

RADICALISM IN THE PRE-LIBERATION LAND REFORM IN CHINA, 1946-1948

Tanaka Kyoko

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) changed its agrarian policy after the Resistance War against Japan from rent reduction to land redistribution. The change took place gradually and reached a point of extremism in autumn 1947 with the Outline Land Law of China stipulating equal per capita distribution of land. The policy was soon branded as “left deviation” and its correction resulted in the relatively moderate Land Reform Law of the People’s Republic of China of 1950. Despite some studies done on the subject,¹ there are some important questions still left unanswered or insufficiently explored. The questions include the process of the policy radicalization, practice under the radical policy and its significance, the reasons for CCP leaders to regard it as “left deviation”, and the process of its correction.

This essay attempts to investigate these questions by examining the nature of 1947 radicalism and its implications, exploring the factors that pushed the Party into “left deviation”, and tracing how it was abandoned. As I have suggested elsewhere, Party leaders decided on the equal distribution policy without fully appreciating the low land-population ratio in rural North China.² Pressed by the unfavourable military development, they desired to rally more active support from the largest possible section of the peasantry and apparently thought equal distribution of land would best serve the purpose. CCP leaders took it for granted that rural poverty derived from maldistribution of resources and that equalization would make every peasant an independent farmer. The fact was that in rural North China where the major Communist base areas were concentrated, resources were far short to realize a society of independent farmers. Equal distribution would make every peasant

a poor peasant with insufficient resources to support himself and his family.

Three factors might explain why Party leaders failed to carefully consider the fundamental agrarian conditions when they formulated such an important policy as land reform. First, Communist leaders as convinced Marxists tended to overemphasize concentration of land-ownership, or “feudal” production relations, and give little attention to the problems on which Marxism did not place importance. Second, the Party had carried out *de facto* land reform since the Resistance War period and let it develop into full-fledged land reform after the war without a well-defined policy on method of takeover and distribution of land. Party leaders had had little opportunity to consider the agrarian conditions as the basis of the land reform policy. Last, they were preoccupied with civil war which on the one hand necessitated poor peasants’ support even more than before and on the other made CCP leaders and cadres more suspicious of the richer classes in their own territory. The preoccupation inhibited them from seeing the general conditions clearly and carefully.

This essay limits its scope to the land reform policy and touches on implementation only when necessary for the simple purpose of making its length manageable. It also excludes the all-important rectification campaign which was a part of the 1947-48 land reform.³ Let us begin with a study of the Outline Land Law of October 1947, the highest-level document of the radical policy.

1. The Outline Land Law

The Outline Land Law and the CCP Central Committee (CC) resolution attached to it are the only CC-level documents that take the full-fledged radical line on land reform during the period under discussion.⁴ The basic principle of the Law was equal per capita distribution of land regardless of age and sex. Land-ownership of the landlords, clan associations, ancestral shrines, temples, schools, government organs, and other organizations was to be abolished (Articles 2 and 3). All agricultural land in the village (*xiang*), which was the unit of land reform (Article 7), was to be taken over by the peasants’ association and distributed equally, both in size and quality, in accordance with the population regardless of former ownership (Article 6). The principle

was commonly referred to in contemporary CCP publications as *daluan pingfen* (total reshuffle and equal distribution).⁵

Based on this principle, the Outline Law did not stipulate on from whom and how much land was to be expropriated except for the above general principle of abolition of land-ownership of the landlords and organizations. The principle of *daluan pingfen* was designed to solve the problems the Party had faced in the preceeding land reform such as landlords' and rich peasants' concealment of their land, uneven distribution of land and other "fruits of struggle" among the peasants, and cadres' difficulty in "correctly" implementing the previous policy. *Daluan pingfen* would allow no piece of land to be concealed, thoroughly correct uneven distribution, and should be easier to implement, as it was a simpler principle than that of the previous policy based on the May Fourth Directive of 1946.⁶

As for properties other than land, such as houses, farm appliances, animals, grain, cash, clothes, furniture, daily utensils, and personal effects, the Outline Land Law provided that all those owned by the landlords were to be confiscated, whereas the rich peasants were to hand over the "surplus" of them (Article 8). This was the only difference the Law made between the landlords and rich peasants. The difference did not seem to have meant much in practice, since it depended on definition of the "surplus" which the Law did not provide. The two definitions commonly used were: 1) the part exceeding the need of the owner and his family; and 2) the part exceeding the average in the village.⁷ Neither of the two would allow the rich peasant to retain much more than the average share, given general hostility to the rich peasants and shortage of the "fruits" at the time. In practice they had already been treated exactly the same as the landlords. Properties other than land taken over from the landlords and rich peasants were to be distributed to those peasants lacking such items. The landlord was to be given a share of them as well as land (Articles 8 and 10), but this was often ignored in practice.⁸

The policy of equal distribution was no doubt radical, idealistic, and ambitious, but not realistic. The policy would certainly equalize land and other property holdings in the village but at the same time create new problems for the Party by making every villager land-poor. Economically, it would leave virtually no villager with sufficient resources to produce surplus to invest for

future improvement of production and damage the economic prospect of the Communist areas. Moreover, the *dalu* policy would discourage all productive work on land at least for the period from its announcement to the final confirmation of new ownership, as no villager would be sure which plot would be his. This was apparently the case in Shandong and Taihang, eastern Shanxi, in late 1947 and early 1948. In March 1948, the East China Bureau of the CCP had to emphasize in a directive that *dalu* was not its policy so that every peasant should start spring planting in his field without worry.⁹ The Taihang Administrative Office issued a similar proclamation accompanied by an editorial of the regional Party organ, the Taihang *Xinhua Ribao*, stressing that the Outline Land Law did not mean the *dalu* policy and that the existing land-ownership resulting from the preceding land reform was to be respected and, therefore, no peasant needed to wait and see before he began to work for spring planting.¹⁰

Politically, equal distribution could alienate the villagers of all classes. It would not only fail to deliver the poor peasants what the Party had promised but also deprive the middle peasants of a considerable part of their land. The middle peasant was defined by the Party as the farmer who neither exploited anyone nor was exploited by anyone,¹¹ i.e., one who supported himself and his family mostly by working on his own land without a hired hand. To be so, he had to own land 20-50 percent larger than the average in North China.¹² The middle peasants, roughly 20 percent of the rural population, would lose out in equal distribution, although CCP leaders expected only a small number of the "well-to-do middle peasants" to lose a small part of their land and the lower middle peasants to gain some land in equal distribution.¹³ Perhaps more serious was the failure to fulfill the poor peasants' expectations which had swollen through the past years' gradual radicalization of land reform, particularly since mid-1946 when every poor peasant's *fanshen* (to obtain sufficient resources) was made the official goal.¹⁴ When many poor peasants found their *fanshen* impossible, their support for the Party could be shaken.

