

Mao Zedong

Speech at a conference of cadres in the shansi-suiyuan liberated area

From the
Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung,
Foreign Languages Press
Peking 1969

First Edition 1961
Second Printing 1967
Third Printing 1969

Vol. IV, pp. 227-39.

Prepared © for the Internet by David J. Romagnolo, djr@marx2mao.org (October 1999)

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April 1, 1948

Comrades! Today I wish to speak chiefly on some problems relating to our work in the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area and also on some problems relating to our work in the country as a whole.

I

In my opinion, the work of land reform and of Party consolidation carried out during the past year in the area led by the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has been successful.

This can be viewed from two aspects. On the one hand, the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization has combated Right deviations, initiated mass struggles and has completed, or is completing, the land reform and the Party consolidation among two million several hundred thousand people out of the area's total population of over three million. On the other hand, it has also corrected several "Left" deviations which occurred in these campaigns and has thereby put its

entire work on the path of sound development. It is from these two aspects that I consider the work of land reform and of Party consolidation in the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area to have been successful.

"From now on," the people of the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area are saying, "no one will ever again dare to be feudalist, to bully others or indulge in corruption." That is their conclusion about our work of land reform and Party consolidation. When they say, "No one will ever again dare to be feudalist," they mean that we have led them in initiating struggles through which the system of feudal exploitation in

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the new Liberated Areas and its remnants in the old and semi-old Liberated Areas have been or are being destroyed. When they say, "No one will ever again dare to bully others or indulge in corruption," they refer to the serious phenomenon of a certain degree of impurity in the class composition and style of work in our Party and government organizations that existed in the past. A number of bad elements had sneaked into the Party and government organizations; a number of individuals had developed a bureaucratic style of work, abused their power and bullied the people, employed methods of coercion and commandism to get things done, thereby arousing discontent among the masses, or had indulged in corruption or encroached upon the interests of the masses. However, after a year's work of land reform and Party consolidation, these conditions have been fundamentally changed.

One of the comrades present told me, "We have rid ourselves of what would have proved fatal to us. We have acquired things we never had before." By "fatal" he meant the serious phenomenon of impurity in the class composition and style of work in Party and government organizations and the resultant discontent among the masses. This phenomenon has now been fundamentally eliminated. By "things we never had before but have now acquired" he meant the poor peasant leagues, the new peasant associations, the district and village people's representative conferences and the new atmosphere that prevails in the countryside as a result of the work of land reform and Party consolidation.

These comments, I think, give a true picture of how matters stand.

Such is the great success of the work of land reform and Party consolidation in the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area. This is the first aspect of the success. It was on this basis that during the past year the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization was able to perform war services on an immense scale in support of the great People's War of Liberation. Without our successful work in land reform and Party consolidation, it would have been difficult to fulfil such immense military tasks.

On the other hand, the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization has corrected several "Left" deviations which occurred in the course of its work. There were three main deviations of this kind. First, in a number of places, in the process of identifying class status a number of working people were wrongly classified as landlords or rich peasants, although they engaged in no feudal exploitation or in only a little exploitation; the scope of attack was thus mistakenly broadened; and

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a most important strategic principle was forgotten, namely, that in the land reform we can and must unite about 92 per cent of the households or about 90 per cent of the population in the villages, in other words, unite all the rural working people to establish a united front against the feudal system. Now this deviation has been corrected. Consequently, people are very much reassured and the revolutionary united front has been consolidated. Secondly, in the land reform work, the industrial and commercial enterprises of landlords and rich peasants were encroached upon; in the struggle to uncover counter-revolution in the economic field, the prescribed scope of investigation was over-stepped; and in tax policy, industry and commerce were harmed. These were the "Left" deviations in dealing with industry and commerce. Now they, too, have been corrected, and so industry and commerce can recover and develop. Thirdly, in the fierce struggles in the land reform of the past year, the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization failed to adhere unequivocally to the Party's policy of strictly forbidding beating and killing without discrimination. As a result, in certain places some landlords and rich peasants were needlessly put to death, and the bad elements in the rural areas were able to exploit the situation to take revenge and foully murdered a number of working people. We consider it absolutely necessary and proper to sentence to death, through the people's courts and the democratic governments, those major criminals who have actively and desperately opposed the people's democratic revolution and sabotaged the land reform, that is, the most heinous counter-revolutionaries and local tyrants. If this were not done, democratic order could not be established. We must, however, forbid the killing without discrimination of ordinary personnel on the Kuomintang side, the common run of landlords and rich peasants and lesser offenders. Moreover, in trying criminals, a people's court or democratic government must not use physical violence. Deviations of this kind which occurred in the past year in the Shansi-Suiyuan area have likewise been corrected.

