entirely eradicate, the influence of these charlatans.

Education in the Border Regions was closely coordinated with agricultural productive work. Thus it constituted an important factor in the increase of production. For example two directives on education issued respectively by the SCH and SKN Border Region Governments on November 11, 1943, and April 18, 1944, both stressed that "education must unite with the production movement" and emphasized the propagation of farming knowledge and techniques. To achieve the above objective a number of educational devices besides the regular village school were utilized. Among these were evening classes, newspaper reading groups, night schools, family reading units, and vocational training classes. Villagers were

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Economic and financial problems, 29.

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encouraged to study wherever they could--at home, in the fields, as well as in the school. Various media were used to persuade the masses to adopt better farming methods and to increase their effort. Notable among these means of propaganda and education were the "black-board" newspapers, lectures, exhibitions, personal interviews, group discussions, story telling, village drama, and the yangko. "Blackboard" newspapers were bulletins written either on a board or on the wall. They publicized government directives on agriculture and announced the results of "emulation contests" between mutual aid teams as well as between agricultural labor heroes. Drama teams formed by villagers utilized many of the traditional techniques, but with new themes such as the commendation of labor heroes and the merits of increase in production. The plots often depicted local personalities and the dialogue used was colloquial and simple. One drama team of Yen-an, the Resistance Drama Club, gave eighty performances in four months to more than 50,000 spectators in 1940.¹ The July Drama Club of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area acted before an audience of more than 3,000,000 from July 1939 to January 1945 in 1,500 per formances.² The yangko, which will be discussed further in a later section, was an indigenous folk dance popular among the peasants in China. It was a form of a song or a dance or drama, or a combination of these. As it was simple, easy to learn, and colorful, its popularity spread far and wide. The yangko, like the other propaganda media, was modified both in form and in content to depict the life of the peasants, and to publicize

¹ Work report of the SKN Border Region Government, 1930-1941, 76.

² Mu Hsin, 92.

agrarian reform programs in simple and realistic style. Many yangko lauded the deeds of the more famous labor heroes in agriculture of the Border Regions.

The labor heroes were those peasants who were chosen, generally by election, for their special achievements in the various aspects of agriculture—greater production, irrigation projects, reclamation, cotton cultivation, and so on. They were given public acclaim as well as material rewards to stimulate others to higher incentive and greater production.

The above-mentioned political and social reforms were closely coordinated with other programs in the land policy. They formed an integral part of the Communists' effort to break up the traditional agrarian system and to increase agricultural production. Many of these measures, as we shall see, were retained in the land policy of the Chinese Communists in the post-war period.

5. Comments on the period.

This section does not intend to discuss the overall impact of the Sino-Japanese War, such as the loss of the large industrial centers in China and the weakening of the Chinese petty bourgeoisie class. These factors, briefly discussed in the Introduction, had a far-reaching effect on the development of the Communist movement, but the following comments will only deal with the salient characteristics of the Communist land policy during the period of 1937-1945.

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a. Moderate nature of the program

The wartime agrarian policy of the Chinese Communists was designed to attract support from all rural classes for the war effort and for the expansion of power by the CCP. Thus the landlords' "civil, political, and property rights were guaranteed as well as those of the peasants."¹ Collection of rent and interest was also guaranteed after the carrying into effect of rent and interest reduction stipulated by the Border Region Government. In the village administration, all elements, including the Kuomintang and the gentry, were represented and the policy of limiting the Communists' seats to one-third was generally observed. This moderate program was, however, an expedient measure of a transitional nature rather than a long-term policy. This was made clear in the major writing of Mao Tse-tung of the period in such works as New Democracy (January, 1940), Economic and financial problems (December, 1942), and On coalition government (April, 1945). The conciliatory nature of the land program was designed chiefly to win over the upper and middle classes in the rural as well as the urban areas until the peasants were sufficiently organized and mobilized. At the beginning of the war, popular enthusiasm for the Chinese Communists was not evident among the peasants in North China, partly because of the propaganda of the Kuomintang, partly because of the extreme measures implemented by the Communists during the Kiangsi Soviet period, and partly because of the traditional conservatism of the Chinese rural community. The advocacy of a moderate, practical policy, together

¹ See Resolution of the Central Committee on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas, January 28, 1942.

with a number of other moves which will be discussed in the following sections, helped the Communists to expand their control in China from about a score of hsien in 1937 to about one-fourth of the mainland at the end of the war in August, 1945.

b. Strong nationalistic flavor

With eyes on political expediency and fingers on the public pulse, the Chinese Communists put increasing emphasis on their demand for national resistance against Japan which invaded the Northeast in September, 1931. The anti-Japanese united front was finally established after the December Twelfth (1936) Incident when Chiang Kai-shek was released by his kidnapers, Generals Chang Hsueh-liang and Yang Hu-cheng, upon the advice of the Chinese Communists. The first sentence of the "Resolution of the Central Committee on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas" dated January 28, 1942, states that "since the beginning of the war of resistance (July 7, 1937), the land policy carried out by our Party in various anti-Japanese bases has been a land policy based on the anti-Japanese national united front." The shift from the land confiscation policy to rent and interest reduction was attributed to the reason that "most of the landlords are anti-Japanese." Peasants were organized into Peasants' National Salvation Associations. Under the intolerable oppression of the Japanese, the peasants in the occupied areas turned toward the Chinese Communists for help and advice. Also the composition of the CCP itself was undergoing a change in the war. Ninety-three per cent of its membership, which totalled 1.2 million at the end of 1944, joined after the war, and 90 per cent of these new recruits were peasants. As one

observer remarks, they came to the Party not after having read and agreed with the theories of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, but in the course of liberating their homes from the Japanese and reforming the social life of their villages. It was in the practice of grim fighting and hard work for freedom and social progress that they found themselves in agreement with the new Communist policies that made this two-fold fight possible.¹ An interesting reaction of the peasants during the war was reflected by Yen Li-hsuan, a sixty year old peasant⁴ of North China. When he was asked what if the Communists should return to radical revolutionary methods after the war, he replied: "If they wanted to introduce Communism, they would have trouble with various groups of the people. This New Democracy is what the people want, not Communism."² This nationalistic tinge of the CCP was also manifest during the war in many other aspects.³ When Mao Tse-tung was asked whether the Communists were Chinese first or Communist first, he replied, "Without a Chinese nation there could be no Chinese Communist Party. You might just as well ask what is first, children or parents?"⁴ Whether this was intended for public consumption or represented a transitional expediency, it is not known, but the strong nationalistic flavor at Yen-an was reported by many neutral observers who visited there during the Sino-Japanese War.

¹ Stein, 146.

