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THE STRUGGLE TO OVERCOME THE FOOD CRISIS

[A declaration of the Revolutionary Communist Party of China -- Chinese section of the Fourth International -- on how to overcome the current food crisis. The declaration was unanimously adopted by the Provisional National Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party of China (RCPC) in March 1961.]

* * *

The shadow of starvation covers the country. From Hainan Island to Hulung River, from Shanghai to Lhasa, the great majority of the people are unable to acquire enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. A small number of privileged bureaucrats are the exception. Because of appalling shortages of staple and subsidiary foods, people often eat wild plants and low-level animals to stave off starvation. [These are animals not normally eaten, such as rats, various insects and the like. -- Translator.] The struggle for food has become a major struggle in the daily life of all working people. Disease arising from long periods of malnutrition and hunger has threatened the survival and succession of the whole nation. The people's resentment has come into the open. The village functionaries who used to act in an oppressive manner realize that now they can hardly carry out their orders. A rebellious sentiment is growing. One often hears of food thefts and riots. The food shortages have created a crisis that threatens the entire nation. New China is now in danger.

Socialist Principles Have Not Been Refuted by These Events

The imperialists and their agents, such as the Chiang Kai-shek clique, cruelly hail this crisis and are seeking to use it for the restoration of the old and rotten regime. If they succeed in ruling China again, the Chinese people will suffer enormously. The imperialists will once again be the masters of China. We must not let this happen.

The current situation in China is not the logical outcome of the revolution. The most important achievements of the Chinese Revolution have been national independence and unification, elimination of the landlord class, and the nationalization of the means of production. The progressive character of these social changes has been verified by the Soviet and Chinese experiences, which show that they are the prerequisites for increasing the productivity of labor. The fact that the increase of labor productivity has not brought about an improvement in the living standards of the people does not mean that the nationalization of all means of production runs counter to their material interests.

Nor is nationalization the main cause of the current agricultural crisis. What should be realized is that if, after abolishing the exploitation of the capitalists and the

landowners, the government had utilized the means of production to raise the people's living standards, the Chinese masses would be far better off today than they were under the Kuomintang regime. Thus the whole question hinges on the fact that the Chinese Communist party is incapable of correctly implementing the superiority of the system based on nationalized property. The problem concerns the policies of the Communist party leadership, not the principles of socialism.

The Crisis Originates in the Mistakes of the Leadership

The food crises do not simply result, as the CCP contends, from natural calamities that struck in 1959-60. These were only secondary factors. The main causes were the CCP's economic policies and the bureaucratic character of the regime. The Communist party leaders have ignored the people's living standards and have blindly pursued high-speed industrial development. They mechanically contrast the people's interests to the abstract "national interest." Mao Tse-tung, having taken over Stalin's theory of building "socialism in one country," believes that a backward country like China can build socialism by its own efforts.

Because the Chinese Communist party leaders have given up the policy of relying on the world revolution, they emphasize the importance of developing heavy (capital-goods) industry and they give it priority in order to build up the military power to resist any imperialist threat. As a result of this policy, they have significantly reduced the production of light industry and made the people suffer from the consequent great shortage of daily necessities. They have also robbed a large amount of agricultural products from the peasants and exported these goods to other countries in exchange for industrial equipment, making the whole nation suffer from a great shortage of food. Therefore, the living conditions of the people are getting harder and harder, the working morale is falling lower and lower, and agricultural production is becoming smaller and smaller. The driving force behind the erroneous economic policies is the CCP's whole bureaucratic system.

The CCP's Agricultural Policy

As the largest share of capital accumulation for industrial construction in China comes from the village, the CCP's economic policy has imposed the biggest part of the nation's sacrifices and sufferings on the peasants. The CCP not only levies large amounts of foodstuff from the peasants in the form of an agricultural tax but also forces them to sell their products at lower than normal prices. The CCP not only takes away the peasants' surplus produce but also part of what they need for daily consumption.

