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Speeches/Documents

Title: ON THE SEPTEMBER MEETING -- CIRCULAR OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

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Description: [This inner-Party circular was drafted by Comrade Mao Tse-tung for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. The September 1948 meeting was held in Hsipaipo Village, Pingshan County, Hopei Province. This meeting convened by the Central Committee had the largest attendance of any since the Japanese surrender. Previously it had not been possible to hold such large meetings, because the great majority of Central Committee members were in various Liberated Areas directing the tense War of Liberation and communications were extremely difficult.]

1. In September 1948 the Central Committee convened a meeting of the Political Bureau, attended by seven members of the Political Bureau, fourteen members and alternate members of the Central Committee and ten important functionaries, including principal leading comrades in the Party and army in northern China, eastern China, the Central Plains and northwestern China. This meeting convened by the Central Committee had the largest attendance of any since the Japanese surrender. The meeting examined the work of the past period and set the tasks for the period ahead.

2. Since the Party's Seventh National Congress in April 1945, the Central Committee and the leading cadres of the whole Party have displayed even greater unity than during the War of Resistance Against Japan. This unity has enabled our Party to cope with many important events at home and abroad in the three years since the Japanese surrender; and in the course of these events our Party has pushed the Chinese revolution a big step forward, shattered the political influence of U.S. imperialism among the broad masses of the Chinese people, combated the new betrayal by the Kuomintang, [1] repulsed its military attacks and enabled the People's Liberation Army to shift from the defensive to the offensive.

In the last two years of fighting, from July 1946 to June 1948, the People's Liberation Army has wiped out 2,640,000 enemy troops, including 1,630,000 captured. The main war booty of the two years amounts to nearly 900,000 rifles, over 64,000 heavy and light machine-guns, 8,000 pieces of light artillery, 5,000 pieces of infantry artillery and 1,100 heavy mountain and field guns. In these two years the People's Liberation Army has grown from 1,200,000 men to 2,800,000. Our regular troops have increased from 118 brigades to 176, that is, from 610,000 men to 1,490,000. The Liberated Areas now cover 2,350,000 square kilometres, or 24.5 per cent of China's total area of 9,597,000 square kilometres; their population is 168 million, or 35.3 per cent of China's total of 475 million; and they have 586 large, medium and small cities, from county towns up, or 29 per cent of China's total of 2,009 such cities.

Because our Party has firmly led the peasants in carrying out the reform of the land system, the land problem has been thoroughly solved in areas having about 100 million people, and the land of the landlord class and of the old-type rich peasants has been more or less equally distributed among the rural population and, first of all, among the poor peasants and farm labourers.

Our Party membership has increased from 1,210,000 in May 1945 to 3,000,000 at present. (In 1927, before the Kuomintang betrayal of the revolution, it was 50,000; after the Kuomintang betrayal of that year, it dropped to about 10,000; in 1934, as a result of the successful development of the agrarian revolution, it rose to 300,000; in 1937, owing to the defeat of the revolution in the south, [2] it dropped again to about 40,000; in 1945, because of the successful development of the War of

Resistance Against Japan, it rose to 1,210,000; and now, because of the successful development of the anti-Chiang Kai-shek war and the agrarian revolution, it has reached 3,000,000.) On the one hand, the Party has in the past year basically overcome, and is continuing to overcome, some unhealthy phenomena which existed to a certain degree in its ranks; these were impurities in class composition (landlord and rich peasant elements), impurities in ideology (landlord and rich peasant ideology) and impurities in style of work (bureaucracy and commandism). On the other hand, the Party has in the past year overcome, and is continuing to overcome, some "Left" mistakes which accompanied the large-scale mobilization of the peasant masses in the struggles to solve the land problem; these were the partial but fairly numerous encroachments on the interests of the middle peasants, the damage done to some private industrial and commercial enterprises and the overstepping in some places of certain lines of demarcation in the policy for suppressing counter-revolutionaries. Through the great, fierce revolutionary struggles of the past three years, and especially of the past year, and the conscientious correction of our own mistakes, the whole Party has made a big step forward in political maturity.