² Stein, 392.

³ For example, the terms "Soviet" and "Red Army" were dropped after 1937 and replaced by "Border Region" and "8th Route Army." The Marx-Lenin Institute at Yen-an was changed to the Party School. Lusun, the late dean of Chinese writers, replaced Gorki as the name of another academy in the Communist capital. Forman reported that "the portraits of Marx and Lenin seemed like relics of a revolutionary past." 176.

⁴ Stein, 118.

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c. Practical and realistic approaches in the land policy

The skillful exploitation of the nationalistic sentiment of the Chinese rural populace and the anti-Japanese war was only one of the practical approaches made by the Chinese Communists to expand the power and popularity of the Party. Throughout, in legislation and directives, there was a constant reminder that adjustments must be made and attention paid to specific local conditions and needs. For example, the "Outline for the simplification of the administrative structure" promulgated by the SKN Border Region Government in March, 1943, stated:

First,...good ideas and good policies are results of investigations and studies of actual conditions. Without familiarity with the circumstances, without understanding the actual needs of the people and the situation of the lower administrations, without careful studies and gathering of information, there can hardly be good ideas and good policies. Mistakes of subjectivism will be committed. Second, the thorough realization of the policies....To accomplish them, it is both necessary to handle and utilize skillfully the cadres and to make periodical checks on the policies, decisions, and effects. Assistance should be given to overcome the difficulties encountered by the lower administrations, mistakes rectified, and timely rewards and encouragements given. Third, past experiences should be utilized for the training and directing of lower cadres as well as the administrative heads themselves. The bureaucratic practice of unrealistic planning, alienation from the people, formalism, red tape, and issuing orders instead of explaining and persuading must be avoided....¹

This pragmatic approach to problems in the land reform can be seen in the following instances: (1) traditional organizations and techniques such as the mutual aid teams and the yangko were utilized; (2) special provisions were made to meet specific local conditions; for example, "rent reduction might be from 10 to 20 per cent instead of the stipulated

¹ Collection of policies and laws of the SKN Border Region,
Vol. II, 15-16.

25 per cent in guerrilla areas or places near (enemy) strongholds";¹ (3) trained students were sent into the villages to work among the peasants, thus overcoming the traditional reluctance of the Chinese intellectuals to engage in manual labor and the tendency to congregate in the cities. Many local leaders were chosen from their own districts and knew what the needs and difficulties of the locality were; and (4) careful planning was made to meet particular problems of various rural communities.² Thus George Taylor wrote: "Peasants were instructed where to keep their grain, what to do with their property and with themselves in case of (Japanese) invasion. Plans for the feeding and housing of refugees and for settling them on new land were worked out in great detail, for the cooperation of the peasants had to be kept at all costs."³ The incorruptibility, enthusiasm and frugal living⁴ of the cadres on the whole further strengthened their popularity among the villagers.

d. Inadequacy in bio-technical improvements

Available reports reveal no substantial achievements in the bio-technical fields in the Chinese Communist agrarian program during the

¹ Appendix, "Resolution of the Central Committee on land policy in anti-Japanese base areas," January 28, 1942.

² See Gelder Stuart, The Chinese Communists, 239.

³ Taylor, 112.

⁴ In a report made in 1941, Lin P'ao-ch'ao said: "The cadres eat, live, work together with the masses. They wear straw sandals and poor clothes. Even when the economic conditions of the Border Region improve, the government workers still get a daily ration of two pounds of inferior quality rice, and a monthly allowance of two cotton suits, two pounds of oil, five pounds of meat, and from three to five dollars. Generally speaking, the standard of living of the ordinary peasants is much better than that of the government workers who also engage in productive work such as farming, weaving, etc." Work report, 21.

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war. The removal of economic and social abuses that plagued the Chinese rural areas helped to increase production, but the basic problem in rural China where the expansion of new land is not unlimited is that the crux of enhancing the peasants' living standard lies in the increase of agricultural yield per unit of land. One American expert estimated that improvement in the use of fertilizers, better seeds, control of injurious insects and plant disease, a forest station, and animal breeding, alone, will double the yield per acre and the production of the farm as a whole.¹ As previously reported, in the SKN Border Region which was the most stable area under the Communist control during the war, grain production increased about 58 per cent from 1937 to 1940. As the amount of cultivated area was raised by 16.8 per cent during the same period and more farm labor was available as a result of the influx of immigrants, it must be concluded that there was no impressive bio-technical achievement in the agrarian program. Marketing facilities were poor and farm credit was far from adequate. The inefficiency of small farms was partially remedied by the extensive organization of mutual aid teams, but the problem was not solved. Due to the pressing needs of man power in the war, the basic question of over-population temporarily faded into the background. However, it is only fair to point out that, during the war, with constant pressure from the Japanese army, with a tight blockade set up by both Japan and the Kuomintang and with no industrial cities in the Communist areas, there was little possibility for providing materials, equipment, and technicians necessary to develop scientific farming.

¹ Gerald Winfield, China, the land and the people, 287-294.

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e. Shortage of administrative and technical
personnel for agrarian reform program

When the Chinese Communists began to expand their land reform program outside of the SKN Border Region, the shortage in trained cadres became more and more acute. Although the various training centers and schools at Yen^aen turned out a few thousand graduates annually, they were soon swallowed up by the vastness of the North China plain. A report of the SKN Border Region Government pointed out that "personnel at the lower level is comparatively weak."¹ Another directive of the SKN Border Region Government dated February 25, 1944, complained that "in some guerrilla areas not yet consolidated, the village administration is still in the hands of the feudalistic elements, loafers, and even traitors."² The problem was further aggravated by the fact that the training period for the cadres was generally short, ranging from a few months to two years. Because of years of isolation due to the blockade, often it was difficult for the Communist cadres to keep abreast of current world events. Theodore White, in his descriptions of the Yen^aen leaders, said:

They knew their own country thoroughly and understood the villages ...they knew precisely what the peasants' grievances were and precisely how those grievances could be transmuted into action...Their ignorance of the outside world was sometimes shocking. They knew little of high finance, protocol, or Western administration; their understanding of industry, Western engineering, and international commerce was primitive....But they knew down to the last detail the impact of the Western world on China and how they planned to harness the energy and technology of the West for the benefit of the peasant.³

¹ Collection of policies and laws of the SKN Border Region, Vol. 2, 9.

² "Directive on the strengthening and reformation of village administrations."

³ Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, Thunder out of China, 229.