In implementing collectivization, the CCP leaders have not followed Engels' and Lenin's teachings to use persuasion

and to set up model farms in order gradually to convince the peasants of the superiority of collectivized agriculture. Instead, they collectivized and communized the peasants by coercion -- by rough and sudden administrative measures. In the collective organizations, the bureaucratic management assigns tasks, sets quotas and handles the harvest in a totally arbitrary manner. As a result of these methods, the CCP cadres have upset the normal order of agricultural production, taken away a great deal of the peasants' harvests, and greatly diminished the peasants' incentive to produce.

The situation in agriculture has been radically deteriorating since the "great leap forward" and the commune policy began in 1958.

The policy of the "great leap forward" hurt agricultural production in 1958 in two ways: First, the mobilization of all the people for work at the "backyard iron and steel mills" caused such an extraordinary tension and shortage of farm labor that the entire process of agricultural production was disrupted. Second, deep plowing and intensive cultivation also destroyed a great deal of good farming land and wasted a great deal of manpower.

The real purpose for setting up the people's communes was to use the CCP's bureaucratic organizational power to increase the peasants' intensity of labor and drive all countrywomen into production so as to increase agricultural output and thereby provide heavy industry with more capital.

Unfortunately these measures were so far removed from the existing level of labor productivity, the social reserves of wealth and the peasantry's level of consciousness that they produced a result totally different from the one originally intended. The peasants just did not want to work. They showed their resentment and dissatisfaction either openly or secretly by sabotage and slowdown. The CCP's lower-level cadres were bewildered and distressed, and they loosened their tight discipline. The whole of agricultural production simply collapsed. The peasants lost the ability to resist the natural calamities that then struck agriculture and they remained impotent before them. Unprecedented food shortages then appeared, confronting the whole nation with the dangerous prospect of the people starving and industry stagnating.

Signs of this dangerous situation appeared as early as the winter of 1959. They forced the CCF leaders to change their opinions in the beginning of 1960 and to emphasize the importance of agriculture. Unfortunately, the CCF leaders did not adopt an economic policy favorable to the peasants. After the agricultural crisis set in, they just mobilized the city male labor force to go to the countryside to help with the farm labor. They also mobilized the cadres so as to tighten their control over the peasants.

Facts prove that the new policy is doomed to failure. At the recently held Eighth Session of the Ninth Plenum of the CCP's Central Committee, the party leadership was forced to announce a reduction in basic construction and a slowing down of the growth rate of heavy industry. Besides making these concessions, the party leaders once again took up the "rectification campaign" aimed at suppressing dissident elements.

The current food crisis cannot be solved by a few minor, technical changes. A solution for the whole social crisis must be found. Such a solution must be based on a radical departure from the policy of building "socialism in one country." But the CCP can never purge itself of this basic error which fundamentally expresses the interests of the entire bureaucracy. But are the workers and peasants willing to allow the CCP to sacrifice the people and the nation merely to further the interests of a few bureaucrats?

Basing ourselves on Marxism-Leninism and on the reality, we, the revolutionaries of the Fourth International, wish to make the following suggestions to the working people of the whole nation and of the world.

The Basic Principle: Everyone Should Have Enough to Eat

The People's Government should immediately publish the real figures of all food on hand, increase the supply of staple and subsidiary foods for all the people, and transport food to the needy areas to relieve starving people there.

Stop all export of agricultural products and postpone repayment of all foreign loans. Our main creditor, the Soviet Union, should show sympathy for our people and agree to the postponement of this repayment. If it does not help us at this critical moment, the Soviet government will stand exposed as a government concerned only with its own selfish interests and as totally devoid of any spirit of internationalism. To such a government we should disown any treaty obligations.

Stop all bourgeois-type diplomatic banquets in order to save food.

For the time being stop sending unnecessary diplomatic delegations to capitalist countries so as to save foreign exchange.

As much as possible, stop importing raw materials needed for the expansion of heavy industry. Use the money saved thereby to purchase food, medicine and objects of daily necessity.