Now that all these deviations have been corrected in earnest, we can say on good evidence that the entire work under the leadership of the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau of the Central Committee is on the path of sound development.

The most fundamental method of work which all Communists must firmly bear in mind is to determine our working policies according to actual conditions. When we study the causes of the mistakes

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we have made, we find that they all arose because we departed from the actual situation at a given time and place and were subjective in our working policies. This should be a lesson for all comrades.

As for the consolidation of Party organizations at the primary level, you have drawn upon the experience of Pingshan County in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Liberated Area in accordance with the Central Committee's directive on the work of land reform and Party consolidation in the old and semi-old Liberated Areas; that is, you have invited activists from the non-Party masses to participate in Party branch meetings, unfolded criticism and self-criticism in order to remove the impurities in the class composition and style of work in Party organizations and enabled the Party to forge closer ties with the masses. This will enable you to accomplish the whole job of consolidating Party organizations in a sound way.

Those Party members and cadres who have made mistakes but can still be educated and are different from the incorrigibles should all be educated and not abandoned, whatever their class origin. It is likewise correct that you have carried out, or are carrying out, this policy.

In the struggle against the feudal system, the experience of setting up people's representative conferences at district and village (or township) levels on the basis of the poor peasant leagues and peasant associations is extremely valuable. The only true people's representative conference is one based on the will of really broad masses of the people. It is now possible for such people's representative conferences to emerge in all the Liberated Areas. Such a conference, once set up, should become the local organ of people's power, and all due authority must be vested in it and in the government council it elects. The poor peasant league and the peasant association will then become its helping hands. At one time we thought of setting up people's representative conferences in the rural districts only after the land reform had been completed in the main. Now that your own experience and that of other Liberated Areas have proved that it is possible and necessary to set up these people's representative conferences and their elected government councils at the district and village levels in the midst of the struggle for the land reform, that is the way you should continue to do it. All the Liberated Areas should do likewise. After the conferences have been generally set up at district and village levels, they can be established at the county level. When people's representative conferences are established up to the county level, it will

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be easy to set them up at higher levels. In people's representative conferences at various levels we must, wherever possible, include representatives of all democratic strata -- workers, peasants, independent craftsmen, professionals, intellectuals, national bourgeois industrialists and merchants and enlightened gentry. Of course, it should not be done mechanically; we should distinguish between rural areas with towns and rural areas without towns, among towns of different sizes and between cities and rural areas, so as to fulfil naturally, and not mechanically, the task of uniting all democratic strata.

The great mass struggles for land reform and Party consolidation have taught and brought to the fore tens of thousands of activists and cadres. They are linked with the masses and will be a most precious asset of the People's Republic of China. Henceforth, we should strengthen their education so that they will make constant progress in their work. Meanwhile they should be warned not to let success and commendation make them conceited and self-satisfied.

In view of all this, in view of the successes in these various respects, we can say that the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area is now more consolidated than ever before. Other Liberated Areas which have worked along the same lines have likewise become consolidated.

II

As far as leadership is concerned, the successes of the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area are due mainly to the following causes:

1. Helped by the work done by Comrade Kang Sheng in the administrative village of Hochiapo in Linhsien County last spring and summer, the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau held a conference of secretaries of prefectural Party committees last June. The conference criticized Right deviations which had existed in past work, thoroughly exposed the serious phenomenon of various departures from the Party line and decided on the policy of starting the land reform and Party consolidation in earnest. In the main, the conference was a success. Without it, land reform and Party consolidation on such a scale could not have been successful. The

shortcomings of the conference were that it failed to decide on working policies varying with the different conditions in the old, semi-old and new Liberated Areas; that on the question of identifying class status it adopted an ultra-Left policy; that on the question of how to destroy the feudal system it laid too much stress on unearthing the landlords' hidden property; and that on the question of dealing with the demands of the masses it failed to make a sober analysis and raised the sweeping slogan, "Do everything as the masses want it done". With respect to the latter point, which is a question of the Party's relationship with the masses, the Party must lead the masses to carry out all their correct ideas in the light of the circumstances and educate them to correct any wrong ideas they may entertain. The conference only emphasized that the Party should carry out the ideas of the masses but neglected to point out that the Party should also educate and lead the masses, and thus eventually exerted a wrong influence on the comrades in some districts and aggravated their mistakes of tailism.