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The CCP has many capable political leaders, but it is the trained specialists, such as technicians and economists of which they are deficient. Also disciplined and regimented indoctrination, although yielding efficiency, sometimes killed the initiative of individuals. Peng Tseng, member of the Central Committee, said himself that:

Some of the cadres in the Party have a dishonest attitude: when one thing is said to be good, then everyone says it is good; bad, they all say it is bad. They are like a kite directed by the wind, without its own stand or its own principles. Another undesirable attitude is to give orders arbitrarily.¹

Whether such measures as self-criticism and criticism can suffice to offset these handicaps remains to be seen.

D. The post-war transitional period, 1945-1950

In time covered, this period is the shortest among the four--spanning about five years, from August 1945 when the Sino-Japanese War ended to June 1950 when the new Agrarian Reform Law was promulgated. But in the nature of developments, this transitional period is the most complicated one, embodying many shifts in the land policy of the Chinese Communists. There were four major changes during this stretch of five years. The first stage (Stage A) which lasted from August 1945 to December 1946 was, on the whole, a continuation of the wartime program of rent and interest reductions. The second stage (Stage B) which lasted from December 1946 to October 1947 was characterized by the compulsory

¹ Peng Tseng, "Equal division of land and reorganizing our ranks," a report made to the Land Conference of the SICH Border Region, (1947). Fight for the purification of Party organization, 11.

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purchase of "excess land" of the landlords. The third stage (Stage C) which lasted from October 1947 to the spring of 1948 represented the most radical era in the post-Soviet period, and was expressed through the Land Law of October 10, 1947, calling for land redistribution. The fourth stage (Stage D) which lasted from the spring of 1948 to June 1950 showed a swing back to moderation with the reduction of rent and interest again becoming the order of the day in the "new liberated areas."¹ Also due to the transitional nature of this period, some aspects, especially the one regarding results and effects, can only be discussed briefly, as comprehensive data are not available.

1. Party theory on the land question.

A major shift of Party theory came in this period when the 2nd Session of the 7th Plenum of the CC, CCP officially announced that "the center of gravity of Party work is shifted from rural areas to the cities."² This was closely tied in with political and economic expediencies. Politically, this decision reflected the continuous attempt of the CCP to reconcile the Marxist theory of leadership by the urban proletariat with the fact that the CCP came to power mainly through the strength and support of the peasants. Economically, the CCP must have realized that, with the taking over of metropolitan cities like Tientsin and Peiping,

¹ This term generally covers those areas that came under the control of the CCP in the autumn of 1947 and throughout 1951 in a number of sustained drives.

² Resolution was made public on March 23, 1949 at Shih-chia-chuang, near Peiping. At that time, a number of large cities like Kirin, Loyang, Kaifeng, Tsinan, Changchun, Kukden, Hsuechow, Tientsin and Peiping were successively occupied by the Chinese Communist forces.

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and millions of administrative personnel, soldiers, and other non-productive elements in the former KMT areas, the extension of fighting areas, and the increasing needs for reconstruction and rehabilitation, the economic and financial requirements which were formerly sustained principally by agricultural produce could not be met successfully without greater industrial production. However, inasmuch as China is predominantly agricultural, agrarian policy continued to receive top attention from Communist leaders.

Before this epic pronouncement in March 1949, there were a number of tactical changes in the line of the CCP regarding land policy, although the overall theory which assigned the peasantry the primary role in the Chinese revolution (theoretically under the leadership of the workers) persisted. Briefly, from August 14, 1945, when Japan surrendered, to the spring of 1948, the principles of the CCP land policy gave an increasingly important role and power to the poor peasants and hired farm laborers. Provided with the legal sanction of the Land Law of October 10, 1947, not only the landlords' but also the rich peasants' properties were confiscated for redistribution without compensation. Poor Peasants' Corps (including farm laborers) were designated as the "legal executive organ" in carrying out the land reform. During the winter of 1947-1948, the poor peasants were encouraged to grant no quarter to the landlords and rich peasants, and as a result, a number of the latter were subject to harsh and even brutal treatment. Even the properties of many middle peasants were infringed upon in what were later labeled "ultra-leftist errors." In the spring of 1948, after Jen Pi-shih's speech on January 12, 1948, in which he emphasized the importance of middle peasants and criti-

cised the use of physical violence against the landlords, the line was again reversed to moderation. Beginning from the fall of 1948, land redistribution ceased and reduction of rent and interest became the order of the day until June 1950 when land redistribution was again enforced. That this moderate measure of the 1948-1950 period was only of a transitional nature was reflected in an editorial of the Yu-hsi jih-pao (East Honan Daily) of August 24, 1948, which stated that "it (the carrying out of rent and interest reduction) is because the preparatory work of agrarian reform in the greater part of Central China still has not progressed to the fullest extent, and not because the policy of agrarian reform (i.e., land redistribution) is incorrect nor because the territory of Central China is unsuitable for agrarian reform...We must have the proper environment and must complete the preparatory work; the most important part being that the peasants must possess a high degree of political consciousness and confidence in the success of the revolution." In plain language, this meant that when the power of the CCP was consolidated and the peasants properly indoctrinated, land redistribution was to be carried out. The overall slogan during this transitional period was enunciated by Mao Tse-tung as "to rely on poor peasants, cooperate with middle peasants, eliminate the feudal system of exploitation in a planned, discriminate manner, and develop agricultural production."¹

2. Legislation and programs.

Following the various shifts in tactics during this period, the

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Speech at the Cadres' Conference of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area, April 1, 1948.

programs varied too, although the principal goal of increasing agricultural production and organizing the peasants remained paramount throughout.

For about fifteen months following V-J Day (August 14, 1945), the wartime program of rent and interest reduction remained the general principle. However, several measures were adopted by the CC, CCP to satisfy the increasing demand for land by the poor peasants and farm laborers now that the common enemy was removed. Land belonging to the Japanese government or its officials or to the puppet regime or its officials was confiscated and redistributed. According to one report, such "public land" in many provinces in the Northeast constituted from one-third to one-half of the total cultivated area.¹ Large land holdings which belonged to landlords who cooperated with the enemy were also appropriated. On May 4, 1946, a directive was issued by the CC of the CCP ordering that landlords' land should be redistributed among the landless, with the landlords allowed to keep a larger-than-average share of land. It also warned against infringement upon the properties of the rich peasants.² On December 21, 1946, the Draft law for government purchase of landlords' land in the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region was promulgated and soon similar programs were adopted in other Communist areas. The salient features of the Draft Law were as follows:

(1) All land of the landlord over and above the following reservations for himself and his family may be purchased by the government with land bonds payable in grain and redeemable in ten years. In general, the landlord's household shall keep land to the extent of 50 per

¹ Handbook of New Democracy, 1947 (Chinese, Hongkong), 82-83.