Apart from equal distribution, the most striking feature of the Outline Land Law was poor peasant power. The Law granted executive power of the land reform to the "peasants' meeting" and the "assembly of the poor peasants' league" of the village (Article 5), instead of the peasants' association

which had traditionally been in charge of agrarian reforms. The change was aimed at keeping the existing village cadres and middle peasants out of power. The peasants' association was an inclusive mass organization which all the villagers except for the "objects of struggle" could join. Its leader was one of the three most powerful village cadres, the other two being the head of the village government and the leader of the militia, who practically ruled the village. Usually they were CCP members and one of them headed the village Party branch. In 1947, they were considered by Party leaders and senior cadres to have "degenerated" and sabotaged land reform. Even their class origins were thought questionable.¹⁵

This was why the Outline Land Law gave executive power of the land reform to the new poor peasants' league which was to be formed as the first step of implementation of the Law. It stipulated specifically that only landless and land-poor peasants could join the league (Article 5) in order to prevent middle and rich peasants from taking over the league. That the Outline Land Law made the "assembly of the poor peasants' league", instead of the league itself, the executive organ stemmed from Party leaders' conviction that the "failure" of the past land reform was attributable in its large part to the lack of "democracy" having resulted in usurpation of village power by "degenerated" cadres and landlords' and rich peasants' agents.¹⁶ Executive power held by mass meeting was designed to prevent recurrence of such usurpation by new cadres.

For the same reason, the "peasants' meeting", rather than peasants' association, was to hold executive power. The association was to be reorganized under the leadership of the poor peasant's league which would decide who among middle peasants could join the association.¹⁷ The reorganized peasants' association was to take over the village government's functions including control over the militia.¹⁸ The reorganization was for three purposes: firstly, to sweep away the existing cadres at least temporarily from village political power; secondly, to deny middle peasants opportunity to hold power; and thirdly, to secure village power in the hands of the poor peasants. The existing cadres and Party members in the village were to be examined by the poor peasants' league which would determine whether and how they should be punished.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Outline Land Law guaranteed the

peasants and their representatives “democratic rights and powers” to “freely remove, change, and elect cadres of the government and peasants’ organization at appropriate meetings” (Article 15).

Underlying these provisions were CCP leaders’ deep distrust of village cadres and middle peasants and unreserved faith in poor peasants.²⁰ At the time Party leaders believed that the general shortage of the “fruits”, which had become the main problem since late 1946, had resulted from landlords’ and rich peasants’ concealment of their property with village cadres’ assistance. The latter were thought to have taken unfairly large shares of the “fruits”, making them middle peasants who now found it beneficial to block further progress of the land reform. Without removing these cadres, a successful land reform was considered impossible. In actual fact, however, sufficient resources to realize every poor peasant’s *fanshen* simply did not exist rural North China. Even after total expropriation of all the landlords and rich peasants, a considerable number of poor peasants had to remain poor.²¹

Under such conditions, poor peasant power might bring about confusion in land reform. No available source defines who were the poor peasants, but the term appears to have referred to those who still remained landless and land-poor in autumn 1947.²² Granting them executive power of the land reform would almost certainly carry the reform into an extremely radical line. Those who were still left in poverty after having seen a number of other poor villagers’ *fanshen* for two or more years were far more frustrated than a year before. The envy at those who had gained much “fruits”, anger with village cadres who had failed to fulfill their expectations, and the strong desire for the *fanshen* would drive them to extreme measures, if necessary, to realize their own *fanshen*. Moreover, by late 1947, in most areas the landlords and rich peasants had lost a major part, if not all, of their property. For their own *fanshen*, the poor peasants had to find new “objects of struggle” who still owned some property. Middle peasants and village cadres who had benefited substantially from the earlier reforms would be the natural targets. A further expansion of the ranks of the “objects” would be inevitable.

The takeover of power from and examination of village cadres by the poor peasants’ league might not result in “democracy” and mass activism, as expected by CCP leaders. Most village cadres were courageous poor

peasants who had first responded to the Party's call for struggle and subsequently led revolution in the village, although there were some who had later "degenerated" to misbehave.²³ Village cadres were leaders at the basic level and the key link between the Party and the masses. By discarding them the CCP could lose scarce manpower of leadership quality in the village and weaken its ties with the peasant masses. Cadre check-up by poor peasants would destroy cadres' authority as leaders and result in exactly the opposite to mobilizing mass activism. Cadres' morale would collapse. Without higher authorities assuringly backing them, cadres would hesitate to mobilize the villagers for services required by the military and civilian organs above. The villagers ceased to respect and obey cadres' instructions, taking advantage of their "democratic rights and powers". It would become difficult and slow to carry out Party policies and services to support war.²⁴

The policy represented by the Outline Land Law could thus endanger the basis of Communist power. To be sure, the policy had the merits of completely destroying landlord power and influence in the village and make rural society thoroughly egalitarian. The merits, however, were outweighed by the demerits described above. Obviously, moreover, the merits and demerits were not carefully calculated before the Party decided to carry out the policy. CCP leaders thought that the policy would make every peasant a middle peasant and stimulate his spirit of enterprise and political activism and thus consolidate the basis of Communist power both economically and politically.²⁵

2. The Absence of Clear-Cut Policy

Many factors were involved to explain the miscalculation. One of them was Party leaders' failure to appreciate the low land-population ratio. It had been well known that the main agrarian problem in North China was shortage of erable land relative to the farming population rather than uneven distribution of land-ownership.²⁶ It is difficult to imagine that CCP leaders, who had all along been interested in agrarian reform, were not aware of that fact. There is evidence suggesting that Party leaders and senior cadres did recognize the problem.²⁷ The CCP documents, however, invariably emphasized and often exaggerated concentration of land-ownership and seldom mentioned the general shortage of land.²⁸

Four reasons are suggested to explain this bias. First, ideologically, concentration of wealth fits well in the Marxian theory of exploitation. It is the question of production relations which forms the core of Marxian economics,²⁹ whereas Marxism does not deal with general scarcity of wealth. Second, politically, the emphasis on uneven distribution would help enhance the importance of the CCP which fought for revolution to abolish social injustice. Third, uneven distribution of wealth was a problem much easier to solve in the short run than its general shortage. Whereas concentration of land-ownership could be changed by land reform once and for all, land shortage could be dealt with only by long-term policies of population control, raising land productivity, and transferring work force from the agricultural to the non-agricultural sectors. The Party was not in a position to carry out these policies when it was in war and had no control over the cities. Last, emotionally, uneven distribution of wealth was the most visible social injustice that inflamed Communist idealism.

