

The Central Committee Directive Concerning the Land Problem,

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Translated by Lauress Ackman and Patti Eggleston.

According to the reports of comrades who have recently come to Yen-an, from all the liberated areas in Shansi, Hopei, Shantung, and Central China, there is an extremely broad mass movement. In the struggles of opposing traitors, settling accounts, and reducing rent and interest, the masses took land directly from the hands of the landlords and enthusiasm is running very high • In the areas where the mass movement has penetrated, we have basically solved or are in the process of solving the land problem • Some places, as a result of the movement, have reached the point where they have realized land equalization: all of the people (including the landlords) have obtained three mou of land. On the other hand, some bad gentry, evil tyrants, and landlords have fled to the cities where they criticize the mass movement in the liberated areas. Some middle-of-the-roaders have thus developed misgivings. Even within the party there are a few people who feel that the mass movement has been too excessive. Under these circumstances, our party must have a consistent policy. We must firmly support the direct action of the broad masses in carrying out land reform and provide systematic leadership so that the land reform in each liberated area may be quickly accomplished in accordance with the scale and intensity of the development of the mass movement. The party committee in each area at the forefront of the mass movement need not fear universally changing land relations in the liberated areas; it need not fear

peasants receiving large amounts of land or the landlords losing their land; it need not fear the destruction of feudal exploitation in the villages; it need not fear the curses and slander of the landlords; it need not fear the temporary dissatisfaction and wavering of the middle-of-the-roaders. On the contrary, it should resolutely support all the just ideas and righteous actions of the peasants and approve the land which peasants already received or just now are receiving. Against the slanders of the traitors, bad gentry, and landlords, you must provide refutation; against the doubts of the middle-of-the-roaders, you must supply explanation; and against incorrect viewpoints within the party, you must supply education. Every local party committee must clearly understand that the solution of the land problem in the liberated areas is now our most fundamental historical task. It is the key link in all our present activities. With the greatest determination and effort, we must wholeheartedly mobilize and lead the present mass movement to complete this historic task. Moreover, based should provide the current guidance:

1. Following the demands of the broad masses, our party firmly supports the peasants in their struggle to purge traitors, reduce rent and interest, and rescind rent and interest, they obtain land from the landlords' hands.
2. We must firmly use every method to draw in the middle peasants to participate in the movement, and cause them to benefit. Never infringe upon the land of the middle peasants. All the land of the middle peasants which has been encroached upon must either be returned or compensation paid. The entire movement must gain the genuine sympathy and satisfaction of all of the middle peasants (including the prosperous middle peasants).
3. Generally, do not change the land of the rich peasants. If, during the time of the liquidation and remission of land rents and land reform due to the demands of the broad masses, there is some unavoidable infringement, we still should not attack rich peasants too fiercely but must draw a distinction between rich peasants and landlords: toward the former we must emphasize rent reduction and preservation of that part of the land which they cultivate themselves. If we attack the

rich peasants too severely, this will cause the middle peasants to waver and impede production in the liberated areas.

4. We must give fair consideration to the livelihood of the middle and small landlords. Attitudes for treating the medium and small landlords should be differentiated from attitudes for treating big landlords, bad gentry, and evil tyrants: toward the former we should, wherever possible, adopt a style of mediation and arbitration to solve their disputes with the peasantry.

5. We must handle with care the dependents of the anti-Japanese soldiers and cadres who belong to the bad gentry or the landlord and the enlightened gentry and others who cooperated with us and were not anti-communist during the Anti-Japanese War, regardless of whether they lived in the liberated or Nationalist areas, and give them proper consideration during the mass movement ▪ ...

6. We must concentrate on carrying out resolute struggle against traitors, bad gentry, and evil tyrants, completely isolate them and seize their land. However, we must let them retain land necessary for maintaining livelihood, that is to say, provide them with food. Toward those running dogs used by the traitors, bad gentry, and evil tyrants who come from middle peasant, poor peasant, and poor families, we should adopt a discriminating policy. We must urge them to make a candid self-examination but need not confiscate their land ▪ After they have done so, they should be given the benefits they are entitled to.