² Mao Tse-tung, Present situation and our tasks, 8.

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cent more than the per capita land owned by the middle peasant household in the same locality....Landlords who contributed to the anti-Japanese War may keep 100 per cent more than the per capita average of land owned by the middle peasants...Land cultivated by the owners' household, irrespective of size, is not subject to government purchase.

- (2) Land owned by rich peasants is not subject to government purchase.
- (3) Prices for the land (to be purchased) shall be fixed jointly by the haiang administration, the haiang Peasants' Association, and the landlord in question. The price of the land to be purchased is to be progressively reduced when the area is larger.¹
- (4) Surplus houses are subject also to purchase by bonds.
- (5) For land belonging to religious establishments and clans, the local inhabitants shall decide whether it should be purchased or not.
- (6) Land purchased by the government shall be distributed to landless peasants and peasants with little land at a price which is 50 per cent of the original purchase price. This half-price shall be paid by installments within ten years. Peasants who are too poor to pay may be exempted from all payment at the recommendation of the district government and with the approval of the Border Region Government.²

Under the double pressure of an increasing clamor of the peasants for more land and the need for obtaining a greater effort from the poor peasants who formed the backbone in the CCP's political and military struggle against the Kuomintang, the pendulum of land policy continued to swing to the left. In September 1947, leading cadres who engaged in land reform work were called upon by the Central Committee of the

¹ The detailed provision stipulates that "if it is under five piculs per capita, the price of land will be paid in full. From 5 to 10 piculs, there will be a 20 per cent discount. From 10 to 15 piculs, 40 per cent discount. From 15 to 20 piculs, 60 per cent discount. From 20 to 25 piculs, 80 per cent discount. From 25 to 30 piculs, 90 per cent discount. From 30 piculs up, that portion of land will be confiscated without compensation."

² For details, see Draft law for government purchase of landlords' land, Appendix II, Chang Hai-chang, Land policies in Communist China, February 1948, a mimeographed pamphlet in limited distribution, 16-20.

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CCP "to review the past experiences and to formulate new policies."

The result was the Land Law passed on September 13, 1947, and promulgated on October 10, 1947. The salient points in this legislation were as follows:

(1) Landownership rights of all landlords as well as those of all ancestral shrines, temples, monasteries, schools, institutions and organizations are all abolished. (Articles 2 and 3.)

(2) The village Peasants' Association is to take over the landlords' draft animals, farm implements, houses, grain and other properties and also to requisition the surplus portions of the above properties of the rich peasants. They shall then be redistributed to peasants and other poor people who are lacking in these properties. An equal portion is to be allotted to the landlords. (Article 8.)

(3) Land deeds shall be issued to those who receive land. They shall be allowed to freely manage, but, sell and rent out the land under specific conditions. Land contracts as well as debts incurred before the promulgation of the Land Law are declared null and void. (Article 11.)

Following the enactment of this Law, the winter of 1947-1948 witnessed a series of radical measures in the form of "struggle meetings" and "settle account" mass gatherings which often resulted in harsh and even atrocious treatment of the landlords and rich peasants. The poor peasants were granted undisputed power, and in their excitement, the properties of many middle peasants were infringed upon. Sensing the dissatisfaction of the middle peasants and the confusion caused in the villages, the Communist leaders exhorted the cadres to "safeguard the interests of the middle peasants" and warned against "ultra-leftist deviations."¹ At the end of 1947, the Central Committee reissued the two documents of the Kiangsi

¹ See Mao Tse-tung, Present situation and our tasks, December 25, 1947; Jen Pi-shih, Some problems in the agrarian reform, January 12, 1948; and Mao Tse-tung, Speech at the Cadres' Conference of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Areas, April 1, 1948.

Soviet days (1933) on the classification of the status of various rural classes, with certain modifications. Following their general principles, the late Jen Pi-shih gave definitions of the various rural classes in his speech of January 1948 as follows:

- (1) Landlords: those who possess much land, do not labor themselves --especially those relying on exploiting the peasants' land rent-- or concurrently engaged in usury and profit without working;
- (2) Rich peasants: those who possess much land, plowing animals, and farm implements, participate themselves in the principal farm labor, and at the same time exploit hired labor of peasants;
- (3) Middle peasants: those with land, plowing animals, and agricultural implements, laboring themselves and not exploiting or only slightly exploiting others.
- (4) Poor peasants: those with little land, agricultural implements, etc., laboring themselves and at the same time selling a portion of their labor power; and
- (5) Farm laborers: those who do not possess land, plowing animals or agricultural implements and sell their own labor power.

Jen further elaborated upon the delicate but all-important question of differentiating rich and middle peasants by saying that "those engaging in slight exploitation such as hiring others to herd cattle or sheep, hiring part-time laborers or laborers on a monthly basis, or even one full-time laborer or so, or perhaps renting out a little land or making small loans, from which the income does not exceed 25 per cent of their gross income, are still considered middle peasants or well-to-do middle peasants." This was evidence of the moderate trend adopted by the CCP hierarchy in land policy as the provisions in the reissued 1933 document allowed only 15 per cent in ordinary cases for the "income from exploitation" for the middle peasants.

Echoing this conciliatory tune, the Central Committee on

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February 22, 1948 issued a directive "on land reform and Party purification work in the old and semi-old areas." It classified the Communist areas into three categories: the "old areas," the "semi-old areas," and the "new areas," according to the degree of consolidation. "In the first category," the directive stated, "the land reform is comparatively thorough...and there should be no more land redistribution but only an adjustment of land made through mutual consent. In the second category, the land reform has not been thorough...and land redistribution should be effected if the majority of the peasants so demand it. Consent of the middle peasants must be obtained when their land is affected and not more than one-quarter of their land should be taken. In the third category, land reform is very inadequately carried out or has not been undertaken at all. In these areas, the policy of confiscating excess land plus other properties of the landlords and the rich peasants should be implemented. The properties of middle peasants must not be touched without their consent."