As much as possible, export industrial products not urgently needed by the people (such as products that today can only be enjoyed by the bureaucrats) in exchange for food,

medicine and daily necessities.

China is a workers state. Although it has many shortcomings, it is still an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist country. Workers states all over the world -- the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, North Korea and the East European countries -- have an absolute obligation to help us surmount the current crisis. The working class, their parties and other groups all over the world also have an obligation, despite their political differences, to relieve the hunger-stricken Chinese people. We, as a section of the international working class, solemnly appeal to our class brothers all over the world for this aid. If, for sectarian political reasons, the Chinese Communist party rulers refuse to accept such aid, they will be held responsible for the defeats the people will suffer. Comrades! Class brothers! the starving Chinese workers and peasants appeal to you!

The Right of Producers to Dispose of Their Own Crops

Except for a twenty per cent agricultural tax, the government should announce that all crops belong to the peasants or to peasant groups, and that they have the complete right to dispose of their own products. Although this is perhaps a painful measure for a socialist government to take, it is the only step capable of saving the whole nation from plunging into disaster. The people's government must concede to the peasants' notion of private property. If the government fails to make this concession to the peasants, they should unite and protect the harvests through their own efforts.

For a Change in Market Relations

To grant the peasant the right to dispose of his own harvest does not mean to encourage him to engage in speculation. Because of the backwardness of Chinese industrial production, we have to tolerate for some time to come the existence of capitalist relationships in the countryside. However, there are two restrictions that must be placed on these relations. First, the peasants should not be allowed to engage in foreign trade. Second, ownership of the land must be vested in the nation. The peasants should have the right only to till the land but not to buy and sell it.

At any rate, the government must not purchase the peasants' surplus products by coercion. Instead, it should set fair prices and purchase the peasants' products through normal trading channels. If the peasants think that the government's regulated prices are too low, they should be allowed to sell their goods on a free market.

For a Change in the Organization of Agricultural Production

The peasants have been organized into communes through coercion not through their voluntary participation. There-

fore, they should have the right to decide whether they want to stay in the communes or whether the communes should be disbanded. They should be allowed freely to choose whatever type of agricultural production organization they prefer and democratically to elect their technical and administrative leaders.

How to Hold Capitalist Tendencies in Check

Restoration of the market and relaxation of the government's control of agricultural organization will no doubt encourage capitalist tendencies. This is a big danger to a country basing itself on socialist property relations. We have not overlooked this danger to a backward country like ours. But we cannot detour around it. We must face it, minimize it as much as possible through a correct policy, and overcome it by long-term efforts. At least in the early period, the government will not be able to cope with this danger from the countryside by means of force or administrative pressure. The only workable method is to gradually channel the free market of the countryside into the government market. The government should offer very fair prices so that the peasants will freely decide to sell their surplus products to the government.

But money is only a means to procure goods, it isn't the goods themselves. If the government does not provide what the peasants need in the state-controlled market, the peasants will not sell their products to the government. What the peasants need most is daily necessities and materials for agricultural production. These are mostly products of light industry. Thus the current agricultural problem really involves the whole socio-economic problem.

In past years, the peasants have supplied their products to the cities virtually without rewards or prices. The shortages of daily necessities have aggravated the suffering of the people and greatly reduced the workers' and peasants' interest in production. When the people cannot procure basic rations or urgent daily necessities, the socio-economic links become immediately disconnected and the relations between various economic domains are shaken. The ambitious plan for heavy industrial development and construction then rests on a foundation of sand.

It is therefore necessary to change the mistaken policy of the CCP. Priority should not be given to heavy industry but to the improvement of the people's living standards. What the Chinese people badly need are not refrigerators, fur coats, steel plants, automobiles or guns, but food and daily necessities. They need rice and wheat, vegetable oil and sugar, cotton cloth and medicine. The government should base its economic policy entirely on the satisfaction of such necessities. It should greatly develop the industries that turn out daily necessities and, at the same time, change the agricultural policy so as to permit of an increase in the

agricultural output. These steps must be taken not only to encourage the peasants to sell their products to the government, but also gradually to improve the people's living conditions, increase the interest of the workers and peasants in production, and consolidate all revolutionary forces for socialist construction.

