

Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Circular on the Report of the Party Group of the Ministry of Labour Concerning the Unregulated Influx of Peasants into Cities from Northeast China, Inner Mongolia, and Other Areas

Date: 7 January 1954

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Provincial Party Committee typing paper

Sender: He 284

General number: Yi 187

Classification: Ordinary

Sent to: Northwest Bureau

Subject: Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party circulates the report of the Party Group of the Central Ministry of Labour concerning the unregulated influx of peasants into cities from Northeast China, Inner Mongolia, and other areas.

Copies to: Zhang, Huo, Chen, Yang, Wu Ruan, An, Gao, He, Wan; Civil Affairs Department, Agriculture Department, Finance and Economics Committee, newspaper offices, Labour Bureau, First Engineering Bureau, Workers', Youth, and Women's Committees, Municipal Party Committee, Gaolan, and all prefectural Party working committees.

To the bureaus and branch bureaus of the Central Committee, for forwarding to provincial and municipal Party committees:

We are hereby forwarding to you the report of the Party Group of the Ministry of Labour of the Central People's Government concerning the unregulated influx of peasants into cities from Northeast China, Inner Mongolia, and other areas. Conditions similar to those described in this report may exist in all regions, and we ask you to pay attention to this matter.

The Central Committee considers the five recommendations proposed by the Party Group of the Ministry of Labour for resolving this problem to be feasible. Please implement them in light of local circumstances.

In future, when labour departments recruit temporary or permanent workers from rural areas, they should make every effort to do so according to a plan. They should specify the type of work, the duration of employment, wages and benefits, and the qualifications required of workers. Recruitment should be appropriately distributed among rural counties, with particular consideration given to established local customs and to rural areas affected by disasters.

Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party

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Report of the Party Group of the Central Ministry of Labour Concerning the Unregulated Influx of Peasants into Cities from Northeast China, Inner Mongolia, and Other Areas

To the Chairman and the Central Committee:

Since the Government Administration Council issued its Directive on Persuading Peasants to Refrain from Unregulated Migration into Cities on 17 April of this year, the phenomenon of peasants migrating indiscriminately has improved for a time. Since the beginning of autumn,

however, the problem has again become more serious in Northeast China, Inner Mongolia, and other areas.

From early July to early November, for example, 19,116 peasants entered Lüda Municipality, of whom 7,885 were women. Preliminary statistics for the third quarter in Jilin Province show that 3,710 people entered from areas within the Great Wall and from various parts of Northeast China. In Songjiang Province, the influx of peasants has continued to increase since the beginning of spring, reaching 17,852 by the present time. More than 8,000 people entered Anshan during May and June alone.

In Yakeshi and Ulanhot, within the Xiguitu area of Hulunbuir League in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, more than 1,300 peasants from disaster-stricken areas in Northeast China, North China, and Central and South China had arrived between July and 22 October. Of these, 444 had already been persuaded to return to their home villages, but the influx was continuing to grow.

In Wuhan, a preliminary investigation of some streets in only three districts—Hanyang, Jiangnan, and Jiang'an—already identified 831 incoming peasants. In Handan, Hebei Province, a large influx of peasants from Shandong Province has also been discovered. Some of them possess disaster-victim certificates bearing county government seals or letters of introduction issued by county civil affairs departments.

Because no arrangements are made for peasants entering the cities, they encounter severe difficulties once the money they brought with them has been spent. Some go to government offices every day to make demands; others beg for alms, sell their clothes, or wander the streets. Some have even attempted suicide.

In Qingjiang County, Jilin Province, for example, incoming peasants surround the Labour Section every day. Unless the section finds them jobs, they sleep in its offices, eat in the government canteen, or follow officials home, saying, “If you are going to eat, then you must let us eat too.” Some individuals cry and make a scene, threatening to die in the office or at the government entrance. When the disturbances became most serious, the county magistrate decided to close the Labour Section and suspend its operations for more than twenty days.

In Lüda, some peasants have gone to Soviet military installations to beg for food. Others, feeling that they have nowhere left to turn, have attempted suicide, although they were rescued. Some women, unable to find work, have hastily sought marriage partners without proper consideration.

Among peasants who entered Xiguitu in Hulunbuir League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, some declared: “Under the rule of the People’s Government, no one should die of hunger.” Others stated that they would rather die than return home.

Some even stole 560,000 yuan in public funds from the accounts clerk of the Tulihe Forestry Bureau and divided the money among themselves to spend.

In Fushun, some incoming peasants have snatched steamed buns from factory and mining-area canteens, wandered the streets begging for food, or gone to the homes of fellow villagers and eaten whatever food they found.

These circumstances have not only created an adverse public impression but have also increased urban unemployment, placing our work in a passive position.

In the countryside, the large-scale departure of peasants has seriously affected agricultural production. The county governments of Xiping in Henan Province and Huanggang in Hubei Province, together with the latter’s Public Security Bureau, have both written to Wuhan Municipality, stating: “The foundations of rural government have been weakened, and we request that joint efforts be made to resolve the problem.”

The Fifth District Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Cang County, Hebei Province, wrote to Premier Zhou, reporting that the Third Detachment of the Fourth Construction Company of Tianjin Municipality had privately recruited and taken away more than thirty peasants from Sanlidi Village. The village had only thirty-five male labourers, eight of whom were members of the Communist Youth League. After these men were taken away, other villagers repeatedly demanded permission to leave as well, disrupting the smooth progress of autumn ploughing.