2. In January this year the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau took proper measures to correct the "Left" deviations. These measures were carried out after the comrades of the Sub-Bureau returned from the December meeting of the Central Committee.^[2] For this purpose the Sub-Bureau issued a five-point directive.^[3] These corrective measures were so well adapted to the wishes of the masses and were carried out with such speed and thoroughness that almost all the "Left" deviations were rectified within a short time.

III

The line of leadership of the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization during the War of Resistance Against Japan was basically correct. This was shown in the reduction of rent and interest; in the substantial restoration and development of agricultural production, home spinning and weaving, war industries and some light industries; in the laying of the foundation of Party organizations; and in the establishment of a democratic government and of people's armed forces numbering nearly a hundred thousand men. All this work formed the basis on which we victoriously fought the War of Resistance and repelled the attacks of

Yen Hsi-shan and other reactionaries. Of course, the Party and the government during that period had their shortcomings; as is now entirely clear to us all, these consisted in a certain degree of impurity in class composition and style of work, which had undesirable effects on our work. But, taken as a whole, the work during the War of Resistance was fruitful. We were thus provided with favourable conditions for defeating Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary attacks after the Japanese surrender. The shortcomings or mistakes of the leadership of the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization during the War of Resistance consisted mainly in the failure to rely on the broadest masses to overcome a certain degree of impurity in class composition and style of work in Party and government organizations and the undesirable effect it had on the work. That task is left for you to fulfil now. One reason for that situation was that certain leading comrades in Shansi and Suiyuan then lacked understanding of a number of the actual conditions concerning the Party and the masses. This should also be a lesson to the comrades.

IV

The task before the Shansi-Suiyuan Party organization is to make the greatest effort to complete the land reform and Party consolidation, to continue and support the People's War of Liberation, to refrain from any further increase in the people's burden but appropriately to lighten it, and to restore and develop production. You are now holding a conference on production. For the next few years the aim of restoring and developing production will be to improve the people's livelihood on the one hand and to support the People's War of Liberation on the other. You have a widespread agriculture and handicraft industry as well as some light and heavy industries using machinery. I hope you will do a good job in leading these productive enterprises, otherwise you cannot be called good Marxists. In agriculture, those labour-exchange teams and co-operatives,^[4] which were in the grip of bureaucrats and which harmed the people instead of benefiting them, have all collapsed. This is entirely understandable and should occasion no regret. Your task is carefully to preserve and develop those labour-exchange teams, co-operatives and other necessary economic organizations that have won mass support and to spread them everywhere.

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V

The national situation is a matter of concern for our comrades. Following the Party's National Land Conference last year, which resolved to adopt a new policy and unfold land reform and Party consolidation, large conferences of cadres were held in practically all the Liberated Areas on Party consolidation and land reform. At these conferences, Rightist ideas existing in the Party were criticized, and the serious phenomenon of a certain degree of impurity in the Party's class composition and style of work was exposed. Afterwards, appropriate measures were taken in many areas, and the "Left" deviations have been or are being corrected. Thus, confronted with the new political situation and new political tasks, our Party has been able to set its work in the whole country on the path of sound development. In the last few months almost all the People's Liberation Army has made use of the intervals between battles for large-scale training and consolidation. This has been carried out in a fully guided, orderly and democratic way. It has therefore aroused the revolutionary fervour of the great masses of commanders and fighters, enabled them clearly to comprehend the aim of the war, eliminated certain incorrect ideological tendencies and undesirable manifestations in the army, educated the cadres and fighters and greatly enhanced the combat effectiveness of the army. From now on, we must continue to carry on this new type of ideological education movement in the army, a movement which has a democratic and mass character. You can see clearly that neither the Party consolidation, nor the ideological education in the army, nor the land reform, all of which we have accomplished and all of which have great historic significance, could be undertaken by our enemy, the Kuomintang. On our part, we have been very earnest in correcting our own shortcomings; we have united the Party and army virtually as one man and forged close ties between them and the masses of the people; we are effectively carrying out all the policies and tactics formulated by the Central Committee of our Party and are successfully waging the People's War of Liberation. With our enemy, everything is just the opposite. They are so corrupt, so torn by ever-increasing and irreconcilable internal quarrels, so spurned by the people and utterly isolated and so frequently defeated in battle that their

doom is inevitable. This is the whole situation of revolution versus counter revolution in China.