7. Excepting the mines, factories, and shops owned by criminal and extremely wicked traitors which should be confiscated, all mines, factories, and shops established by rich peasants and landlords should not be encroached upon but should, instead, be protected so as not to affect out industrial and commercial development. We must not apply the same methods we used in solving the land problem and opposing feudal classes within the villages in opposing the industrial and commercial class; the two are fundamentally different. In some areas, the method of settling accounts with feudal landlords used in the villages was mistakenly applied to the cities, thereby destroying factories and stores. This ought to stop immediately, otherwise it will produce extremely bad effects.

8. Excepting criminal and extremely wicked traitors and public enemies whose execution is demanded by the great popular masses in the area (we should support these demands and formally carry out capital punishment through the sentencing of the court), We should apply a lenient policy. Don't kill, beat people to death, or make too many arrests. This will keep the reactionaries from making excuses for attacking the movement t as a whole, and keep the masses from becoming isolated ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

9. We must make the utmost effort to win over all intellectuals who can be educated and give them an opportunity to study and work. With regard to the enlightened gentry, others (outside the party, or the liberal bourgeoisie in the cities, as long as they endorse our democratic program, notwithstanding their serious faults or their doubts and dissatisfaction with the present land reform, we should continue to cooperate with them (do not abandon even one) in order to consolidate an antifeudal, ant dictatorial united front, striving for peace and democracy. We should allow those landlords and others who have fled to return home and give them the means to earn a living...

10. The masses have already created various methods for solving the land problem. For example: (a) confiscation and redistribution of the land of arch-traitors; (b) following rent reduction, the landlords voluntarily sell land and the tenant farmers have the first right to purchase this land; (c) since the peasants' tenancy rights were guaranteed after the rent reduction movement, the landlords voluntarily gave the peasants 70 to 80 percent of their land and requested to keep 20 to 30 percent of their land to cultivate themselves; (d) in settling accounts of rent and interest, of usurpation of land, of burdens and of other unjust exploitation, the landlords sell their land to compensate the peasants.

The peasants, using all the above methods, obtained land. Moreover, the vast majority have obtained land titles written by landlords. In this way they fundamentally solved the land problem in the villages, yet this is very different from the method adopted in solving the land problem during the civil war period. Using the various methods explained above to solve the land problem placed the peasants in a legal and reasonable position. Each area can adopt different policies according to different objectives.

11. All fruits which have been obtained during the movement must be fairly and rationally distributed to the poor descendants of the martyrs, the anti-Japanese soldiers, cadres and their dependents, and the landless or small-owning peasants. After the peasants have fairly and reasonably obtained land, we ought to consolidate their ownership and develop their productive enthusiasm, encouraging them to become more industrious and frugal, to establish their own family and career, and to become wealthy and prosperous and follow in the footsteps of Wu Man-yu* so as to promote production in the liberated areas. As soon as the land problem has been solved, all those who, as a result of their own industry and thrift, skill and management, have become prosperous ought to have their property safeguarded against encroachment. Consequently, we must not have endless settling of accounts and struggle which would undermine the productive enthusiasm of the peasantry. We ought to educate those who are idle, lazy loafers so that they may engage in production and improve their livelihood.

13. During the movement and after the resolution of the land problem, we should pay attention to the consolidation and development of peasant associations and the people's militia, develop the party organization, train and promote cadres, reform the district and village governments, and educate the masses to struggle for defending both the land they have obtained and the democratization of the nation.

14. In those border areas where our control is not consolidated and is vulnerable generally, we do not want to mobilize the tenants to rise up and demand land. Even a movement to reduce rent and interest should be handled with caution....

15. The party committee in each area should go all out to mobilize and lead the mass movement in the liberated areas. According to the principles explained above, we must resolutely solve the land problem. As long as we can grasp the principles given above, retain the support of over 90 percent of the village population which is united with the party (in the villages, farm laborers, poor peasants, middle peasants, handicraftsmen, and other poor people constitute approximately 92 percent of the population and the landlords and rich peasants constitute the other 8 percent), and maintain a broad-based antifeudal united front, then we will not make adventurist errors..

18. The Central Committee's land policy decision of 1942 in the past few years has correctly mobilized the broad mass movement and supported the War of Resistance against Japan. However, as a result of the deep penetration and development of the movement to settle accounts and reduce

rent in practice, the policy needs some changes according to the demands of the broad masses. This is not yet a complete change because we still have not entirely abolished the policy of reducing rent.

* A prominent labour hero in North Shensi in the early 1940s