These factors combined seem to have inflated the importance and gravity of land concentration in Party leaders' and cadres' minds. With typical optimism of the revolutionaries they took it for granted that once this problem was solved, there would be no land problem nor rural poverty. The low land-population ratio may have been known but it was no more than an abstract idea. They failed to take it into account in concrete terms when they observed development of land reform and formed policies for its promotion.

Peculiar development of the preceding campaigns deprived CCP leaders of an opportunity to correct the above described bias. The Party began to distribute land to the peasants in autumn 1945, but kept land reform secret until October 1947 when it published the Outline Land Law. During the years, the official policy was changed secretly to land reform and details of its method were gradually worked out, while practice went ahead of the policy. The CC never formulated a comprehensive, clear-cut, and detailed land reform policy as such until the Outline Law, although it showed piecemeal principles when required by on-going practice. Unofficial and partial land reform had been carried out even before 1945 under a variety of titles justifiable within the united front agreement with the Guomindang (GMD) which did not allow land reform. Under such circumstances, land reform could not but be

deficient, because land-ownership was transferred for the reasons other than the amount of land owned. The situation did not change fundamentally after the war, as the united front ostensibly continued.³⁰

Let us see how deficient land reform could be by taking two commonly used methods for example, the anti-traitor accounts settling (*fanjian qingsuan*) and anti-black land (*fan heidi*) campaigns. The former, which was by far the most extensively used, was carried out under the banner of nationalism in the areas newly recovered from Japanese control. Those who had held village offices under Japanese rule were the "objects of struggle" and accused at mass meetings of "exploitation and oppression" by their victims and demanded compensation for each case. Although the campaign could go very far by including anyone who had maintained even the slightest contact with a village official during the Japanese occupation in the "objects of struggle" and by setting the level of compensation high, the method did not always work well as land reform. Not all the "objects" were landlords, nor was every recipient of compensation a poor peasant. The "objects" did not necessarily include all the landlords in the village. The amounts of compensation varied in accordance not with the recipient's need but with the degree of the seriousness of the case, the "object's" ability to pay, the degree of the vigorousness of accusation, the mood of the audience at the meeting, etc. Moreover, if the "object" sold land to pay compensation, middle and rich peasants who had means to purchase it obtained land cheaply.³¹

The anti-black land campaign was ostensibly for uncovering non-registered land (black land) and land registered in false names for the purpose of tax evasion. The owner of such land was imposed a large fine and back tax and often forced to sell or surrender his land. The black land itself was confiscated. This method had similar problems to the method of accounts settling. Not every tax evader was a landlord or vice versa and, if sold, the land went to middle or rich peasants, although the fines and back tax paid and the black land confiscated were usually distributed to needy villagers.³²

Both methods were plagued with four major problems. First, they could transfer only a part of landlord land to poor peasants. Second, they had loopholes for the "objects" to exploit and afforded them time to take measures to escape reform or minimize the loss. The gradual extension of the

“objects” from national traitors (*hanjian*) to local bullies (*eba*) then to the landlords in general and further to the rich peasants in two or more years made it relatively easy for landlords and rich peasants to foresee their fate. Third, the methods did not necessarily benefit those in need. Last, the “objects” included some middle and poor peasants as well as rich peasants and landlords. In short, the “objects” and the beneficiaries were only roughly divided by the class boundary and not every case worked meaningfully to correct social injustice.

In 1946, when the Party decided on land reform, accounts settling was extended to practically all the landlords and some rich peasants for their past “exploitation and oppression”, while at the same time a campaign to uncover landlords’ hidden property was launched.³³ This would solve the first two of the above four problems. The 1946 land reform, however, still stuck to the method of accounts settling which inherently incur uneven distribution of the “fruits of struggle”. It was only in late 1946 that the principle of distribution according to the need or equal distribution was introduced to solve the third problem.³⁴ The last of the above problems was given little attention until spring 1948, as will be seen later. Furthermore, the important and complex question of class division was left to local cadres who, faced with shortage of the “fruits”, expanded the ranks of the landlords and the rich peasants. It was not until January 1948 that Party leaders began to take the question seriously.³⁵

The specific problems arising from implementation were attended to only after widespread practice had proved such problems detrimental. This meant not only a failure to examine the agrarian conditions carefully and draw an overall policy but also a failure in solving the specific problems effectively. The 1946 May Fourth Directive of the CC,³⁶ which marked the CCP’s official return to land reform, was fairly clear only on whose land should be expropriated. The Directive was vague on the method of takeover and had no stipulation on how to distribute land except that distribution must be “fair and equitable” and the beneficiaries should include martyrs’ families, soldiers and cadres and their families, and landless and land-poor peasants.³⁷ Obviously, at the time CC leaders were not interested in method of distribution, since it had not yet constituted a serious problem in practice. The May Fourth Direc-

tive was characterized by a complex united front strategy to divide the landlords, neutralize the rich peasants, and unite with the middle peasants, and, therefore, a conciliatory tone towards the landlords in general.