Only on such a foundation, can we plan a reasonable, step by step development of heavy industry. Built in this way, heavy industry will have a solid foundation. And industrial development proceeding on this solid basis can help gradually to weaken and reduce the capitalist tendencies.

Only by the Working People Themselves

"The Trotskyists want our country to remain backward forever," the CCP leaders may say about us. As a matter of fact, our dispute with them is not over whether we should develop heavy industry or not but over how to develop it. The initial accumulations of Chinese industry must come from the countryside. This is our common ground. But the question is: After taking from the peasants a great deal of their products, what proportion should be left in their hands? The CCP has taken almost everything from the peasants but has given them nothing in return. It has even taken a large part of the rations necessary for their survival. We think we should give the peasants an equivalent for a large part of what we take from them. If they agree to follow our plan, heavy industry will develop more slowly but more surely. Constructing heavy industry during a long period of starvation is like erecting a skyscraper on a sandy beach. This is exactly what the CCP is doing now. The logic of its policy is that the big building -- heavy industry -- will sooner or later collapse.

"Since you ignore heavy industry how can you consolidate our national defense against imperialism?" some people may ask us. We have never disregarded the importance of national defense, but the question is how to defend our country and our socialist system. In our opinion, we cannot defend our country merely by engaging in a military build-up and by sacrificing the basic needs of the people. Their physical exhaustion only weakens their will to defend the country. We would prefer to see millions of people well fed and full of revolutionary determination to defend their homeland against imperialism even with poor weapons than to see a small number of modern troops equipped with nuclear weapons but isolated from the masses (who are on the verge of starvation).

The main weapon for the defense of our country is the revolution not guns. The revolutionary spirit of the masses in a socialist country will fire the working-class movement in the imperialist countries. That is the best weapon available for eliminating imperialism and war. The best way for a socialist country to defend itself is through a military

build-up that is coordinated with the nation's economic development. But to engage in national defense by sacrificing the people's living standards and reducing their revolutionary fervor -- this will never do any good.

The CCP leaders, however, pursue the latter way. Their real reason for doing so is that they do not trust the workers [of the world] and that they are afraid of the masses and the national working class. Thus they rely solely on the army. What they actually defend day in, day out is not socialism but their own bureaucratic interests.

If the workers and peasants think that this bureaucracy will change its erroneous basic policy, they are mistaken. Bureaucratic interests prevent the government functionaries from making a radical change.

Therefore, the workers and peasants should take the whole matter in their own hands and rely on themselves.

First, we must fight for freedom of speech. We must organize food committees on a mass scale and whenever possible take control of food production and distribution. We must reorganize the Economic Planning Committees from top to bottom and make major revisions in their policies and plans. All parties based on socialist principles should be allowed legal existence and the right to organize. They should also have the right to speak on national problems and to participate in elections at all levels.

If the CCP believed its policy was right, it would permit socialist democracy. But the CCP leaders don't have the courage to do so. Instead, their secret police arrest oppositionists and those who voice doubts. Besides having suffered from hunger and cold, our people are also subjected to political and ideological oppression. Shall we die of starvation just like that? Or shall we let the CCP endanger the nation any longer? It is high time for the workers and peasants to speak out and act. The international working class is on our side!+

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CHANGES IN THE COMMUNE SYSTEM

By Chou Sze

Soon after the people's agricultural communes were brought into being in China -- when the official tune, "the people's communes are paradise," was being loudly sung -- we, basing ourselves on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, on the experiences of the entire Soviet bloc and what had actually happened during the communization and its aftermath, pointed out that the policy of the Chinese Communist party was adventuristic. We showed that it wasn't beneficial but detrimental to the development of production. Our criticism was rapidly borne out by the events -- agricultural production fell and the people suffered.

