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Speeches/Documents

Title: ON THE QUESTION OF THE NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE AND THE ENLIGHTENED GENTRY

Author: Mao Zedong

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Description: This inner-Party directive was drafted by Comrade Mao Tse-tung for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

The Chinese revolution at the present stage is in its character a revolution against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism waged by the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat. By the broad masses of the people is meant all those who are oppressed, injured or fettered by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, namely, workers, peasants, soldiers, intellectuals, businessmen and other patriots, as clearly stated in the Manifesto of the Chinese People's Liberation Army of October 1947.^[1] In the manifesto "intellectuals" means all intellectuals who are persecuted and fettered. "Businessmen" means all the national bourgeois who are persecuted and fettered, that is, the middle and petty bourgeois. "Other patriots" refers primarily to the enlightened gentry. The Chinese revolution at the present stage is a revolution in which all these people form a united front against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and in which the working people are the main body. By working people are meant all those engaged in manual labour (such as workers, peasants, handicraftsmen, etc.) as well as those engaged in mental labour who are close to those engaged in manual labour and are not exploiters but are exploited. The aim of the Chinese revolution at the present stage is to overthrow the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and to establish a new-democratic republic of the broad masses of the people with the working people as the main force; its aim is not to abolish capitalism in general.

We should not abandon the enlightened gentry who co-operated with us in the past and continue to co-operate with us at present, who approve of the struggle against the United States and Chiang Kai-shek and who approve of the land reform. Take, for instance, people like Liu Shao-pai of the Shansi-Suiyuan Border Region and Li Ting-ming of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region.^[2] Since they gave us considerable help in the hard times during and after the War of Resistance Against Japan and did not obstruct or oppose the land reform when we were carrying it out, we should continue the policy of uniting with them. But uniting with them does not mean treating them as a force that determines the character of the Chinese revolution. The forces that determine the character of a revolution are the chief enemies on the one side and the chief revolutionaries on the other. At present our chief

enemies are imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, while the main forces in our struggle against these enemies are the people engaged in manual and mental labour, who make up 90 per cent of the country's population. And this determines that our revolution at the present stage is a new-democratic, a people's democratic revolution in character and is different from a socialist revolution such as the October Revolution.

The few right-wingers among the national bourgeoisie who attach themselves to imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and oppose the people's democratic revolution are also enemies of the revolution, while the left-wingers among the national bourgeoisie who attach themselves to the working people and oppose the reactionaries are also revolutionaries, as are the few enlightened gentry who have broken away from the feudal class. But the former are not the main body of the enemy any more than the latter are the main body among the revolutionaries; neither is a force that determines the character of the revolution. The national bourgeoisie is a class which is politically very weak and vacillating. But the majority of its members may either join the people's democratic revolution or take a neutral stand, because they too are persecuted and fettered by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. They are part of the broad masses of the people but not the main body, nor are they a force that determines the character of the revolution. However, because they are important economically and may either join in the struggle against the United States and Chiang Kai-shek or remain neutral in that struggle, it is possible and necessary for us to unite with them. Before the birth of the Communist Party of China, the Kuomintang headed by Sun Yat-sen represented the national bourgeoisie and acted as the leader of the Chinese revolution of that time (a non-thorough democratic revolution of the old type). But after the Communist Party of China was born and demonstrated its ability, the Kuomintang could no longer be the leader of the Chinese revolution (a new-democratic revolution). The national bourgeoisie joined the 1924-27 revolutionary movement^[3] and during the years 1927-31 (before the September 18th Incident of 1931) quite a few of them sided with the reaction under Chiang Kai-shek. But one must not on this account think that we should not have tried during that period to win over the national bourgeoisie politically or to protect it economically, or that our ultra-Left policy towards the national bourgeoisie was not adventurist. On the contrary, in that period our policy should still have been to protect the national bourgeoisie and win it over so as to enable us to concentrate our efforts on fighting the chief enemies. In the period of the War of Resistance the national bourgeoisie was a participant in the war, wavering between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. At the present stage the majority of the national bourgeoisie has a growing hatred of the United States and Chiang Kai-shek; its left-wingers attach themselves to the Communist Party and its right-wingers to the Kuomintang, while its middle elements take a hesitant, wait-and-see attitude between the two parties. These circumstances make it necessary and possible for us to win over the majority of the national bourgeoisie and isolate the minority. To achieve this aim, we should be prudent in dealing with the economic position of this class and in principle should adopt a blanket policy of protection. Otherwise we shall commit political errors.

The enlightened gentry are individual landlords and rich peasants with democratic leanings. Such people have contradictions with bureaucrat-capitalism and imperialism and to a certain extent also with the feudal landlords and rich peasants. We unite with them not because they are a political force to be reckoned with nor because they are of any economic importance (their feudal landholdings should be handed over with their consent to the peasants for distribution) but because they gave us considerable help politically during the War of Resistance and during the struggle against the United States and Chiang Kai-shek. During the period of land reform, it will help the land reform throughout the country if some of the enlightened gentry favour it. In particular, it will help win over the intellectuals (most of whom come from landlord or rich peasant families), the national bourgeoisie (most of whom have ties with the land) and the enlightened gentry throughout the country (who number several hundred thousand) and help isolate the chief enemy of the Chinese revolution, the Chiang Kai-shek reactionaries. It is precisely because they have this role that the enlightened gentry also constitute an element in the revolutionary united front against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism; therefore, attention must also be paid to the question of uniting with them. During the period of the War of Resistance, what we required of the enlightened gentry was that they should favour resistance against Japan, favour democracy (not be anti-Communist) and favour reduction of rent and interest; at the present stage, what we require of them is that they favour the struggle against the United States and Chiang Kai-shek, favour democracy (not be anti-Communist) and favour the land reform. If they can meet these requirements, we should unite with them without exception and while uniting with them educate them.

NOTES

1. See the first of the eight policies listed in "Manifesto of the Chinese People's Liberation Army", p. 150 of this volume.

2. Liu Shao-pai, an enlightened landlord of the Shansi-Suiyuan Border Region, had been elected Vice-Chairman of the Provisional Council of the Shansi-Suiyuan Border Region. Li Ting-ming, an enlightened landlord of northern Shensi Province had been elected Vice-Chairman of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region Government.

3. See "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan", Note 10, p. 25 of this volume.