In practice, however, the land reform under the May Fourth Directive ignored the united front strategy and became radical. It was partly because in July 1946, when the Directive began to be implemented, full-scale civil war broke out and the Communists were put on the defensive. To alleviate the unfavourable military situation, they tried hard to win active support from the broadest section of the rural population, the poor peasants, by distributing them tangible benefits. At the same time, the Party's fear of the landlords and rich peasants who might work for the GMD loosened its restraint from harsh treatment of the "objects of struggle".³⁸ A more important reason for the radicalization, however, was the fact that before the May Fourth Directive was issued, one of its two objectives, "elimination of feudal exploitation", i. e., distribution of all land under tenancy, had been realized in many areas. The Directive was taken as asking for realization of the other objective, "solution of the peasants' land problem", i. e., to make them own sufficient land to live on, although the Directive equated the two objectives.³⁹

The three-month campaign from July 1946 to implement the Directive revealed inadequacies of the document especially in its provision on distribution method. Apparently, in most villages the "fruits" were not enough to solve every peasant's land problem.⁴⁰ The Provisional Land Reform Ordinance of Shandong Province, promulgated in October 1946,⁴¹ provided for the distribution of land owned by public and private organizations (Articles 3 and 12-15) as well as landlord land and stipulated clear-cut methods of both takeover and distribution. The method of expropriation was accounts settling. All accounts of exploitation and oppression must be settled in land, not cash or grain, and the "fruits" were to be pooled and distributed to approximate every per capita holding to that of the average middle peasant in the village (Articles 5 and 20). The landlords who were "local tyrants and bullies" (*haoshen* and *eba*) were to retain land 30-50 percent less than the standard share; the small and middle landlords 50 percent more; and the landlords with family members serving as soldiers or cadres 100 percent more than the standard share (Article 5). The last group, however, were encouraged to

“voluntarily donate” their land for distribution (Article 6).

Although clear and sound, the policy represented by the Shandong Ordinance had little chance for success. The land-population ratio would not allow every villager to own a share equivalent to the average holding of the middle peasants, let alone some landlords to retain more than the standard share. Moreover, by the autumn of 1947 most areas in the North China bases had virtually finished land reform in the sense that there remained few people left with land much larger than sufficient to live on and that land holdings in the village had been fairly standardized.⁴² The new principles and methods introduced by the Ordinance and presumably similar legislation in other regions⁴³ were applicable to only minor transfers of the “fruits”. They would not change the basic pattern in which 20-40 percent of the villagers were still land-poor. If the goal was every poor peasant’s *fanshen*, land reform had not been finished. It was more than a failure of attaining the policy goal, since the *fanshen* of many peasants in the preceeding reforms and the official goal itself had raised expectations of those remaining poor. It could be politically dangerous for the CCP to leave their expectations unfulfilled.

Pressed to meet their demands, Party leaders rushed to the conclusion that the shortage of the “fruits” had been caused by an alliance of landlords, rich peasants and village cadres. It was imagined that the former two groups had hidden considerable portion of their property and the last group had gained too much from the early stage of land reform. Since they had common interest against further progress of land reform, they ganged up and sabotaged it using cadres’ power and influence.⁴⁴ To cope with this “grave situation”,⁴⁵ CCP leaders finally decided to work out a clear-cut land reform policy for the first time after two years’ extensive practice.

3. War and Land Reform

Communist leaders’ failure to formulate a technically sound land reform policy with careful consideration of the resource-population ratio was partly a result of their high appreciation of the method of accounts settling. They wanted land reform to be revolution of the peasants themselves which would transform their outlook as well as the rural socio-economic and political system. Accounts settling eminently suited the purpose. It would not only make

the peasants conscious of the class relations in the existing system but also destroy the landlords' authority, power, and prestige and the peasants' fear of and respect for the traditional elites through their personal "struggle" against elites at mass meetings. It represented class struggle which would advance both the mode of production, the substructure, and the socio-political system at the same time. More importantly, it would consolidate CCP power at the basic level by making the peasant identify himself and his interests with the Communist system.

Civil war made class struggle even more important, as Party leaders regarded it as a class war. It was a matter of survival for the CCP and the Party had to depend heavily on the peasants in the liberated areas for material and manpower supplies for war. Land reform through fierce class struggle was to serve the purpose of securing their active support, as it drove them into total commitment to the Communist system, while at the same time giving them material benefits to defend against the GMD. It was, therefore, of special importance to realize peasants' *fanshen* without delay and leave none of them discontented. In a top leaders' words, "land reform supports war and war itself is for land reform."⁴⁶ This partly explains why every poor peasant's *fanshen* became the official goal when all-out civil war began, why the Party stuck to the accounts settling method, and why land reform went radical when the military situation was unfavourable.

The military setback added a psychological factor for excessive radicalism and confusion in land reform. In the first two years of the war, CCP leaders were far more pessimistic about military prospect than one may imagine in view of their brilliant performance in the last two years. They thought the war would last ten or more years with uncertain outcome.⁴⁷ In autumn-winter 1947 when tide began to turn favourable, they feared a United States intervention, which could finish off the poorly equipped Communist army, in case of a GMD collapse.⁴⁸ Frustration and insecurity played a part in harsh treatment of the "objects of struggle" and distrust of village cadres. Party leaders and senior cadres viewed the land reform situation in terms of their life-or-death struggle with the formidable enemy, the GMD, backed by the world-greatest power. They feared that landlords, rich peasants, and even middle peasants were real or potential GMD agents who tried to destroy the

basis of Communist power.⁴⁹ The “failure” of land reform was a collapse of the home front.

In April 1947, when Liu Shaoqi toured rural Shanxi and found the goal of land reform far from attained, the Communists were at the lowest military ebb. The fall of Yanan in the previous month had put the Party headquarters on the run and the top leaders were suffering directly from the adverse situation. Liu’s dismay manifested itself in his letter of 22 April which was characterized by pessimistic assessment of land reform and deep distrust of village cadres. They were soon to develop into a drastic view that village cadres were in fact “landlord-rich peasant elements” who had usurped village power and sabotaged land reform.⁵⁰ Harsh treatment of village cadres was inevitable under the new policy of equal distribution and poor peasant power.⁵¹

CCP leaders believed it essential to deliver substantial material benefits to the peasants for winning their firm support and ameliorating the military difficulty.⁵² It is doubtful, however, that land reform contributed directly to securing the peasants’ support for the Party’s war effort. The war tide began to turn first in the Northeast where land reform had lagged behind the other regions.⁵³ In North China, the Communist Army turned from the defensive to the offensive in autumn 1947 when land reform was in confusion. The CCP’s military ascendancy over the GMD was established in summer 1948 when the former had just begun to rescue the land reform from the chaos brought about by “left deviation” in the past year.⁵⁴

Doubtful contribution by land reform was not limited to the military area. Economically, although no statistics are available, it is almost certain that land reform did more harm than good. As it followed the course of gradual radicalization for two and a half years, the rural population in general and its most productive sections, rich and middle peasants, in particular were left in the state of uncertainty. Besides, the rapidly changing policy and practice could not possibly avoid making many peasants cynical and discouraged them from improving productivity. During the anti-Japanese war the CCP encouraged the peasants to enrich themselves through hard work and enterprise. After 1945, however, the Party failed to protect those who had responded to its call and improved their economic positions from its new policy of land reform. Those who had gained from the “struggles” since 1945 were also subject to the

1947 policy of equalization. The “new” rich and middle peasants who had raised their class status under CCP rule came to be distinguished and protected only in 1948 when the Party turned to a moderate policy.

