

Dates of Meeting: 9-9-1951 – 30-9-1951

Type of Meeting:

1st conference on mutual aid and cooperation

Place of Meeting:

Beijing

Attendance:

Chen Boda, Liu Shaoqi, Mao Zedong presided. Participants at the meeting were representatives of the Central Bureau, the Provincial Party Committee, and comrades from relevant central departments. This conference was convened by the CC CCP.

Major Agenda Items: Mutual aid

Speeches/Reports:

Liu Shaoqi: his speech was shelved **Documents passed:**

- "[Draft Resolution on Mutual Aid and Cooperation in Agricultural Production](#)" set a target of having 40% of the rural population organized largely into mutual aid teams by the end 1952. Land and means of production were still owned by private peasants but used collectively.

Remarks:

1. This conference began the rapid development of the mutual aid and cooperation movement. By 1952, 40 percent of rural households belonged to mutual aid and cooperative organizations.
2. December 15, 1951, Central Committee distributes [TAKE MUTUAL AID AND CO-OPERATION IN AGRICULTURE](#) to party committees at various levels for trial implementation.
3. The keynote drafted by Liu Shaoqi for this conference was shelved. Instead, the "Resolution on Mutual Aid and Cooperativization in Agriculture (Draft)" drafted by Chen Boda, was passed. The Draft underscored peasants' aspiration for working collectively and joining mutual aid teams. It proposed a three-stage plan: starting from mutual aid teams, move up to the lower stage of agricultural producers' cooperatives modelled on Shanxi's prototypes, and end up with more advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives which should be a quasi-collective farms. From then on, Liu Shaoqi ceased to actively write about the cooperatives. Indeed, at the time and in subsequent years, Liu made repeated self-criticisms for his "mistakes" on the issue of cooperatives.
- 4 "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Mutual Aid and Cooperation in Agricultural Production (Draft)", September 1951. Mao Zedong, in fact, drafted this document as a firm response to the criticism raised by another CCP leader, Liu Shaoqi, who considered Mao's vision of socialist agricultural transformation an erroneous, dangerous and utopian notion of agrarian socialism. Compared to Mao, Liu was a more urban-rooted and professionally oriented communist who was in favor of large-scale industrial development rather than small-scale agricultural collectivization. This can be considered as the starting point of a split between the two divisions amongst top leaders on fundamental issues of Chinese socialism – the relations between agriculture and industry, between peasants (a majority of the mass) and the elite, between the countryside and the city, between goals and means, which inevitably led to a series of dramatic policy shifts and mass political campaigns in following years.

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The meeting criticized the two erroneous thinking of "Left" and Right on the issue of mutual assistance and cooperation in agriculture.

5 Mao instructed that the Draft should also affirm that many peasants preferred to work individually. Consequently, the Draft was rewritten. The first paragraph of the revised version declared that the enthusiasm of peasants after land reform was related to a combination of aspects of both the individual economy and cooperative labor.

Draft modified the original plan of transition to socialism in rural sector. Although acknowledging peasants' dual natures, apparently, it announced to nurture peasants' nature of working collectively and implied to discipline their inclination of working

individually. It was not easy for cadres to figure out this point wrong, by carefully reading the text.

Second, Draft clarified the point that it was from now, not ten years later, to transit to socialism. It did not elaborate on when the party should immediate start the transition, yet the tone of "let's act earlier than later" had been implied, and seemed correctly received by its readers.

The draft was heavily influenced by the series of reports that had appeared in Shanxi and was based more on what the party wanted peasants to be than on what peasants themselves wanted. Nevertheless, this draft served as the foundation of a series of future movements, and its assertion of the dual nature of peasants was never questioned during the Mao era.

Hou Xiaojia (2008). *Jumping the gun: Local agency and early experiments in the socialist transformation of rural society in revolutionary China*. Pages 88-89