

Telegram from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Soliciting Opinions on Certain Issues Regarding the Publication of the New Land Law (March 30, 1950)

East China Bureau, Central South Bureau, Southwest Bureau, South China Branch Bureau, Northwest Bureau, Chen and Song (1) forwarded to all provincial committees, and notified to the Northeast Bureau and North China Bureau:

In preparation for implementing land reform in some provinces and regions after the autumn harvest, we intend to publish a new land law and a decision on class divisions in the name of the Central People's Government. Under the new circumstances, after our study of the previously promulgated Land Law Outline and the 1933 Document, some areas can already be revised for certain, but on other issues, we still need to solicit opinions from all areas. The following are the questions we intend to solicit opinions from all regions. We hope to receive responses within 20 days after consideration. First, can land reform be divided into two phases, with the interval between the two phases not being a few months, but perhaps several years? In the first phase, a policy of neutralizing the concentration of wealth and eliminating the landlord class would be adopted. That is, only the land, livestock, farm tools, grain, and houses of the landlord class would be confiscated and distributed, while the land and property of the rich peasants would remain untouched. Under this method, how much land could the landless or land-poor peasants receive, and how much would it represent a tenth of the village average?

Second, if the policy towards rich peasants is to confiscate and distribute only the land they rent out, while leaving all other land and property untouched, will this still achieve the goal of neutralizing the rich peasants? According to this method, after confiscating the land of the landlords and distributing it, how much land can the landless and landless peasants receive, equivalent to several tens of percent of the village average?

Third, in this situation of "too many monks and too little porridge," is it possible to stipulate:

(1) In principle, no land will be allocated to those who have not traditionally relied on agriculture for their livelihood.

(2) When the rich peasants are not being moved, can hired workers be exempted from receiving land and only receive appropriate improvements in their wages and benefits?

Fourth, if the rich peasants' property remains entirely immovable, and the landlords generally lack sufficient draft animals, farm tools, or grain reserves, will the peasants' shortage of production capital after receiving land be resolved, and how?

Five, how should the issue of usury be addressed? Can a general standard be established as the dividing line between usury and ordinary interest, and appropriate measures be established to ensure that peasants are free from the exploitation of past usury while also preventing the destruction of rural lending relationships in the future? Should the issue of usury be omitted from the new Land Law, or should only the rights of landlords be abolished while leaving all other rights intact?

Six, what specific issues should be addressed regarding special land areas in southern China, such as fish ponds, mulberry fields, orchards, and tea plantations? What are your opinions on how to address these issues? Furthermore, what other special land issues should be addressed in the new Land Law?

7. In parts of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, there is the issue of so-called groundwater rights and land surface rights (i.e., perpetual use rights, but different from perpetual tenancy rights, as land surface rights can also be rented and sold). When allocating land, how should land surface rights, especially those of middle- and poorer farmers, be handled? Does this issue also arise in other areas?

8. How should pawned land be handled when allocating land?

9. What methods should be used to allocate land? Is there any difficulty in allocating land based on townships (administrative villages)? What are the appropriate regulations for the units that allocate land?

10. Can the county government establish a land committee composed of enlightened gentry to handle land reform matters, or should the farmers' cooperative handle it?

11. The income and exploitation of rich peasants in the South are more complex than in the North. When calculating total income and exploitation for class division, should we consider only their total income and exploitation from agriculture, or should we also include their income and exploitation from sideline activities and other areas? What practical consequences would these two different calculation methods produce?

12. Can rich tenant peasants participate in farmers' associations?

13. When distributing land, is it necessary to set aside a portion for "public enterprises"?

14. Although land distribution has been fully or largely implemented in Northeast China and North China, we would still appreciate your feedback on your experiences and observations regarding the above issues.

Central

March 30

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Notes

Chen refers to Chen Yu; Zhu refers to Song Renqiong.