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In this situation, all comrades must firmly grasp the general line of the Party, that is, the line of the new-democratic revolution. The new-democratic revolution is not any other revolution, but can only be and must be a revolution against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism waged by the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat. This means that leadership in this revolution can and must be assumed by no class and party other than the proletariat and the Communist Party of China. This means that the united front of those joining this revolution is very broad, embracing the workers, peasants, independent craftsmen, professionals, intellectuals, the national bourgeoisie and the section of the enlightened gentry which has broken away from the landlord class. All these are what we refer to as the broad masses of the people. The state and the government to be founded by the broad masses of the people will be the People's Republic of China and the democratic coalition government of the alliance of all democratic classes under the leadership of the proletariat. The enemies to be overthrown in this revolution can only be and must be imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. The concentrated expression of all these enemies is the reactionary regime of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang.

Feudalism is the ally of imperialism and bureaucrat-capitalism and the foundation of their rule. Therefore, the reform of the land system is the main content of China's new-democratic revolution. The general line in the land reform is to rely on the poor peasants, unite with the middle peasants, abolish the system of feudal exploitation step by step and in a discriminating way, and develop agricultural production. The basic force to be relied upon in the land reform can only be and must be the poor peasants. Together with the farm labourers, they make up about 70 per cent of China's rural population. The main and immediate task of the land reform is to satisfy the demands of the masses of poor peasants and farm labourers. In the land reform it is necessary to unite with the middle peasants; the poor peasants and the farm labourers must form a solid united front with the middle peasants, who account for about 20 per cent of the rural population. Otherwise, the poor peasants and farm labourers will find themselves isolated and the land reform will fail. One of the tasks in the land reform is to satisfy the demands of certain middle peasants. A section of the middle peasants must be allowed to keep some land over and above the average obtained by the poor peasants. We support the peasants' demand for equal distribution of land in

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order to help arouse the broad masses of peasants speedily to abolish the system of landownership by the feudal landlord class, but we do not advocate absolute equalitarianism. Whoever advocates absolute equalitarianism is wrong. There is a kind of thinking now current in the countryside which undermines industry and commerce and advocates absolute equalitarianism in land distribution. Such thinking is reactionary, backward and retrogressive in nature. We must criticize it. The target of the land reform is only and must be the system of feudal exploitation by the landlord class and by the old-type rich peasants, and there should be no encroachment either upon the national bourgeoisie or upon the industrial and commercial enterprises run by the landlords and rich peasants. In particular, care must be taken not to encroach upon the interests of the middle peasants, independent craftsmen, professionals and new rich peasants, all of whom engage in little or no exploitation. The aim of the land reform is to abolish the system of feudal exploitation, that is, to eliminate the feudal landlords as a

class, not as individuals. Therefore a landlord must receive the same allotment of land and property as does a peasant and must be made to learn productive labour and join the ranks of the nation's economic life. Except for the most heinous counter-revolutionaries and local tyrants, who have incurred the bitter hatred of the broad masses, who have been proved guilty and who therefore may and ought to be punished, a policy of leniency must be applied to all, and any beating or killing without discrimination must be forbidden. The system of feudal exploitation should be abolished step by step, that is, in a tactical way. In launching the struggle we must determine our tactics according to the circumstances and the degree to which the peasant masses are awakened and organized. We must not attempt to wipe out overnight the whole system of feudal exploitation. In accordance with the actual conditions of the system of feudal exploitation in China's villages, the total scope of attack in the land reform should generally not exceed about 8 per cent of the rural households or about 10 per cent of the rural population. In the old and semi-old Liberated Areas the percentage should be even smaller. It is dangerous to depart from actual conditions and mistakenly enlarge the scope of attack. In the new Liberated Areas, moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between different places and different stages. By distinguishing between places we mean that in those places which we can hold securely we should concentrate our efforts on carrying out appropriate land reform work that accords with the wishes of the