In the period from April 1948 to June 1950 during which the Communists crossed the Yangtze River and gained control of East, Central, South, Southwest, and Northwest China, the moderate land policy continued. A number of directives were issued by the Central Committee as well as regional Party organs. The major ones available to the writer are: Directive on land reform, CC, CCP, February 22, 1948; Directive on land reform and Party purification, CC, CCP, May 25, 1948; Outline for the reduction of rent and interest, Central China Bureau, CCP, October 8, 1948; Outline for reduction of rent and interest, Political Department, Kwangtung-

Kiangai-Hunan Border Region Forces, June 1949; Provisional regulations for rent reduction in the new areas in East China, East China Bureau, CCP, September 1949; and Regulations for rent and interest reduction in the Central-South Area, Military and Political Committee, Central-South China, February 1950. The key points of these official pronouncements, which followed in general the program of the Sino-Japanese War period, may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Rent was reduced 25 per cent, and total amount of rent could not exceed 37.5 per cent of the crop yield.
- (2) Rent in arrears was declared null and void; rent deposit as well as other forms of extortions were prohibited.
- (3) Old debts were to be calculated at an interest rate ranging from 15 to 30 per cent per annum. If interest payments equalled or exceeded the loan, no more interest was to be paid; if the interest payments doubled the loan or more, the debt was considered as cancelled.
- (4) Investments of landlords and rich peasants in industry and commerce were to be protected. If such properties were infringed upon by mistake, they were to be returned.
- (5) Clan land was to be managed by the village community and land belonging to religious organizations was to be protected.
- (6) The Peasants' Association was designated as the official organ to carry out the program of reduction of rent and interest.

The shift toward moderation is discernible in these documents. For example, the Directive of the Central Committee regarding land reform issued on May 25, 1948, stated:

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The direction of work should be shifted from land redistribution to unifying all the laboring people in the villages and organizing the landlords and rich peasants to develop agricultural production together....Only in those areas where conditions are ripe is land redistribution to be carried out....The question of land redistribution must not be raised in those districts where only slight difference in land holding exists between the poor and the middle peasants. In these districts the central task should be the recovery and development of production.¹

That this conciliatory gesture represented only a strategical withdrawal for political expediency is seen by the fact that land redistribution continued to be enforced in the "new areas" in the Northeast and North China, where the hold of the Communists was consolidated. This fluid policy in adjustment to circumstantial conditions is also reflected in the fact that although on February 28, 1950, the Government Administrative Council stipulated, among other things, that "no land redistribution would be carried out before the summer harvest of 1952 in the six provinces of Kwangsi, Yunnan, Kweichow, Szechuan, Sikang, and Suiyuan,"² land redistribution was in force in the winter of 1951-1952 when the Communists found they had consolidated soon enough to do so. The same directive also stipulated that "no land redistribution is to be carried out before the autumn harvest of 1951 in Sinkiang and those areas where Chinese inhabitants mix with minority groups." This provision was observed.

Regarding the program of agricultural taxation, no information is available on the agricultural taxes collected in the early stage of this period. Presumably the progressive agricultural tax effected during

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Speech at the Cadres' Conference of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Liberated Area, 23-27 (Appendix III).

² Government Administrative Council, CPC, Directive on land reform and taxation in kind in the new liberated areas, February 28, 1950.

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wartime was continued, with local variations. The rate of agricultural tax for the year 1948 was reported by Communist sources as 20 per cent of the agricultural income of the peasants.¹ This seems to indicate that, as fighting continued between the Communists and the Nationalists, peasants were taxed more heavily in the Communist areas than previously, as peasants in the liberated areas reportedly paid about 10 per cent of their income as agricultural taxes in the latter years of the Sino-Japanese War. (See page 94.) The Directive of February 28, 1950, issued by the Government Administrative Council ruled that "the average (of agricultural taxation) must not exceed 17 per cent of the total agricultural yield, and the additional public grain levied by the local people's governments must not exceed 15 per cent of the amount collected by the Central People's Government." The tax was collected on a progressive scale, and the maximum rate reached 60 per cent, and in special cases, 80 per cent. The actual results of tax collection will be discussed later.

Other programs in the land policy, such as the movement to increase agricultural production, the organization of peasants, especially the youth and women, mass education, propaganda, and indoctrination programs, were similar to those carried out during the Sino-Japanese War, except now the main target of attack was the Kuomintang. One significant development also occurred during this period. In February 1950, the Directive for dealing with agricultural land in the suburbs of cities of old

¹ Reported by Po I-po, Chairman of the North China regional government at that time, Chun-chung (The Masses), 2.42, October 28, 1948, 2.

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liberated areas was issued by the Government Administrative Council. One of the provisions stated that "in the interests of municipal construction and development of industry, the suburban farm lands (confiscated from the landlords) shall be placed under state ownership." The land then was redistributed among the poor peasants, but the government retained the right to repossess it and collected agricultural taxes from the cultivators. Although the nationalization of land under state ownership is not in immediate prospect, such a move is interesting to watch for as a future development.

3. Organization and administration

From August 1945 to October 1947 when the Land Law was enacted, the organizational structure in the villages in the Communist areas followed in general the pattern during the Sino-Japanese War. Local administration was primarily managed by the hsiang and ch'u governments elected by the villagers. The People's militia continued to serve as an auxiliary force to the regular Communist army, but this time the enemy was the Kuomintang, especially when civil war broke out openly after January 1947 when General George Marshall left China, admitting the failure of his mission. Other mass organizations such as the mutual aid teams, reading groups, drama and yangko teams continued to be organized, with functions similar to those during the war. There was, however, one new feature: the Peasants' Associations received increasing attention and powers. In the Regulations for the purchase of the land of the landlords made public in December 1946, the Peasants' Associations were given a one-third voice together with the

hsiang government and the landlord in question in determining the price of land to be purchased by the government. From the autumn of 1947 to the spring of 1948, the Poor Peasants' League became the all-powerful organ in matters dealing with land reform. It was officially stipulated in the Land Law of October 10, 1947 (Article 5) that:

The legal executive organs of reform of the agrarian system shall be the village peasants' congress and the committees elected by them; the assembly of the Poor Peasants' League organized by the landless and land-poor peasants of the villages, and the committees elected by it; ch'u, hsiang, provincial and other levels of the peasant representatives' congresses and the committees elected by them.

The predominant position assigned to the poor peasants can be seen from a report made by Mao Tse-tung to the Central Committee on December 25, 1947, in which he said:

In order to resolutely and thoroughly carry out the agrarian reform, not only Peasants' Associations and the committees elected by them should be organized to represent the vast masses of farm laborers, poor peasants, and middle peasants, but first of all the Poor Peasants' League which includes the poor peasants and farm laborers and the committees elected by it must be organized. They are to be the legal executive organs for agrarian reform, and the Poor Peasants' League should be the core in leading all struggles in the rural areas.¹

During the winter of 1947-1948, as stated previously, many cases were discovered in Communist areas where the poor peasants confiscated not only the industrial and commercial investment of landlords and rich peasants, but the properties of some middle peasants as well. These extreme actions led to discontent and confusion not only among the middle peasants, but also the poor peasants. After this, the CCP directives frequently reminded the cadres of the necessity of having the participation of middle peasants in the village administration. Two-thirds of the seats

¹ Mao Tse-tung, Present situation and our tasks, 8.

in the village administration were allotted to middle peasants in the old areas, and one-third of the seats in the new areas.¹ The Poor Peasants' Leagues were no longer organized in the areas that came under the Communist control after 1948 and those in the old areas were incorporated into the Peasants' Associations. After the establishment of the Central People's Government in October 1949, peasants were encouraged to form hsiang and ch'u people's representatives conferences or peasant representatives conferences to be the depository of power at the village level, with the local people's governments as the administrative organs. In the new areas, the authority to execute land reform was first vested in the Peasants' Association, and later the hsiang and ch'u people's representatives conferences. The organization and functions of these local power structures will be discussed more fully in the section on the current land reform program of the Chinese Communists.