Because Shan County in Shandong Province suffered a disaster this year, more than 800 people migrated to Northeast China during July, August, and September alone, according to incomplete statistics. Many refused to heed attempts to persuade them not to leave. Cases have also been discovered in which people forged official seals and obtained migration certificates through deception. Others found jobs and then sent money home, conspiring with relatives and friends to follow them to the cities.

If these developments continue, they will not only disrupt urban order but also interfere with rural production.

Our assessment of the causes of the unregulated influx of peasants into cities is as follows:

(1) In some areas, the Government Administration Council's Directive on Persuading Peasants to Refrain from Unregulated Migration into Cities has not been properly implemented. On the one hand, district and township cadres have failed to enforce it conscientiously and continue to issue letters of introduction indiscriminately. On the other hand, our propaganda work has been inadequate. Some peasants and village cadres still do not know that the Government Administration Council has issued a directive discouraging peasants from entering the cities.

At the same time, some employing departments continue to bypass the labour authorities and recruit workers directly and indiscriminately from the countryside.

(2) Some regions suffered natural disasters this year, leaving peasants in difficult circumstances. Fearing that they would go hungry at home, they went to the cities to seek a livelihood. Of the 838 peasants who had entered Xiguitu Banner in Hulunbuir League, Inner Mongolia, most came from disaster-stricken areas. They feared that they would starve if they returned home and said that they could not even find food to beg for along the journey. They therefore refused to return.

Another cause is the surplus of rural labour following the organization of the countryside into collective arrangements. This is particularly true after the autumn harvest, when peasants have little work to do at home.

(3) Some peasants envy urban life and believe that working in the cities brings higher incomes. In particular, peasants who have found jobs in the cities and sent money home have further encouraged others to consider leaving the countryside.

(4) The commencement of national economic construction, especially in Northeast China, which is a major focus of construction, has also contributed to the problem. This spring, a group of incoming peasants was given employment there, and this is one of the important reasons why peasants have continued to migrate indiscriminately to Northeast China.

Although the influx of peasants into cities has so far become serious only in certain areas, the problem must be given sufficient attention.

On the one hand, some regions suffered natural disasters this year, and the influx of peasants into cities may become even more serious during the spring famine period next year.

On the other hand, an assessment of next year's construction tasks and the existing construction workforce indicates that, generally speaking, there will not be a shortage of labour; rather, there will be a surplus. For example, Beijing estimates that it will need 30,000 fewer temporary workers next year than this year. Other cities face similar circumstances. In addition, once capital construction

projects are suspended, another group of temporary manual labourers will be released from employment.

Unless these problems are addressed appropriately, allowing them to develop unchecked will place our work in an even more difficult position.

We therefore propose the following measures:

Recommendations

(1) Strictly implement the Government Administration Council's directive discouraging peasants from migrating indiscriminately into cities.

All localities must conscientiously implement the Government Administration Council's directive and strictly prohibit county, district, and village authorities from issuing letters of introduction indiscriminately.

During this winter and next spring, the directive should be explained thoroughly and comprehensively to peasants, so that it becomes known to every household. Peasants must understand that industrial construction in the cities is still in its initial stages and that the demand for workers remains limited. Entering the cities without authorization not only wastes travel expenses and results in fruitless journeys back and forth but also delays agricultural production.

When urban construction eventually requires additional workers, the authorities will formally notify district and township governments to recruit them according to a planned and organized arrangement.

Peasants should also be informed about the future prospects of the countryside in order to strengthen their enthusiasm for agricultural production.

(2) Vigorously organize peasants, especially those in disaster-stricken areas, to engage in production for their own relief.

Governments at all levels should take the lead in organizing peasants to engage in production for self-relief (shengchan zijiu). This means making use of every available local resource and adapting activities to local conditions to develop supplementary winter occupations.

Once peasants have secure means of subsistence and opportunities to engage in productive work, their unregulated migration will naturally decline considerably.

(3) Strictly prohibit factories, mines, construction companies, and other employing units from recruiting workers directly from rural areas without going through the labour authorities.

In future, whenever employing units genuinely require workers from the countryside, they may submit requests to the labour authorities, which will arrange recruitment in an organized and planned manner.

If any unit continues to disregard the overall situation and recruit workers directly from rural areas, the local Party committee and government must take strict corrective action.

Administrative and trade union organizations in industrial, mining, and construction areas should also strengthen education among workers and staff, urging them not to write letters to their home villages encouraging relatives and friends to enter the cities in search of employment.

(4) Take measures to persuade peasants who have already entered the cities to return to their home villages.

The civil affairs and labour departments, together with trade unions and other relevant agencies, should mobilize these peasants to return home.

For those who genuinely cannot afford the journey back, local governments may provide subsidies for travel expenses or issue railway or other transport passes. Those currently facing serious subsistence difficulties may receive appropriate relief.

If peasants who have entered the cities remain unwilling to return despite repeated efforts by the local government to persuade them, the authorities may, when necessary, notify the governments in their places of origin and ask them to send representatives to persuade the peasants to return and escort them home.

(5) In general, do not arrange employment or other placements in the cities for peasants who have entered without authorization.

Some localities have reported that “the faster the incoming peasants are given jobs, the more of them arrive.”

We believe that, from now on, efforts should be made as far as possible to persuade peasants who have entered the cities to return to the countryside and resume agricultural production. As a general rule, they should not be provided with employment or other placements in the cities.

We submit the above recommendations for your consideration and request instructions.

Party Group of the Central Ministry of Labour

4 December 1953