The Party's work in the Kuomintang areas has been crowned with tremendous success. This can be seen from the fact that in the big cities we have won over to the side of our Party the broad masses of workers, students, teachers, professors, cultural workers, ordinary residents and national capitalists as well as all the democratic parties and people's organizations, and have thus resisted Kuomintang oppression and completely isolated the Kuomintang. In several large areas in the south (the Fukien-Kwangtung-Kiangsi, the Hunan-Kwangtung-Kiangsi, the Kwangtung-Kwangsi and the Kwangsi-Yunnan border areas, southern Yunnan, the Anhwei-Chekiang-Kiangsi border area and eastern and southern Chekiang), bases for guerrilla warfare have been established, and their guerrilla forces have grown to more than 30,000.

During the past two years and especially last year, we have carried out an orderly, well-led democratic movement in the People's Liberation Army, with all fighters and commanders taking part. In this movement we have unfolded self-criticism, have overcome and are continuing to overcome bureaucracy in the army and have restored the Party committee system at various levels of the army and the soldiers' committee system in the companies, both of which produced good results from 1927 to 1932 but were later abolished. All this has greatly heightened the political enthusiasm and consciousness of commanders and fighters, strengthened their combat effectiveness and discipline and helped us to absorb some 800,000 captured Kuomintang soldiers and change them into liberated fighters [3] who have turned their guns against the Kuomintang. During the past two years, in the Liberated Areas, we have mobilized some 1,600,000 of the peasants who obtained land to join the People's Liberation Army.

We already have quite a number of railways, mines and industries, and our Party is learning on a large scale how to manage industry and carry on trade. In the past two years our war industries have grown considerably. But they are not yet adequate to meet the needs of the war. We lack some important raw materials and machines and, generally speaking, still cannot make steel.

In areas in northern China with a population of 44 million we have set up a unified people's government in which our Party cooperates with non-Party democrats. In order to facilitate support to the front, we have decided to entrust this government with the task of unifying the work of leading and administering the economy, finance, trade, banking, communications and war industries in three regions northern China, eastern China (with a population of 43 million) and the Northwest (with a population of 7 million), and we are prepared in the near future to extend the unification of this work to two additional regions, the Northeast and the Central Plains.

3. In the light of our successes in the past two years' fighting and of the general situation as between the enemy and ourselves, the meeting convened by the Central Committee considered it fully possible to build a People's Liberation Army of five million in a period of about five years (beginning from July 1946), to wipe out a total of some 500 brigades (divisions) of the enemy's regular forces (an average of about 100 brigades a year), to wipe out a total of some 7,500,000 men of his regular and irregular forces and of the special arms (an average of about 1,500,000 men a year) and to overthrow the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang completely.

The military strength of the Kuomintang was 4,300,000 men in July 1946. In the past two years, 3,090,000 of its men have either been wiped out or have deserted, and 2,440,000 have been recruited. Its present strength is 3,650,000 men. It is estimated that in the coming three years the Kuomintang may still be able to recruit 3,000,000 men and that some 4,500,000 will probably be wiped out or desert. Thus, as a result of five years' fighting, the remaining military strength of the Kuomintang will probably be only some 2,000,000. Our army now has 2,800,000 men. In the coming three years we plan to admit into our forces 1,700,000 captured soldiers (estimated at 60 per cent of the total we shall capture) and to mobilize 2,000,000 peasants to join the army. Allowing for depletion, our army, as a result of five years' fighting, will probably approach 5,000,000 men. If five years' fighting brings these results, then it may be said that we have overthrown the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang completely.

To fulfil this task, we must wipe out each year about 100 brigades (divisions) of the enemy's regular forces, making a total of about 500 brigades (divisions) in five years. This is the key to the solution of all problems. In view of the fact that the enemy's regular forces we wiped out amounted to 97 brigades (divisions) in the first year and to 94 brigades (divisions) in the second year, our targets can be fulfilled and even overfulfilled. Of the Kuomintang's existing military strength totalling 3,650,000 men, 70 per cent are at the fronts (north of the line of the Yangtse River and the Pashan Mountains, east of the line of Lanchow and the Holan Mountains and south of the Chengteh-Changchun line); only about 30 per cent are in the rear (including those south of the line of the Yangtse River and the Pashan Mountains and those west of the line of Lanchow and the Holan Mountains). Of all the existing Kuomintang regular forces, which consist of 285 brigades or 1,980,000 men, 249 brigades or 1,742,000 men are at the fronts (99 brigades or 694,000 men on the northern front, and 150 brigades or 1,048,000 men on the southern front). Only 36 brigades or 238,000 men are in the rear, and most of them are newly formed troops of low combat effectiveness. Therefore, the Central Committee has decided that during the third year the whole of the People's Liberation Army will continue to operate north of the Yangtse River and in northern China and the Northeast. To accomplish the task of wiping out the enemy, it is necessary to utilize large numbers of captured soldiers in addition to mobilizing people in the Liberated Areas, in a planned and prudent way, to join the army.