To relieve some of the pressure regarding the shortage of administrative personnel and trained cadres in land reform, a great number of young men and women were trained in various areas. According to NCNA reports, from March 1947 to October 1948, more than 200,000 middle school students in the Northeast joined training schools or various branches of the administration. In North China, 15,559 students were admitted to the three newly established Communist colleges in the spring of 1949. In East China, more than 30,000 entered the Communist institutions in the summer of 1949. Many of these trainees later served as cadres in the

¹ Jen Pi-shih, Some problems in the land reform, January 12, 1948, 8.

rural areas for land reform. Also special schools and classes were set up by local governments at various levels to train personnel for land reform work. The training period was generally short--from three months to two years.¹

4. Results and effects

In the period from 1945 to 1950, because of its transitional nature and the continuous fighting of the Communist and the KMT forces, information and data are very scanty regarding the concrete results of the various programs in the CCP land policy. Hence, many aspects such as village organization, agricultural production, and whatever bio-technical improvements there were are discussed in the next chapter dealing with the current period (1950-1951). The following are some of the available data showing what was done in this transitional period.

a. Land redistribution

According to one neutral source, the "land redistribution plan was carried out in many areas in North and Northeast China even before July 1946. In four of the six Border Regions visited by Mark Gayn in 1947, land distribution, according to him, was nearly completed."² But in general, landlords were allotted more land than the middle and poor peasants in that period.³ In the winter of 1947-1948 the process of land

¹ For more information on the training of cadres by the Chinese Communists, see NCNA bulletins March 18 and 20, 1949; NYT, July 4, 1949, 1; and China Daily News, July 28, 1949, 4.

² Chang Hsi-chang, 10.

³ Ibid., 7-8. Cases quoted by Chang show that in one region, "landlords" (numbering 11,052 households) got an average of 121 mou, which was about five times the holding of a middle peasant in the same region.

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redistribution was accelerated after the enactment of the Land Law in October 1947. One of the results was that a number of extreme measures were taken against the landlords and rich peasants by the poor peasants as well as by many cadres. This was admitted by Jen Pi-shih in January 1948 when he said:

The correct criterion for the demarcation of class standing has not been grasped and the class standing of many people has been determined incorrectly....Now I cite a case from the Shansi-Shuiyuan Area, to elucidate on the seriousness of this danger. The number of landlord and rich peasant households should be less than 8 per cent, but the number of landlord and rich peasant households in Tsaichiai (an administrative village in Hsinghsien county, Shansi) exceeded 8 per cent by nearly twofold...It may be positively stated that in other villages of the Shansi-Shuiyuan area, in North China, East China, Central China, the Northeast, and the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, there is sure to be quite a number of cases of incorrectly determining class standing like that which took place in Tsaichiai, or cases more or less similar to this.¹

Revealed in the criticisms of the CCP leaders as well as in non-Communist reports were a number of cases in which the properties of middle peasants were wrongly confiscated and many landlords manhandled or even beaten to death.² This obviously caused discontent in the middle peasants and general confusion in the rural areas.

After the spring of 1948, the middle peasants were given a greater voice in the management of land redistribution and village administration. In many villages, households were reclassified according to the standards enunciated in the speech of Jen Pi-shih. The properties "erroneously dealt with" were returned to their original owners. Illegal

¹ Jen Pi-shih, 2, 4.

² For sample cases, see Liu Shao-ch'i and others, Typical experiences in land reform and Party purification, (Chinese) 6-40, and Jen Pi-shih, 21.

corporal punishment of landlords was "strictly prohibited." Meanwhile in the old areas, redistribution of land continued, though in a milder manner. According to one NCNA bulletin dated April 23, 1950, "land redistribution has been completed in the Northeast and in about 76 per cent of the total area of Shansi, Chahar, Hopei and P'ingyuan provinces."

b. Rent and interest reduction program

No comprehensive reports are available regarding the land reform in the new areas where rent and interest reduction was in effect between the summer of 1949 and the summer of 1950. Available reports concerning results regarding reduction of rent in early 1950 vary with different areas. In some districts the landlords were hard pressed and even beaten when their tenants demanded the refund of rents paid in 1949 or before. In some districts where the peasants were so afraid of the landlords through years of undisputed domination, they returned secretly part of the rent refund to which they were entitled. Even in old areas, renting out of land in small quantities was permitted under special conditions by the Communist authorities.¹

Debts contracted before the taking over of the Communists were calculated at the rates which were generally between 15 and 30 per cent per annum, irrespective of the originally agreed upon interest rates. New loans were made at whatever rate was arrived at by mutual consent of the parties concerned. For instance, an official report in December 1949 shows that in the Northeast, "for one picul of grain borrowed in the spring,

¹ Kao Kang, Speech to the conference on rural work in the Northeast, December 10, 1949.

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one and one-half piculs were to be returned in autumn."¹ This also indicates that as a result of the Communist policy of cancelling old debts, opportunities for peasants to secure loans from private sources were greatly reduced.

c. Agricultural taxation.

Po I-po, member of the Central Committee, CCP, in a report in August 1948 said that "the agricultural tax on the average must not exceed 20 per cent of the total agricultural income." This was higher than the stipulated agricultural tax during the war. One NCNA bulletin dated February 20, 1949, stated that "the public grain (tax in kind) in the new liberated areas in Honan...was, on the average, less than 15 per cent of the agricultural income." Another report stated that in the year 1949 the peasants in the Northeast paid a total of 2.3 million tons in tax, about 5.7 million tons less than what they paid under the Japanese and puppet rule.² The reported 2.3 million tons of grain paid as tax was about 16 per cent of the total reported grain production, and the percentage would be lower so far as total agricultural income is concerned. However, there are indications that peasants in East, Central, South and Southwest China in the months immediately after the Communist take-over, paid higher taxes than did their compatriots in the old areas. For instance, one Communist economist revealed in January 1950 that "the average tax burden on the peasants in the new liberated areas was about 20 to 25 per

¹ Kao Kang, Speech to the conference on rural work in the Northeast, December 10, 1949.

