

CALLING UPON THE PEASANTS TO SELL COTTON TO THE STATE

June 1, 1951

The Administration Council of the Central People's Government⁴⁰ has issued a directive on the purchase and storage of cotton, and the CPC Central Committee has instructed local Party committees at all levels to act on it. This directive deals with an important matter, one that will affect the national economy and the daily lives of the soldiers and of all the people. Accordingly, throughout the country, and especially in cotton-growing areas, it must be taken very seriously.

The Council's directive and the Central Committee's instructions are intended to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of cotton to meet the urgent needs of the textile industry. To this end, cotton growers are being asked to sell their reserves to the state or to store them in warehouses belonging to designated state institutions on terms that will be to their own benefit and to the benefit of society.

The people's government has always been very concerned to increase cotton production and protect the interests of cotton growers. In carrying out the agrarian reform,⁶⁴ it is taking a number of measures to this effect. These include: setting a floor for the price of cotton, prohibiting speculators from forcing the price down, guaranteeing that the state purchases cotton at a fixed price, levying lower taxes on cotton than on grain, supplying peasants with large quantities of fertilizer at the right time and placing state orders for cotton well in advance of the harvest season. Thanks to these measures, cotton production increased last year, and more land has been devoted to cotton this year. As a result, peasants in the old liberated areas are now leading a much better life than before.

For many years China has imported large quantities of cotton. In the year and a half since its establishment, the Central People's Government has taken action to promote cotton production, and the result was last year's

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bumper harvest. But the problem now is that since people's lives have improved, the demand for cotton yarn and cloth is increasing. Last year, for the first time, we launched a nationwide campaign to increase production, but after we deducted the amount of ginned cotton retained by the peasants for their own use in making padded quilts, coats and homespun cloth, total output was not quite enough to meet the needs of cotton mills in all parts of the country. Taking advantage of this shortage, the U.S. imperialists are now blockading our country in an attempt to prevent us from exporting products in exchange for cotton. But the imperialist blockade is doomed to failure. We are fully confident that before too long we shall be able to produce not only enough grain to meet the country's needs, but also enough cotton.

We shall inform the peasants that if, after reserving a certain amount of last year's cotton for their own use, they sell all the rest to the state, cotton mills throughout the country will have almost enough. Many peasants now have large amounts of cotton on hand, but recently the amount they offer to the state has been steadily decreasing. If they go on refusing to sell their cotton, or selling only very little, the cotton mills will be forced to cut back production, and the soldiers and the people throughout the country will lack for clothing. Moreover, this shortage may cause price fluctuations. So the Government Administration Council calls on cotton growers in all parts of the country to sell their reserves to the state at reasonable prices or to store them in state warehouses with the option, at a later date, of withdrawing them or selling them to the state. This will be beneficial not only to the state and the whole people but also to the cotton growers themselves.

"If you want to be rich, grow cotton"—that has become a popular saying among the peasants. And under present circumstances, growing cotton really can help one become rich: the improved living standards of the peasants in the old liberated areas are proof of that. In the past, however, not all peasants who grew cotton were able to better themselves. On the contrary, in the old days under reactionary rule, they often lost money when, after a bountiful harvest of cotton, the price would drop, just as they lost money when the price of grain fell. Only the people's government can help cotton growers become rich, because it has reformed the system of landownership and implemented policies to protect their interests. Only when the country belongs to the people can cotton growers hope for prosperity. This is a fact. Without our victory in the revolution, the establishment of the people's government and the agrarian reform, it would be absolutely impossible for the cotton growers to improve their lot.

So the saying "if you want to be rich, grow cotton" is only a half-truth.

More important is that only by strengthening our country can we hope for a life of abundance. Party organizations, local governments and mass organizations in the cotton-growing areas should make this clear to the peasants, so that recognizing the absolute importance of building up the country, they will be willing to sell their cotton reserves, at reasonable prices, to the state. Using the slogan "To show your love for the country and to earn more money for yourself, grow more cotton," they should also encourage the peasants to increase output by planting more land to cotton and introducing intensive-farming techniques.

State trading companies, supply and marketing cooperatives and the People's Bank of China should pay the peasants reasonable prices for their cotton and make it easy for them to store cotton. Because the state trading companies have not been established long, there are still many shortcomings in their work. Also, they cannot provide enough goods to meet the peasants' needs. They must make every effort to overcome this deficiency so that the state will be able to purchase all the cotton it needs.

In most of the cotton-growing areas the agrarian reform has been completed. In the old liberated areas the peasants have considerable reserves of cotton, and they have strong political awareness. So long as local governments and Party and mass organizations work together, we can succeed in our effort to buy cotton. We believe that peasants in all parts of the country will show their patriotism by responding to the call of the Central Committee and the Government Administration Council and vying with each other to sell cotton to the state. We also believe that they will devote more land to cotton, introduce intensive-farming techniques, and do all they can to increase production as an answer to the imperialist blockade.