4. Because our Party and our army were long in a position in which we were cut apart by the enemy, were waging guerrilla warfare and were in the rural areas, we allowed very considerable autonomy to the leading organs of the Party and army in the different areas. This enabled the Party organizations and armed forces to bring their initiative and enthusiasm into play and to come through long periods of grave difficulties, but at the same time it gave rise to certain phenomena of indiscipline and anarchy, localism and guerrilla-ism, which were harmful to the cause of the revolution. The present situation demands that our Party should do its utmost to overcome these phenomena of indiscipline and anarchy, localism and guerrilla-ism and centralize all the powers that can and must be concentrated in the hands of the Central Committee and its agencies, so as to bring

about the transition in the form of the war from guerrilla to regular warfare. In the past two years both the army and its operations have become more regular in character, but this is not enough and in the third year another big step forward must be made. For this purpose, we must do everything possible to repair and operate modern means of communications, such as railways, highway transport and steamships, to strengthen the administration of cities and industry and to shift the centre of gravity of our Party work step by step from the rural areas to the cities.

5. The task of seizing political power throughout the country demands that our Party should quickly and systematically train large numbers of cadres to administer military, political, economic, Party, cultural and educational affairs. In the third year of the war, we must prepare thirty to forty thousand cadres of lower, middle and higher ranks, so that in the fourth year when the army advances they can march with it and bring orderly administration to newly liberated areas with a population of some 50 to 100 million. China's territory is very large, her population is very numerous, and the revolutionary war is developing very rapidly; but our supply of cadres is very inadequate -- this is a very great difficulty. In preparing cadres during the third year, while we should rely on the old Liberated Areas to supply the greater part, we must also pay attention to enrolling cadres from the big cities controlled by the Kuomintang. In the big cities in Kuomintang areas there are many workers and intellectuals who can take part in our work and who have, generally speaking, a higher cultural level than the workers and peasants in the old Liberated Areas. We should make use of large numbers of working personnel from the Kuomintang's economic, financial, cultural and educational institutions, excluding the reactionary elements. School education in the Liberated Areas must be restored and developed.

6. The slogan of convening a political consultative conference [4] has rallied around our Party all democratic parties and people's organizations and all democrats without party affiliation in the Kuomintang areas. We are arranging for representatives of these parties and organizations to come to the Liberated Areas and are preparing to convene a conference in 1949 of the representatives of all China's democratic parties, people's organizations and democrats without party affiliation, in order to establish the provisional central government of the People's Republic of China.

7. The restoration and development of industrial and agricultural production in the Liberated Areas is an important link in supporting the war and in defeating the Kuomintang reactionaries. The meeting convened by the Central Committee held that, on the one hand, the People's Liberation Army must develop its victorious offensive into the Kuomintang areas and obtain from the Kuomintang forces and areas the large supply of manpower and material resources needed for the war; and that, on the other hand, in the old Liberated Areas every effort must be made to restore and develop industrial and agricultural production so as to raise their level to some extent. Only if these two tasks are fulfilled will it be possible to ensure the overthrow of the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang; otherwise, that will not be possible.

We will have many difficulties in carrying out these two tasks. When our armies enter the Kuomintang areas in force to make war with no rear area or with no adequate rear area, they will have to get all or most of their military supplies themselves on the spot. The restoration and development of industrial and agricultural production requires good organizational work, good leadership of markets in the Liberated Areas, control of trade with outside areas, the overcoming of shortages of certain machinery and raw materials and, first of all, the solution of the problems of communications, transport and the repair of railways, highways and waterways. At present there are great difficulties in the economic and financial situation in the Liberated Areas. Although our difficulties are much smaller than those of the Kuomintang, they do exist. The main ones are that our material resources and manpower are inadequate for the needs of the war and that inflation has