² Ibid.

cent of the agricultural income--which was more than the stipulated rate."¹ An Associated Press report from Nanking dated July 23, 1949, stated that "there were sporadic uprisings of peasants in Manchuria, Shensi, Honan, Kiangsu, and Anhwei opposing heavy taxes." It is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of such reports, but the Communist leaders themselves admitted that there were "counter-revolutionary" activities in South China, particularly in Kwangtung and Kwangsi.

d. Agricultural production

With the fighting gradually removed from the mainland and with the various programs set up by the Chinese Communists to stimulate production, there seems to be no reason to doubt the Communist reports that the total agricultural yield of 1949 increased considerably over the previous post-war years. But there is also an indication that the actual grain production fell short of the planned goal for 1949. For example, take the Northeast, the most stabilized area in Communist China. Kao Kang, Chairman of the Northeast People's Government, admitted that only approximately 90 per cent of 1949 agricultural production goal was realized, netting a total of 14.5 million tons (metric) of grains. (This figure does not include 2 million tons of subsidiary crops.) Production in other less consolidated areas such as South and Southwest China for 1949 probably was short of the planned goal also, since the mainland in that year suffered the worst flood and drought since 1931. Figures for agricultural production for the years 1945-1948 in the various Communist areas

¹ Nan Han-chen, (general manager of the Central People's Bank) speech to the Shanghai banking circle in January 1950.

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show a slow but steady increase, according to Communist sources. These data are not included here because (1) they cover only small areas and are spaced between long intervals, and (2) they may not be representative of the other areas in general.

e. Rural credit and marketing

The information on credit and marketing facilities in the rural areas under the Communist control during this period is rather meager and scattered. On March 5, 1949, the North China People's Government announced the rural credit plan for North China for 1949. It is quoted here not so much to evaluate the effects on the rural areas as to present some relative criteria regarding the priorities assigned to the various rural programs at that time. The plan for rural credit totalling 564 million dollars in the people's currency (jen-min pi)¹ gave the following allocations: 44.6 per cent for irrigation and equipment; 20 per cent for subsidiary industries; 11.4 per cent for livestock; 8.8 per cent for state farms; 4.4 per cent for cotton plantation; 3.4 per cent for chemical supplies (pest control, fertilizers, etc.) in agriculture; and 1.7 per cent for forestation; and 5.7 per cent for other purposes. The credit, with the increase of production as its primary goal, was divided into two categories. The general loans which were for equipment, fertilizer, seeds, draft animals, etc., were managed by the people's bank (established on December 1, 1949) through the rural cooperatives. The special loans which were for

¹ The official rate of exchange announced by the Communists on April 3, 1950, was 41,000 jen-min pi to one U.S. dollar. The rate of exchange announced by the People's Bank in August 1951 was about 22,000 jen-min pi to one U.S. dollar.

irrigation projects, afforestation, livestock, cotton plantation, etc., could be managed jointly by the people's bank, technical institutes, and local administrations. Most of them, however, were also managed through the rural cooperatives. The general credit was given for a short period of about eight months at an interest rate of six to twelve per cent per annum. The special loans were extended for a longer period of two to three years, at an interest rate of 2 to 3 per cent per month.¹ Available information indicates that there was little private credit available to the peasants and loans granted by the government could not cover all the needs.

Marketing facilities for rural products were very much limited as a result of fighting between the Communists and the Nationalists. Things improved a little during the later stage of this transitional period. At the end of 1949, more than 80 per cent of the railways were in efficient operation and inland water navigation along the Yangtze and other navigable rivers was resumed on a limited scale. But for most agricultural produce, the market was limited to neighboring districts during this period. The distribution of essential goods such as foodstuffs in the cities and cloth in the countryside was maintained by state trading companies and cooperatives.

f. Other programs in land policy

Other programs such as the organization of mutual aid teams, the setting up of village women and youth leagues, and the promotion of

¹ Hua-chiao jih-pao (China Daily News), New York, March 12, 1949, 1.

bio-technical and educational improvements followed the general pattern discussed in the previous sections on wartime programs. Available reports regarding concrete results of these programs during the earlier stage of this period are fragmentary. Data reported by the Chinese Communists on the results of the various agricultural programs on a national scale since the establishment of the Central People's Government on October 1, 1949, are included in the chapter on current (1950-1951) land policy.

5. Comments on the period.

a. Transitional nature of the period

Because of the frequent changes of policy toward the various rural classes as described in the section on legislation and programs, confusion and errors resulted in many districts. For instance, immediately after the enactment of the Land Law on October 10, 1947, the various regional Party and administrative organs called for the "confiscation of all the properties of the landlords and all the surplus properties of the rich peasants, the assignment of supreme power in the disposition of confiscated properties to the poor peasants and farm laborers, and the overthrow of the landlord class without mercy."¹ As a result, not only were many villages turned into turmoil, but errors were made in classifying the peasants. In a report by a Communist cadre² it was revealed that in the thirty-three "administrative villages" in an area in Shansi, 106 middle peasant households

¹ See the various articles in the pamphlet (Chinese) Struggle for the purification of the organization of the Party, 1-63.

² Tan Cheng-wen, "How the land reform has been carried out in Funghsien, Shansi," Typical experiences in agrarian reform and Party purification, 7.

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were wrongly classified as rich peasants, twenty-six middle peasants as landlords, five middle peasants as "downfall landlords," fifty-one peasants as "bankrupt landlords," and forty-three rich peasants as landlords. The reasons were attributed by that cadre to the "mistakes" of the local cadres and to the fear of the cadres of being accused as "protecting the landlords." This illustrates the danger of too much regimented discipline which results in the loss of individual judgment and initiative. It also indicates the shortage of trained administrative personnel in Communist areas.

This transitional period also saw a number of cases of atrocities against the landlords committed by the poor peasants and cadres. These illegal acts, called "irregularities and deviations" by the Communist leaders, were especially frequent during the later 1947 and early 1948. They were reported by the Communist sources to be "rectified" after the spring of 1948. But in the new liberated areas south of Yangtze, there was still reported cases of "illegal punishment" inflicted upon the landlords. Cases of excessive assessment of agricultural taxes and severe treatment of former Kuomintang local village officials, too, were reported by some foreign observers in some areas during this period.¹ One of the main causes of confusion during the winter of 1947-1948 was the vagueness in the definition of various rural classes. The situation improved after Jen Pi-shih re-

¹ For example, see William Skinner's "Aftermath of the Communist liberation in Chengtu Plain," Pacific Affairs, 24.1, March 1951, 61-76. The author observed that immediately after the Communist occupation of Szechuan, the agricultural taxes were heavy and the quota was later reduced. Another official Communist document, Decisions on the unification of state financial and economic work passed by the GAC on March 3, 1950 also admitted that "deviations were discovered in the work of (grain tax) collections. There is also a discrepancy between the taxes actually collected and the stipulated quota."

