

Liu Shaoqi's Comment on the Shanxi Provincial Party Committee's Document "Raising the Level of Mutual Aid Organizations in Old Liberated Areas"
(July 3, 1951)

In the rural areas after the land reform, along with economic development, spontaneous forces among peasants and class differentiation have already begun to emerge. Within the Party, some comrades are already expressing fear of these spontaneous forces and class differentiation, and are attempting to stop or avoid them. They fantasize that through the use of mutual aid teams and supply and marketing cooperatives, they can achieve the goal of halting or avoiding this trend.

Some have even put forward such views: that we should gradually weaken and undermine, and eventually negate, the private ownership foundation; and that by advancing agricultural mutual aid organizations into agricultural cooperatives, we can use this as a new factor to "overcome the spontaneous tendencies of the peasants."

This is an erroneous, dangerous, and utopian conception of agricultural socialism. The document from the Shanxi Provincial Party Committee exemplifies such thinking, and is hereby specially printed and circulated for responsible comrades to read.

—Liu Shaoqi
July 3

(Published according to Liu Shaoqi's handwritten manuscript)

[Appendix I]

Reply from the North China Bureau of the Central Committee to the Shanxi Provincial Committee's "Opinion on Raising the Level of Mutual Aid Organizations in Old Liberated Areas"
(May 4, 1951)

To the Shanxi Provincial Committee, and copied to the Central Committee:

We have read your "Opinion on Raising the Level of Mutual Aid Organizations in Old Liberated Areas." It is correct that you are emphasizing the leadership of mutual aid teams and paying attention to studying newly emerging issues. However, you have proposed:

1. Using the accumulation of public funds and the method of distribution according to labor as a means to gradually undermine, weaken, and ultimately negate the private ownership foundation. This is inconsistent with the Party's policy during the New Democratic stage and with the spirit of the Common Program, and is therefore incorrect. During the New Democratic stage of the revolution, our revolutionary tasks include only shaking the foundations of feudal private ownership, eliminating imperialist privileges in China, and removing bureaucratic capitalist private ownership. Generally undermining private property is a task of the socialist stage of the revolution. Currently, in your province, many mutual aid groups need to be improved and consolidated. However, the main issue in raising and consolidating mutual aid groups is how to enrich their productive content to meet the peasants'

demands for further development—not the issue of gradually weakening private ownership. This principle must be fully clarified.

2. Agricultural production cooperatives may be established on a trial basis in only a few places across the province, for research, demonstration, and educating peasants. Even such pilot cooperatives must arise from the voluntary will of the masses and must not be forcefully implemented, let alone expanded. We approve the trial of seven such cooperatives by the Changzhi Prefectural Committee, but we ask that you examine whether these were genuinely established based on the masses' voluntary will.
3. According to Comrade Wu Guangtang's estimate, 55% of all households in Shanxi Province are participating in mutual aid groups (not including temporary small-scale mutual aid). Whether this figure is too high requires scrutiny. Even so, nearly half of all households remain unorganized. Therefore, for the province as a whole, the task of further organizing the peasantry must be placed on the agenda. Comrades attending the mutual aid group conference here will discuss these matters with you in person. Please report back with your conclusions after your research and discussions.

—North China Bureau

May 4

(Published in Compilation of Important Documents on Agricultural Collectivization (1949–1957))

[Appendix II]

Raising the Level of Mutual Aid Organizations in Old Liberated Areas (April 17, 1951)

By the Shanxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party

1. Problem Raised

In the old liberated areas of Shanxi, mutual aid organizations have a solid foundation and long history. Due to the restoration and development of the rural economy, the shortage of labor and draft animals that existed during wartime is no longer a serious problem. Some peasants have already reached the level of well-off middle peasants. With the transition from war to peace, some mutual aid organizations have shown signs of disintegration.

Last year, we emphasized combining “organization with technological improvement,” which solved some issues, but this disintegration trend has not been completely reversed. In practice, we have found that with the recovery and development of the rural economy, peasant spontaneity is growing—not in the direction of modernization or collectivization that we desire, but in the direction of becoming rich peasants. This is the root cause of the disintegration of some mutual aid groups.

Of course, this does not mean that many rich peasants have already developed, but it does mean that this direction has become a spontaneous tendency among peasants. We are paying close attention to this issue. If not handled well, it may lead to two results: one, mutual aid groups disbanding; two, mutual aid groups becoming the “manors” of rich peasants.

This is one side of the situation. On the other side, many mutual aid organizations are also developing new positive factors. The development of mutual aid groups in the old areas has reached a turning point: they must advance, or they will fall behind. We must nurture and strengthen these new factors within mutual aid organizations to gradually overcome the spontaneous tendencies of peasants. This is essential to reversing the disintegration trend.

2. How to Strengthen New Factors and Overcome Peasant Spontaneity

Two fundamental measures are required:

First, collecting public funds and increasing communal accumulation.

There are differences of opinion on this issue. Some comrades believe that since mutual aid organizations are still based on private ownership, public funds cannot maintain equivalent production relations within the group, and thus they should be portable when members leave. They also think that public funds should not be distributed equally among members.

Our understanding is the opposite: strengthening communal accumulation and distributing benefits equally among members—even if it doesn't fundamentally alter the private ownership foundation—still introduces a negating factor to it. The aim should not be to consolidate private ownership, but to gradually undermine, weaken, and eventually negate it. Therefore, public funds should **not** be portable when members leave.

Key points on public funds:

1. Collected based on land productivity.
2. Owned collectively by all members (regardless of original land productivity contributions), with each member having equal voting rights—one person, one vote.
3. Not portable upon leaving the group.

As for how much to collect, that's not a matter of principle and can be decided based on production conditions and members' opinions.

Second, on profit-sharing in agricultural cooperatives:

Adopt a dual standard—by labor and by land. However, the portion distributed by land should never exceed that distributed by labor. Over time, the share based on labor should gradually increase.

In summary, we believe that by gradually strengthening the progressive factors of **communal accumulation** and **distribution by labor** within mutual aid organizations, we can significantly advance their development in the old liberated areas.

3. A Few Practical Issues That Also Require Attention

1. Use of public funds: The portion used for expanded reproduction should be relatively large; public welfare expenditures should be limited.
2. New members joining mutual aid groups with existing public funds should receive preferential treatment, but also be required to contribute a share.
3. The state should grant preferential treatment to agricultural cooperatives.

Are the above opinions appropriate? Please advise.

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