Under such circumstances, the peasant could hardly find economic rationality in working hard and producing more. Even before 1946 when the official policy remained rent reduction, the Communist sources often pointed out the problems of peasants’ egalitarianism (*junchan sixiang*) and loafing habit (*youdang xiqi*) stemming from repeated struggles. The former referred to the tendencies to struggle against the richer than the average to take away his “excess” property and be reluctant to produce surplus in fear of struggle. The latter meant that some of the beneficiaries of the struggles ceased to work and idly consumed the “fruits of struggle” expecting to gain more from future struggles.⁵³ Both show what was rational behaviour of peasants under the condition of several struggles carried out every year making property distribution more and more egalitarian. They felt unsure that working hard and producing more would be economically rewarded and politically safe. They had by all means to avoid becoming the “object of struggle” who would be systematically discriminated against and persecuted indefinitely.

During the Resistance War, however, these tendencies did not constitute the major problem clearly damaging the Communist economy presumably for two reasons. One is that the official policy remained unchanged and provided a certain limit to radical practice, while the other being the fact that the Party energetically and successfully carried out a variety of policies since 1942 to directly stimulate production increase such as providing low-interest loans, tax incentives, and technical assistance. These policies probably compensated more than sufficiently for the losses caused by the above tendencies of peasants.

After 1945, the official policy changed frequently and grew constantly radical and, moreover, the military situation made Communist power appear less stable than before. The new conditions provided peasants with more reasons for taking equalitarian attitude and loafing habit, as they were even less certain of future development. Communist leaders, however, did not seem worried about the adverse economic effects of land reform. Suzanne Pepper has noted that Mao Zedong stated as early as 1934 that production

suffered for a year or two after land reform.⁵⁴ But the contemporary CCP sources in 1946-47 suggest that Mao and his colleagues believed in land reform to enhance production immediately since it freed production force from antiquated production relations of “feudalism”.⁵⁵ There is no evidence available that they were prepared to see a production setback for a few years. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine CCP leaders willing to sacrifice even a small part of production when the primitive economy of the liberated areas was hard pressed by protracted war.

It seems likely that Party leaders failed to give thoughtful attention to economic consequence of land reform. Based on their faith in the Marxian theory of historical materialism, they vaguely expected the change in the ownership system to advance production immediately. If Mao anticipated a short-term setback, he made little effort to warn his colleagues and subordinates of the setback. Party leaders and senior cadres were preoccupied with delivering substantial material benefits to every poor peasant on which they thought the Party's survival depended. The preoccupation led them not only to a misperception of the rural resource and political situations but also to a wishful thinking that equal distribution would solve all the problems they were faced with, political, military, and economic, in one stroke. The misperception and wishful thinking were reinforced by the Communist bias on production and class relations, peculiar development of the preceding agrarian reform, and Party leaders' insecure psychology deriving from the unfavorable military situation. Since “left deviation” was based on misperception, a change in perception was needed to correct the “deviation”.

4. The Beginning of Moderation

As soon as the Outline Land Law was put into effect, excessive radicalism became obvious. The “deviation” that alarmed Party leaders at first was damage of middle peasant interests. It was not considered, however, as an integral part of the policy but as a deviation from the policy in its implementation. Mao's report to the CC meeting at Yangjiagou, northern Shaanxi, delivered on 25 December 1947,⁵⁶ has officially been hailed as having initiated general correction of “left deviation”.⁵⁷ The report, however, fully endorsed the pessimistic assessment of the village situation and asserted that equal

distribution should be carried out “resolutely and thoroughly”, while at the same time stressing protection of middle peasant interests. Mao expected the middle peasants to be in favour of equal distribution “because it does no harm to their interests.” He thought only “well-to-do middle peasants” would lose “a little surplus land” and lower middle peasants would benefit from equal distribution. The Chairman listed two fundamental principles of land reform: first, to satisfy the landless and land-poor peasants’ demands, which was “the most fundamental task of the land reform”, and second, to unite with the middle peasants by not damaging their interests.⁵⁸ In practice, however, since the two principles were generally incompatible, the “most fundamental task” was emphasized inevitably at the expense of the second.⁵⁹ At about the same time, the top leaders began to take up the question of class division.

Mao’s Yangjiagou report called for a special care to avoid misclassifying middle peasants as rich peasants.⁶⁰ Shortly before that, the CC reissued the two 1933 documents written by Mao on class division to the local Party organs “for reference”. Notwithstanding the later claim,⁶¹ the purpose of the reissue stated in the attached inner-Party directive was somewhat less than clearly and definitely to correct upward misclassification widely practised in the preceeding land reform. The directive consisted of three items. Item 1 stated that the criteria for class division should be decided through formal discussion at a meeting of “experienced comrades of correct viewpoint” and what they could not agree on were to be cabled to the Party Centre. Item 2 told the local Party organs to distribute copies of the two documents to the Party committees, governments, peasants’ associations, and work teams at various levels for discussion and presentation of opinions on the documents. The lengthy Item 3 explained that the documents had originally been issued to correct the left deviation of classifying middle and poor peasants as landlords and rich peasants which had happened in the areas where the “land struggle” had been thorough, while the right deviation of fearing bold mass mobilization and deepening of the struggle had occurred in the areas where the struggle had not been thorough. Drawing an analogy between the 1933 and 1947 situations, the directive warned that after the Outline Land Law dealt a severe blow at “right inclinations”, which was absolutely necessary, the struggle became thorough and “left phenomena” were beginning to

emerge. The two 1933 documents, the directive concluded, were for “appropriately correcting excessively left actions”, which did harm to the interests of the masses, so as to contribute to “unity of the farm labourers and the poor peasants and to protection of the middle peasants.”⁶²