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defined rural class status in his speech on January 28, 1948 and by the promulgation of the detailed "Decisions on the differentiation of rural classes in the countryside" in August 1950, which will be discussed later.

b. Greater role granted to middle peasants and more leniency toward the rich peasants

One of the important trends that emerged at the end of this period was the greater power and prestige attained by the middle peasants. In general, middle peasants, who possess relative economic independence and do not exploit others, are the productive and respected members of the rural community. There was discontent among many of them during the 1947-1948 period when the poor peasants in many rural districts acted arbitrarily and infringed upon their interests. The situation was described by Jen Pi-shih in January 1948 as follows:

According to available information, in many places of the liberated areas where agrarian reform movement has been set in motion, a "leftist" tendency to encroach on the interests of the middle peasants and to exclude the middle peasants has occurred. This kind of tendency is manifested in the following questions: (1) the class standing of some middle peasants has been determined incorrectly...and they have had their possessions confiscated. (2) (This erroneous tendency) is expressed in wanting the middle peasants to take part in managing affairs. The middle peasants doubt that they are still wanted... (3) (The erroneous tendency also) is expressed in not giving consideration to the middle peasants on the question of public duties, especially increasing the middle peasants' burden. In some places, it has been discovered that only the poor peasant-farm laborer group decides and makes decisions on the apportioning of the public grain tax; and, because after agrarian reform the landlords and rich peasants are not in a position to meet their responsibilities, the public grain burden is placed on the middle peasants and even the delivering of public grain is apportioned more to them...

Jen Pi-shih concluded in his speech that the middle peasants could be "united very well" when their rights were safeguarded and they were given opportunities in the management of village affairs. Similar themes ran

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through subsequent directives and programs of the Chinese Communists on land policy. There were also a number of important measures which were practised during the early stage of this period and were later discarded as "incorrect." One was the confiscation of the industrial and commercial investment of the landlords and rich peasants. This was discovered to have a very disruptive and unfavorable effect on the rural economy as these enterprises had to be operated as a whole unit and as those who had savings no longer dared to invest them in industry and commerce. The second was the confiscation of the "hidden treasure" of the landlords and rich peasants such as their gold, silver, jewelry and personal belongings. The owners generally hid these items and when the peasants tried to unearth them, confusion and disorder resulted. The third was the confiscation of the "surplus properties" of the rich peasants. This discouraged the peasants in general to save or to expand farming facilities, for fear of being later labelled as rich peasants. These measures were, on the whole, no longer in practice after the spring of 1948.¹

c. Close coordination with practical conditions
and political expediency

As in other periods, the land programs of the Chinese Communists in this transitional post-war period were adjusted to circumstantial requirements and political expediency. For example, a different program was adopted in the new liberated areas from the summer of 1949 to the summer of 1950, which advocated only rent and interest reduction instead of land

¹ For more detailed information, see Jen Pi-shih, 10-18; Mao Tse-tung, Speech at the Cadres' Conference of the Shansi-Shuiyuan Area, April 1, 1948; Liu Shao-ch'i, On the agrarian problem, June 14, 1950; and The Agrarian Reform Law, June 28, 1950.

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redistribution.¹ Changes were also made in the details of the general land reform program to meet local conditions. But the overall principle in policy shifts seemed to be political expediency, i.e., how to attain and retain power in the most effective way. For instance, when the fighting between the CCP and the KMT became intensified after 1946 and increasing support was needed from the common peasants, more and more harsh treatment was given the landlords and rich peasants. After the summer of 1949 when the KMT strength was basically crushed while the Communists had not yet consolidated their control in the new areas south of Yangtze River, a moderate program of rent and interest reduction was enforced. When the situation in the new areas was deemed to be well in hand by the Communist leaders after the summer of 1950, the program of land redistribution was reintroduced one year in advance of the announced schedule. Also in accordance with circumstantial needs, the rich peasants were allowed to accumulate wealth and expand farming facilities to increase agricultural production. In the speech of Jen Pi-shih quoted previously, the reasons for the granting of better treatment to the middle peasants were given as follows:

At the present time in fighting Chiang Kai-shek, the middle peasants are relied on for a large part of the manpower and grain. In the Liberation Army at present, 30 to 40 per cent are middle peasants. If we injure the interests of the middle peasants, or even go so far as to stand in opposition to them, this will cause us to be defeated in the war (against the Kuomintang).²

This clearly shows the close tie between the CCP land policy and the political objective of the Party at that given time.

¹ See Government Administrative Council, CPC, Directive on land reform and tax in kind in the new liberated areas, February 28, 1950.

² Jen Pi-shih, 8.

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d. Official shift of emphasis from agriculture
to industry

An important shift of policy of the CCP occurred during this period. This was, as officially announced by the 2nd Session of the 7th Plenum of the CC, CCP on March 23, 1949, "the shift of the center of the Party's work from rural areas to urban cities." The implications of this significant event have been discussed in the section on the CCP's theory on the land problem in this period. The reasons can also be seen from Mao Tse-tung's On the people's democratic dictatorship written on July 1, 1949, to commemorate the 28th Anniversary of the CCP. Mao wrote:

The grave problem is that of educating the peasants. The peasant's economy is scattered. According to the experiences of the Soviet Union, it requires a very long time and careful work to attain the socialization of agriculture. Without the socialization of agriculture, there will be no complete and consolidated Socialism. And to carry out the socialization of agriculture, a powerful industry with state-owned enterprises as the main component must be developed. The State of the people's democratic dictatorship must step by step solve this problem of the industrialization of the country...

The same premise was contained in The Common Program, the supreme policy statement passed by the People's Political Consultative Committee on September 29, 1949, which stipulated that "the People's Republic of China must...steadily transform the country from an agricultural into an industrial country." (Article 3.) That agriculture will be used as a major instrument in achieving an industrialized China can also be seen from the May Day (1950) address of Liu Shao-ch'i who said: "After the completion of the land reform and after two or three reasonably good harvests, the present shrunken purchasing power in the rural districts will be swiftly revived and will gradually increase so that industry and commerce in the urban areas will

flourish." The indications are clear that in the blueprint of the Chinese Communists the emphasis is now shifted to industrializing China, and agriculture chiefly will bear the direct and indirect burden in the process of accumulating saving and developing exports in exchange for capital goods.