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local masses, while in those places which for the time being are difficult to hold securely, until there is a change in the situation we should not be in a hurry to start the land reform but should confine ourselves to activities which are feasible and beneficial to the masses in the present circumstances. By distinguishing between stages we mean that in places recently occupied by the People's Liberation Army we should put forward and carry out the tactics of neutralizing the rich peasants, of neutralizing the middle and small landlords, and thus narrow the scope of the attack so as to destroy only the reactionary Kuomintang armed forces and deal blows at the bad gentry and local tyrants. We should concentrate all our efforts on accomplishing this task as the first stage of work in the new Liberated Areas. We should then advance step by step to the stage of total abolition of the feudal system, in accordance with the rising level of political consciousness and organization of the masses. In the new Liberated Areas we should distribute movable property and land only when conditions are relatively secure and the overwhelming majority of the masses have been fully roused to action; to act otherwise would be adventurist and undependable and would do harm rather than good. In the new Liberated Areas the experience gained during the War of Resistance must be fully utilized. By abolishing feudalism in a discriminating way we mean that we should distinguish between landlords and rich peasants, among big, middle and small landlords and between those landlords and rich peasants who are local tyrants and those who are not, and that, subject to the major premise of the equal distribution of land and the abolition of the feudal system, we should not decide on and give the same treatment to them all, but should differentiate and vary the treatment according to varying conditions. When we do this, people will see that our work is completely reasonable. The development of agricultural production is the immediate aim of the land reform. Only by abolishing the feudal system can the conditions for such development be created. In every area, as soon as feudalism is wiped out and the land reform is completed, the Party and the democratic government must put forward the task of restoring and developing agricultural production, transfer all available forces in the countryside to this task, organize co-operation and mutual aid, improve agricultural technique, promote seed selection and build irrigation works -- all to ensure increased production. Party organizations in the rural areas must devote the greatest energy to restoring and developing agricultural production

and also industrial production in small towns. In order to speed up this restoration and development, we must do our utmost, in the course of our struggle for the abolition of the feudal system, to preserve all useful means of production and of livelihood, take resolute measures against anyone's destroying or wasting them, oppose extravagant eating and drinking and pay attention to thrift and economy. In order to develop agricultural production, we must advise the peasants to organize, voluntarily and step by step, the various types of producers' and consumers' co-operatives based on private ownership, which are permissible under present economic conditions. The abolition of the feudal system and the development of agricultural production will lay the foundation for the development of industrial production and the transformation of an agricultural country into an industrial one. This is the ultimate goal of the new-democratic revolution.

You comrades know that our Party has laid down the general line and general policy of the Chinese revolution as well as various specific lines for work and specific policies. However, while many comrades remember our Party's specific lines for work and specific policies, they often forget its general line and general policy. If we actually forget the Party's general line and general policy, then we shall be blind, half-baked, muddle-headed revolutionaries, and when we carry out a specific line for work and a specific policy, we shall lose our bearings and vacillate now to the left and now to the right, and the work will suffer.

Let me repeat:

The revolution against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism waged by the broad masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat -- this is China's new-democratic revolution, and this is the general line and general policy of the Communist Party of China at the present stage of history.

To rely on the poor peasants, unite with the middle peasants, abolish the system of feudal exploitation step by step and in a discriminating way, and develop agricultural production -- this is the general line and general policy of the Communist Party of China in the work of land reform during the period of the new-democratic revolution.

NOTES

^[1] Issued on February 22, 1948, this directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China summed up the experience of work in the land reform and Party consolidation in various Liberated Areas, laid down a series of policies and methods for the land reform and Party consolidation and stressed the correction of "Left" deviations which had occurred during the execution of these two tasks in certain areas. [p. 230]

^[2] See the introductory note to "[The Present Situation and Our Tasks](#)", pp. 158-59 of this volume. [p. 232]

^[3] This refers to the "Directive on Correcting Mistakes in the Determination of Class Status and on Uniting with the Middle Peasants" issued by the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on January 13, 1948. The directive is divided into five sections. The following are its main points:

(1) Because the criteria for class identification had not been well-defined quite a few persons were wrongly classified as bankrupt landlords or rich peasants on the spontaneous demands of the peasants, and in particular, well-to-do middle peasants were wrongly classified as rich peasants. This had an adverse effect on the effort to unite with the middle peasants and was wrong.

(2) Proper measures were to be taken resolutely to persuade the peasants to correct these mistakes. Suitable restitution was to be made of property that had been taken.

(3) It was to be explained to the peasants and the cadres that the only criterion in class identification should be the relationship of exploitation. Mistakes in determining class status were to be corrected.

(4) The principle of relying on poor peasants and farm labourers and uniting with middle peasants had to be grasped. The middle peasants were to be enabled to have one-third of the members of the peasant representative conferences and of the leading bodies of the peasant associations, and consideration was to be given to their interests in taxation and in the land reform.

(5) Responsible cadres were to make a serious study of the Party's class policy for the rural areas. Mistakes that departed from the Party's policies concerning the middle peasants had to be corrected; they had to be corrected through the masses.

Simultaneously with the issuance of this five-point directive, the Shansi-Suiyuan Sub-Bureau issued the "Directive on the Protection of Industry and Commerce" to correct the deviations of encroaching on industry and commerce during the land reform. [p. [232](#)]

^[4] This refers to the supply and marketing co-operatives. [p. [233](#)]