Although the two documents were clearly meant for correcting upward misclassification, it was not quite clear that correcting “left phenomena” was more important than hitting “right inclinations”. The directive failed to stress the seriousness of the left deviations already widespread and the importance and urgency to correct them. It was on 12 January 1948 when Ren Bishi, one of the top five leaders of the Party, delivered a lengthy speech at an Army meeting that the Party Centre showed the first sign of its awareness of extensive misclassification and determination to correct it.⁶³

Ren’s speech is the earliest among available documents that pointed out a wide range of radical practices, such as upward misclassification, encroachment on middle peasant interests, harsh treatment of the landlords and rich peasants, damage on industry and commerce, attack on the “enlightened gentry” and the intellectuals, and excessive violence, and branded them as “mistakes”. Ren Bishi placed the misclassification problem above the others and illustrated for the first time with examples how serious it was.⁶⁴ He stated, however, that the “problems” were merely practical mistakes⁶⁵ and avoided calling them “deviations” which had a more serious connotation. On the next day, the CCP Jin-Sui (Shanxi-Suiyuan) Sub-Bureau issued a directive to correct misclassification of middle peasants as rich peasants,⁶⁶ which suggests that the essence of Ren’s speech was protection of the middle peasants deriving from Mao’s Yangjiagou report. Five days later, on 18 January, Mao issued an inner-Party directive which took the same line as Ren’s speech listing the same “concrete problems”⁶⁷ But in the directive the Chairman came very close to calling them “left deviations” by putting an opening chapter for discussing left and right deviations in general terms.

In February 1948, Mao went a step further in moderation by identifying “left deviations” and requiring different methods of land reform in different areas. Three short works dated 11 and 15 February 1948, included in his *Selected Works*⁶⁸ and Liu Shaoqi’s “Pingshan example”⁶⁹ seem to have been the origins of the much longer CC directive of 22 February 1948.⁷⁰ Mao’s

three works were internal Party directives and never appeared in any contemporary publications available, nor was their existence mentioned, whereas “Pingshan example” and the CC directive was prominently reprinted in almost every major CCP publication in late February onward. Mao’s directive of 11 February on land reform propaganda is of special importance as the earliest among the high-level Party documents available to identify “left deviationist errors”.⁷¹ The leader rebuked the propaganda machine for propagating the “poor peasant-farm labourer line” (*pingunong luxian*) without mentioning unity with middle peasants, encouraging “rashness” and “tailism” to follow whatever poor peasants said.⁷²

Mao apparently thought, however, that it was little more than a question of propaganda. The CC directive of 22 February divided the liberated areas into the “first, second, and third types” according to the thoroughness of the land reform and forbade the “first type” areas where the middle peasants accounted for 50-80 percent of the population from re-doing land reform for equal distribution.⁷³ But the directive insisted on every peasant in those areas, including the former landlord and rich peasant, to obtain enough to make a living by the method of “draw and supplement” (*choubu*)⁷⁴ if not equal distribution.⁷⁵ By equal distribution (*pingfen*) the directive clearly meant *daluhan pingfen* whose primary purpose, it maintained, was to “satisfy the poor peasants’ and farm labourers’ demands.”⁷⁶ The directive’s main point of moderation seemed that *daluhan* did not need to be implemented indiscriminately. The basic assessment of the land reform and its goal remained unchanged. As Frederick Teiwes has noted, given the pessimistic assessment prevailing, it was inevitable for cadres to define their areas as the “second” or “third” type where the land reform had not been thorough.⁷⁷

Mao’s Yangjiagou report, Ren Bishi’s speech and the above-discussed February documents were meant unmistakably for moderation but ineffective to stop radical practice, because they were asking for the impossible. Without an instruction how to reconcile the shortage of the “fruits” with moderation, no directive for moderation would be effective. Mao’s preface to a report of correcting misclassification in Guoxian, northern Shanxi, dated 12 March 1948,⁷⁸ still followed the same principle as that of the February CC directive. The significance of the preface lay in that it indicated the Party leader’s com-

mitment to undoing past excesses, particularly misclassification.

It was just after he had written the perface that Mao's Party Centre in northern Shaanxi decided on protection of middle peasant interests even at the expense of every peasant's *fanshen*. The earliest available document that placed correction of "left deviation" above land reform itself is a directive issued by Xi Zhongxun, the Secretary of the CCP Northwest Bureau, at a work team cadres' conference held in "mid-March" presumably in the district town of Yihe, Suide County, northern Shaanxi.⁷⁹ Xi demanded in the directive to take measures immediately for "correcting past deviations" by returning "wrongly" confiscated land and other properties to their original owners who had been "wrongly" defined as landlords and rich peasants. The Northwest Bureau leader took pains to allow no excuse to sabotage or delay the correction, while at the same time instructing to suspend land reform at once for the busy season of spring planting.⁸⁰ Xi's directive avoided the term *ping-unong* (poor peasants and farm labourers) and used *qunzhong* (masses) in its place for the obvious purpose of including the middle peasants in the village leadership group.

On 20 March, a few days after Xi's directive, Mao wrote "A Circular on the Situation" at Yangjiagou,⁸¹ only about 30 kilometres from Yihe. As Teiwees has pointed out, the circular is the Chairman's first writing available that identified "left deviations" as the main problems.⁸² The tone of the circular is clearly different from his earlier works for moderation, listing a wide range of "left deviations" to be corrected and briefly mentioning "right deviations" only to dismiss them as minor problems. Apparently, the circular prompted the *Renmin Ribao*, the official organ of the CCP Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu (Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan) Bureau, to publish the Guoxian report, Xi's directive, and Ren Bishi's January speech. They appeared in the newspaper's 24, 25, and 28 March issues respectively.⁸³ The three documents pointed to a single subject of importance — undoing of upward misclassification. Their publication marked the turning point of the *Renmin Ribao* to a great emphasis on correction of "left deviations" especially misclassification.⁸⁴ About a week later, the Party daily made undoing of misclassification the subject of its major campaign.