The CCP leaders blame the bitter fruits of their own policy on "unprecedented natural calamities." They argue that the commune policy had been "perfectly correct" and that it had enabled the party to lead the people in efforts to overcome the natural disasters, thus lessening their harmful effects. But the CCP leaders' repeated "rectifications" of the commune program gives the lie to their explanations.

The main reason advanced in 1958 for forced communization was that the communes embody "large-scale production" and "collective ownership." Basing themselves on the argument that "large-scale production is superior to production by small units," the CCP leaders at one stroke organized more than 26,000 people's communes nationally by merging 740,000 agricultural production cooperatives. On the average, each commune numbered five thousand households.

It was said that the communes "can fully mobilize and rationally deploy labor power in the rural areas more effectively than the agricultural producers cooperatives." To make this possible, "the organizational principle of the people's commune is democratic centralism. This principle should be thoroughly practiced in the administration of production, income and distribution, welfare and living conditions of the members and in all other phases of the work." (Resolution adopted by the CCP's Eighth Central Committee at its Sixth Plenary Session, Dec. 8, 1958.) That is, the individual members, the production teams and the production brigades should all be subordinated to the higher centralized power of the communes. But in less than two years, the CCP has openly overthrown the notion of the superiority of "large-scale production." It also cut down the "higher" power of the communes by restoring ownership, administration and distribution to the production brigades and, in part, to the production teams.

"The present stage is based on the production brigade of the original cooperative of the higher stage. Every brigade consists on the average of more than two hundred households. Labor and the distribution of income are to be

basically carried on through the brigade....Production targets, technical arrangements and the type of crops to be raised are determined by the production brigade and the production team." The labor force, land, draft animals and farming tools are distributed permanently to the production brigade. The commune is allowed to make suggestions to the production brigade but is definitely forbidden to decide arbitrarily the size of the area for raising crops, to raise the production quota, to decide the technical arrangements or to transfer labor and means of production." Again, "The production brigade can make counter-suggestions to the commune and does not have to carry out the commune's advice if it doesn't fit the brigade's conditions." (Quoted from editorials in the Peking People's Daily of Nov. 15, 1960; Dec. 21, 1960; and June 21, 1961.)

The "rectifications" not only overthrow the commune's "democratic centralism" but even remove its powers to make suggestions. They show that the commune is unable "to organize and adjust the labor power on a much larger scale" according to the CCP's original plan. In its self-criticism, the CCP gives the following reasons for the "rectifications":

(1) The cadres of the production brigade are familiar with all local conditions, but the commune leaders always "ignorantly give directives that muddle up production." This results in many errors and losses. As a result, the production-brigade and production-team members become dissatisfied and passive.

(2) "Economic conditions vary from team to team and their levels of production are not alike." In the beginning, the commune tried to equalize the income of all members, but this encountered the sabotage and resistance of the "rich teams."

(3) Under conditions of "poverty and backwardness," low productive levels, scarcity of agricultural machines and prevalence on the land of hand labor aided only by draft animals, the attempt to develop the "superiority of large-scale production" holds no advantages but causes harmful effects in the form of much waste and many dislocations. Therefore, the significance of the production brigade and the production team is again to be emphasized. All the reasons given for the "rectifications" are the best refutations possible for the CCP's notion of the "superiority of production on a large scale" as applied to present-day Chinese agriculture7.

At first, the CCP leaders strongly recommended the communes on yet another ground -- namely, that "collective ownership" would bring "kung," or equity. This was chiefly to be embodied in the collectivization of many aspects of daily life. The so-called "free-benefits system" was then very popular and universally touted. In general, about one half of personal income was in the form of free benefits and

one half in cash wages. In many places the ratio of free benefits to cash was much higher. "Seven free" (that is, seven free items such as room and board, haircuts, etc.), "eight free," "fourteen free" -- these marked the trend. And some people thought that communism was right around the corner. They believed it would not be long before people obtained goods and services according to their needs.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese economy could not afford to realize this sweet dream. The Chinese Communists had to wake up after a while and lay down rules limiting free benefits to no more than thirty per cent of total personal income. They urged the nation to live a frugal life. Living standards now dropped to a much lower level than before the communes. In fact, they could not have dropped any lower. Undernourishment became prevalent throughout the nation. This fact pitilessly exposed the fallacy that China was about to enter the stage of communism.