developed to a considerable degree. And one cause of these difficulties is the inadequacy of our organizational work, especially in the financial and economic sphere. We believe these difficulties can be overcome and must be overcome. In the struggle to do so, we must fight waste and practice economy. At the front we must see to it that everything captured is handed in, must cherish our effective strength, take good care of weapons, use ammunition sparingly and protect captured soldiers. In the rear we must reduce government expenses, reduce the mobilization of manpower and draught animals not urgently needed, reduce time taken by meetings, observe agricultural seasons so that farm work is done on time, reduce costs in industrial production, raise labour productivity, mobilize the whole Party to learn to manage industrial and agricultural production and carry on trade, make the greatest possible efforts to organize the economies of the Liberated Areas properly, overcome disorder in the markets and wage the necessary struggles against all speculators and manipulators. By getting down to all these jobs, we can certainly overcome the difficulties facing us.

8. Raising the cadres' theoretical level and broadening inner-Party democracy are important links in the fulfilment of the above tasks. The meeting convened by the Central Committee adopted a special decision on broadening inner-Party democracy.[5] It also discussed the problem of raising the cadres' theoretical level and drew the attention of all comrades present to the problem.

9. The Sixth National Labour Congress has been successfully held and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions [6] has been founded. In the first half of next year a National Women's Congress will be convened to form the All-China Federation of Democratic Women,[7] a National Youth Congress will be convened to form the All-China Youth Federation,[8] and the New Democratic Youth League will be established.[9]

NOTES

1. The first betrayal by the Kuomintang was in 1927. The betrayal here mentioned is the all-out counter-revolutionary civil war launched by the Kuomintang after the conclusion of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

2. The defeat of the revolution in the south was the defeat of the Chinese Red Army's fifth campaign against the Kuomintang's "encirclement and suppression" and the withdrawal of our main force from the southern revolutionary bases in 1934; this was the consequence of the third "Left" deviationist line represented in the Party by Wang Ming.

3. This refers to Kuomintang soldiers who were liberated through capture by the People's Liberation Army and joined its ranks after having been educated.

4. The slogan of convening a political consultative conference was put forward by Comrade Mao Tse-tung. At his suggestion, one of the "May Day Slogans" for 1948 issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China stated, "All democratic parties, people's organizations and public personages should quickly call a political consultative conference to discuss and carry out the convening of a people's congress and the formation of a democratic coalition government." This slogan won an immediate warm response from the democratic parties, people's organizations and democrats without party affiliation in the Kuomintang areas. The political consultative conference was later renamed the New Political Consultative Conference and finally the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. See "Address to the Preparatory Meeting of the New Political Consultative Conference", Note 1, pp. 408-09 of this volume.

5. This refers to "The Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Convening of Congresses and Conferences of the Party at Various Levels". The resolution made the following provisions for the broadening and building of regular democratic life within the Party: Party committees at various levels should regularly convene Party congresses and conferences at their respective levels, as required by the Party Constitution. These congresses and conferences should be vested with all the powers stipulated in the Party Constitution, and there must be no infringement. Adequate preparations should be made before meetings. Inner-Party controversies should be reported promptly and truthfully to the higher levels and important controversies must be reported to the Central Committee. The resolution also provided for strengthening the Party committee system and required that the rule that important questions must be decided collectively after discussion by the Party committee should be enforced by Party committees at all levels, that no decisions on important matters should be made by an individual and that neither collective leadership nor individual responsibility should be overemphasized to the neglect of the other.

6. The Sixth National Labour Congress was held in Harbin in August 1948. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the unified national organization of the Chinese working class, was re-established at the congress. The previous five National Labour Congresses were held in 1922, 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1929 respectively.

7. The First National Women's Congress was held in March 1949 in Peiping. The All-China Federation of Democratic Women, the leading body for the organizations of the masses of women throughout the country, was founded at this congress. It was later renamed the National Women's Federation of the People's Republic of China.

8. .The first session of the National Youth Congress was held in May 1949 in Peiping. The All-China Federation of Democratic Youth was founded at this session. It was later renamed the All-China Youth Federation.

9. The New Democratic Youth League was founded in January 1949 in accordance with a decision by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Its First National Congress was held in Peiping in April 1949. It was renamed the Communist Youth League at its Third National Congress in May 1957.