That the official press made a clear turn in early April could not be unrelated to Mao's Jin-Sui speech of 1 April. It was the first high-level document

that presented the new moderate line of the agrarian policy. Mao retained in the speech his definition of the main task of the land reform as to satisfy the poor peasants' demands but placed no stress on it. Nor did he say that it was the "most fundamental task". In contrast, the Chairman put great vigour in attacking "absolute egalitarianism", or "agrarian socialism", as "reactionary, backward and retrogressive." Although he kept the principle of equal distribution, it was now subject to the united front strategy which limited the target of the land reform to "feudal exploitation" of the landlords and "old" rich peasants. This meant to leave the rich peasant land on which they worked with or without hired hands, industrial and commercial assets of landlords and rich peasants, and the whole of "new" rich peasant property outside land reform.⁸⁵

5. Economics Took Command

It is clear from the available sources that the Shaanxi Party Centre under Mao, not the Central Working Committee led by Liu Shaoqi in western Hebei, initiated moderation and reversed the relative importance of every poor peasant's *fanshen* and unity with the middle peasants. The reversal was made between 13 and 19 March 1948 and the new policy was cabled immediately to the regional bureaux. But regional Party leaders seemed ambivalent about the new policy until they received the Chairman's strongly worded speech of 1 April delivered at a Jin-Sui cadres' conference. It took the regional bureaux about a month to send the new policy down to the implementation level, as indicated in William Hinton's report.⁸⁶

There is little doubt that the most important and immediate reason for the policy change was economic.⁸⁷ The degree of radicalism had run parallel to the extent of damage on production and, with the Outline Land Law, reached such a level that liberated areas would possibly face mass starvation unless drastic measures for moderation were taken before spring planting. The damage that alarmed Party leaders was serious vacillation of the middle peasants. Although their vacillation had been expected to a certain extent, it had been thought to be more than made up for by rising enthusiasm for production of the poor peasants.⁸⁸ In reality, however, the new policy of *dahuan pingfen* (total reshuffle and equal distribution) brought production work close to

a halt. Poor peasants devoted their time to "struggles" which would bring them immediate gains rather than working in the fields which would be reallocated, while rich and middle peasants tried to slaughter their animals, consume grain stocks, fell trees in their orchards, and destroy farm appliances as much as possible before they were taken away.⁸⁹

Faced with a threat of collapse of the Communist economy, Mao in his Yangjiagou report embarked on correction of what he thought to be a deviation from the policy of protecting middle peasant interests. The question led him and his colleagues to the second and more complex problem of misclassification. A call for protection of the middle peasants would be meaningless, if many of them were defined as rich peasants. At the same time, industry and commerce began to demand more attention, as the turning tide in the battlefield opened the prospect to rule cities. Ren Bishi launched an attack on left deviations particularly upward misclassification and damage on industry and commerce. At the time, however, Ren did not seem to have realized that the twin problems were the unavoidable cost of pursuing the goal of every poor peasant's *fanshen* which required sparing no part of landlord and rich peasant property and infringing on middle peasant interests. Ren's speech was followed by Mao's directive of 18 January 1948 which presented for the first time the Party's plan to establish regular political, administrative, and economic systems for governing the whole country. It was a sign, however vague, that the Party was turning to an emphasis on law and order.⁹⁰

In February, before Ren's call was put into effect, CCP leaders became aware that the policy of *dalu* provided great disincentives for production. The realization appeared to have come with the beginning of the busy season of preparation for spring planting. The CC instructed the local Party organs to drop *dalu* where it was not necessary. Yet none of the top leaders seemed to have thought of dropping equal distribution as well. It was only after the misclassification began to be corrected in more than a few areas that Party leaders finally recognized that equal distribution was generally incompatible with protection of the middle peasants.⁹¹ Once recognized, the incompatibility had to be resolved by sacrificing equal distribution, because Party leaders were not prepared to see any production setback.

Even before the beginning of the spring planting season, the top leaders

had realized the damaging impact of the radical policy on the economy. Apparently, they had not expected such destructive effects of the new policy that brought production work to a near halt and attempted to stop damaging practices. In the three-month course of the unsuccessful attempts, which coincided with the pre-spring planting season, Party leaders grew almost obsessed with economic stability and development. By the time they finally arrived at the conclusion that they had to choose between equal distribution and preservation of the middle peasants' productivity, they were fully prepared to give up the former.⁹²

The favourable military development reinforced their willingness to abandon equal distribution. With overall victory in sight, they had to plan to govern the whole nation so that they became more interested in stability and economic reconstruction than quick mass mobilization. As the Communist army took more and more cities, protection of industry and commerce became increasingly important in the CCP policy. The radical agrarian policy would cause vacillation of the urban middle classes on whose expertise the Party would have to depend to run the cities and the country.

Conclusion

Radicalism in the 1947 land reform was based essentially on what one may call agrarian egalitarianism seeking absolute equality in land and other property holding, idealizing agricultural society as simple peasant masses, and suspecting things seemingly alien to simple village life such as wealth, power, education, commerce, and industry. The privileged people who possessed one or more of these were suspected of being "impure" and counter-revolutionary. The emphases on poor peasant power, no mercy for any landlord, and attack on "degenerated" village cadres and intellectuals⁹³ indicate the general air of extreme egalitarianism at the time.

Apparently, CCP leaders and senior cadres thought that the poor peasants were the only reliable supporters when the Party was in great difficulty and the rest of the population were real or potential enemies. In view of the "grave situation" that the enemies were in power in the villages, riding "roughshod over the people" and preventing "the land reform being thorough",⁹⁴ it was felt urgent to remodel the rural socio-political system so

as to ensure the poor peasants' grip on power.

The gloomy perception of the rural situation grew out of the Party's futile effort in the preceeding land reform to attain every poor peasant's *fan-shen* by distributing landlord and rich peasant land. When the "fruits" were reported exhausted while many poor peasants still remained poor, Party leaders and senior cadres suspected those who had acquired some power and wealth as well as those who had enjoyed privileges. Local cadres who had presented optimistic reports about the land reform and village political conditions in their areas were required self-criticism for their "complacency" and lack of "class outlook". They were alleged to have overestimated their achievements in land reform work and overlooked the plight of the poor peasants.⁹⁵

The pessimistic view of the rural political situation in general and the progress of land reform in particular resulted in part from the gradual radicalization of the CCP's agrarian policy in 1945-47 which had possibly allowed landlords and rich peasants to evade total expropriation. Party leaders' lack of interest in the resource-population ratio provided the basis for their presupposition that distribution of landlord and rich peasant land would make every poor peasant an independent farmer. An indirect but perhaps most important factor that drove the Party into this pessimism and radicalism was its insecure military position. The GMD's military machine was far superior in size and equipment and kept the Communists on the defensive until late 1947. Worse still, the GMD was backed by the United States, the world's greatest military and economic power which was thought to be invincible.