At the beginning, under fantastic slogans, all land, farming tools, domestic animals and poultry was confiscated. But this practice later met with widespread opposition. The destruction and secret killing of domestic animals by the farmers accelerated the food shortage. As a result of this pressure the Chinese Communists were compelled to restore small pieces of land to the farmers for individual tillage as well as small farming tools, domestic poultry and small fruit gardens near the house.

According to the December 1958 resolution, the means of production and the output of the people's communes were to be the collective property of the communes. However, with the aim of transforming the collective ownership of the communes into "ownership by the whole people," every county (hsien) was directed to set up a county communal association. The county communal association was then gradually to increase the proportion of means of production belonging to the people and the proportion of the product distributed by the state. As conditions ripened further, the association was supposed to transform collective ownership altogether into public ownership. But a little more than a year later, the Chinese Communists changed a great deal of this program by announcing that the basic means of production in the commune were for the time being to belong to the production brigade and that the output was also, in the main, to be distributed by the production brigade. The production team was also to have a small share in the ownership. Economic development was not to proceed at the expense of accumulation by the production brigade. The new policy thus indicated a return from commune ownership to ownership by the production brigade and production team rather than an evolution from commune ownership to ownership by the whole people.

The 1958 resolution prescribed that, with the rapid development of agricultural production, a corresponding ..

increase in capital accumulation should take place. Considerable evidence is at hand to show that in the first year the communes, acting on orders, increased the proportion of capital accumulation to sixty-five per cent of the commune's income, whereas distribution to the commune members amounted only to thirty-five per cent. However, a year later, the ratio of capital accumulation to distributed income turned out to be just the reverse.

In the early days of the program, the Communist party leaders directed the people's communes to make every effort to help speed iron and steel production and simultaneously to promote industry, agriculture, forestry, pastoral activities, side-line occupations and fishery. Perhaps as much as fifty per cent of the labor force from the communes throughout the nation was recruited for non-agricultural activities. This resulted in needless shortages of labor in farming and undue neglect of land that might otherwise have been tilled. The CCP then issued regulations providing once more that, at the busy times in agriculture, eighty per cent of labor should be preserved for agricultural purposes. The party also ruled that less farm labor should be employed in industry, mining and the like and that, if necessary, such labor be stopped altogether.

At the beginning, the commune monopolized all commerce. All goods were to be directly distributed by the communes or traded among them. This policy eliminated the free market, clogged up the circulation of goods, suppressed the incentive for production and worsened the shortage of foodstuffs and other items in daily need. These results compelled the CCP to allow commune members to conduct individual side-line occupations and also compelled it partially to reopen the free market in the form of collective trading.

The 1958 document urged that extensive but shallow tilling be changed step by step to close and deep plowing with the aim gradually to reduce the nation's total area under cultivation by about one third. The new policy had the following result: although output per acre increased, the total national output greatly decreased. A year later, the CCP changed this policy, too. It now urged that every available inch of land should be planted.

Originally, the Chinese Communists insisted that development of heavy industry had to receive prime consideration in the national economic plans. Everything else had to stand aside so as to let heavy industry pass. In 1958, the nationwide "backyard blast furnaces" to smelt pig iron became one of the most fantastic ventures ever promoted by the CCP. After finding out that too much labor and materials had been wasted in the vain endeavor to boost heavy industry [by these auxiliary methods] and that a serious agricultural crisis had also been produced thereby, the CCP leaders were compelled for the first time to proclaim

the slogan that agriculture is the foundation of the national economy.

The erroneous commune policy has accumulated many acute contradictions. First, there is a basic contradiction between the high productive relations [the communal property forms] and the low productivity of labor. Experience has proved that manpower supplemented only by animal power and confined to small farming tools is not suited for large-scale tillage. Again, the poor material conditions in China today cannot support a free-benefits system. Furthermore, many farmers do not yet fully understand the meaning of collective ownership.

Second, there is a basic contradiction between the bureaucratic nature of the leadership and the interests of the hard-working farmers. Compulsory communization violated the principle that the farmers should participate in the communes only if they were willing to do so. The merger of local government and the commune meant that the Communist party completely dominated production as well as the daily life of the farmers. Contradictions also developed among the communes, the productive brigades and the individual members because of the artificial attempt to equalize incomes.

All these contradictions and hostilities produced extreme emotional disturbances among the peasants, as well as pessimism, sabotage, bad harvesting methods, waste, and carelessness with public property such as farming tools and animals. As a result, the agricultural program was not carried out, food production decreased, and widespread hunger set in. The outcome demonstrated that the commune policy had debilitated agricultural production. Although some aspects of the policy were modified two years later, the above-mentioned contradictions remain. The destructive role played by the commune policy has not diminished.

The merger of the government and the communes means to the farmers that the Chinese Communist party, the government and the individual party members directly control and interfere in agricultural production, personal income and all aspects of daily life. The slogan that "the secretary is boss" spells out the party's absolute authority. The procedure whereby crops are promptly transferred to the national or commune storehouses and then distributed to the commune members by the party members expresses at least one thing -- namely, that the farmers have nothing to say about their production. At the same time, the party members enlarge their political authority and their economic privileges, while the government is free to exploit the farmers' output.

From the farmers' viewpoint, the government helps little in providing agricultural machinery, fertilizer and credit. But it does take away the biggest part of the crop. As long as these conditions obtain, it doesn't make much difference

to the farmers whether ownership is vested in the commune or the production brigade. They know that the party members control both types of organization. In either case, the farmers are really employees of the government without freedom of action and without enough food to eat. Although some concessions have been made in recent years, the rise in wages can hardly buy more food than before because it can't catch up to the rise in prices on the free market. As long as the basic policy of the government remains unchanged, the farmers' incentive to produce can hardly be expected to increase. And without raising the productive incentives, it will be very difficult for the government to obtain a big increase in agricultural output.

Unfortunately, the Chinese CP leaders have not, and apparently will not, draw the lessons from their failures. On the contrary, they say their policy has always been consistent. Up till now, they have made little attempt genuinely to explain why they made compromises. This bureaucratic course cannot solve China's agricultural crisis. Worse, it might lead the farmers to a new explosive situation.

Basing ourselves on fundamental principles of Marx and Lenin in regard to agricultural policy, and in view of the CCP's mistaken commune policy, we wish to reiterate the following propositions:

(1) The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government should immediately put into effect a rule allowing every farmer to freely choose the kind of productive system to which he wants to belong. He should be free to join a cooperative, a mutual assistance team or a commune or to engage in individual farming. If a member wants to withdraw from the commune, he should be permitted to do so without delay, and he should be dealt with fairly and reasonably. Farmers should not be coerced by orders or threats to do anything that is against their will. Just the same, the vanguard of the proletariat has the responsibility patiently to explain to the farmers that cooperation is the best productive system for China today.

(2) Democracy must be put into effect in every kind of productive system. According to the real principle of democratic centralism, it is up to all the members in a labor system (commune, production brigade or production team), and not to the party members alone to decide the problems of production and distribution. The party and the government should act as guides rather than as supervisors.

(3) All land belongs to the nation. The farmers can only make use of it. But the output, except for a maximum tax of twenty per cent, should belong to the farmer. Government purchases from the farmer should not be made by assignment but on the basis of voluntary and free trade.

(4) Heavy industry, light industry and agriculture must be harmoniously developed. Heavy industry must no longer be developed at the expense of agriculture or of light industry. The present growth rate of heavy industry must be slowed down. The main guiding line should not be the growth of heavy industry but the continuous betterment of the living standards of the Chinese people.

June 1961
Hong Kong