In spring 1948 when the military situation turned clearly favourable and American intervention became unlikely, the CCP moderated its land reform policy and practice. The direct cause of the moderation, however, was not military but economic, although the changed military tide provided Party leaders with psychological latitude and turned their eyes to economic reconstruction. There are no statistics available to even roughly gauge the damages done by the radical land reform on the economy, but there is no shortage of reports in the contemporary CCP sources pointing to its dampening effects. Not only did equalitarianism set the peasants against producing surplus and saving but political radicalism emphasizing ruthless struggle against "exploita-

tion” intimidated the peasants from normal economic activities, as no one was sure what would be regarded as “exploitation”. For economic development and social stability, the Party needed a clear turn against radicalism. After May 1948, land reform was declared completed in the old liberated areas and it was suspended in the new areas.

Between the years 1945 and 1948, the CCP went radical and turned moderate in its agrarian policy. One may assume that the clear changes suggest a split of opinions in the Party leadership between the radicals and the moderates, since the Maoist theory of Party history defines it as a history of two-line struggle represented by two leadership groups.⁹⁶ As I have shown elsewhere, however, the Party leadership stayed united during the Civil War.⁹⁷ The five top leaders, Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Ren Bishi, and Zhu De, worked closely and made joint decisions on the agrarian and other policies, although Liu as the Chairman of the CC’s Land Reform Commission was in charge of land reform work. It seems safe to say that Party leaders were all capable of going extremely radical and swinging back to the moderate depending on the situation. An analysis of the different situations in which they went radical and moderate in the perspective of their long revolutionary career will help better understand the 1947 land reform, but this requires another full-length study.

Notes

1. Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: the Political Struggle, 1945–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), Chapter 7; John Wong, *Land Reform in the People’s Republic of China* (New York: Praeger, 1973), Chapter 2; Kato Yuzo, *Chugoku no tochi kaikaku to noson shakai* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1972), Chapter 2; Kobayashi Koji, *Chugoku kakumei to toshi no kaiho* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1974), Chapter 2; Yamamoto Hideo and Noma Kiyoshi, eds., *Chugoku noson kakumei no tenkai* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1972), Chapter 4; Kotake Kazuaki, *Kokkyo naisenki no tochi kaikaku ni okeru taishu undo* (Tokyo: Ajia Seikei Gakkai, 1983); Tanaka Kyoko, “Mao and Liu in the 1947 Land Reform: Allies or Disputants?” *The China Quarterly* 75, pp.566–593; Tanaka Kyoko, “Naisen to Chugoku tochi kaikaku seisaku no tenkan,” *Aziya Kenkyu* XXIV: 4, pp.1–25 and XXV: 1, pp.1–26; Tanaka Kyoko, “Naisenki Chugoku tochi kaikaku ni okeru ‘sakei henko’ no zesei katei” I and II, *Ajia Keizai* XXII: 3, pp.35–59 and XXII: 4, pp.70–

92.

2. See Tanaka, "Mao and Liu," pp.590–593.
3. For the rectification campaign, see Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification: Inner-Party Purges and Education before Liberation," *The China Quarterly* 65, pp.32–49; Tanaka Kyoko, "Tochi kaigi to seito: Naisenki ni okeru Chukyo kyushin shugi no ichi sokumen," *Aziya Kenkyu XXVIII*: 3–4, pp.97–130.
4. For the text, see Takechi Minoru et al, eds., *Mao Zedong ji X* (Tokyo: Hoku-bosha, 1971), pp.85–90. The footnotes on Articles 4 and 6 were added in May 1948. For the English text, see William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), pp.615–618.
5. For example, "Dongbei jiefangqu shixing Tudifa Dagang buchong banfa," *Wei chunjie Dang de zuzhi er douzheng* (Hongkong: Zhengbaoshe, 1948), p.44; "Huadongju guanyu chungeng shengchan he jiusai gongzuo de zhishi," *Bohai Ribao*, 26 March 1948.
6. *Remin Ribao*, 31 Decembr 1947.
7. The only contemporary source available that defines the term "surplus" is the "Supplementary Measures of the Northeast Liberated Area for Implementation of the Outline Land Law" (Note 5 above) which takes these principles combined. *Wei chunjie*, pp.44–45.
8. It had been common practice since 1946 or earlier to deprive the "objects of struggle" of everything. The Outline Land Law accelerated the practice by extending the "objects" to all the landlords and rich peasants. See, e.g., Ren Bishi, "Tudi gaige zhong de jige wenti," *Yijiusiqi nian yilai Zhongguo Gongchandang zhongyao wenjian ji* (Hongkong: Xinminzhu chubanshe, 1949), pp.44–46; "Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Zhongyangju zhishi Taiyuequ Dangwei jizu jiuzheng suoqing cuoqu," Andong Ribao she, ed., *Mao Zhuxi zai Jin-Sui ganbu huiyi shang de jianghua* (n.p.: Andong Ribao she, 1948?), pp.36–37.
9. "Huadongju guanyu," *Bohai Ribao*, 26 March 1948.
10. *Taihang Xinhua Ribao*, 5 March 1948.
11. "Zenyang fenxi jieji," *Mao Zedong ji X*, pp.153–154. The document was originally published in 1933 but reprinted and used widely throughout the land reform in the late forties and early fifties.
12. See Tanaka, "Mao and Liu," p.591. The average here means the average not only among the land-owning villagers but includes the landless peasants and the non-farming villagers who wished to become farmers if they could obtain land. The CCP planned to distribute land to all of them.
13. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* IV (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965)

(hereafter SW IV), p.165.

14. Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, p.3–23.

15. Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification," pp.36–39; Tanaka, "Mao and Liu," pp.575–579.

16. *Ibid.* See also "Wei chunjie Dang de zuzhi er douzheng," *Wei chunjie*, pp.34–36.

17. "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu nonghui linshi daibiaohui gao nongmin shu," *Wei chunjie*, p.61; "Jin-Sui bianqu nonghui linshi weiyuanhui gao nongmin shu," *Zhongguo Gongchandang yu tudi geming* (Hongkong: Zhengbaoshe, 1947?), pp.32–33.

18. *Ibid.*, pp.26–28 and 62–63; "Pingfen tudi yu zhengdun duiwu," *Wei chunjie*, pp.13–14; "Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu bianqu nonghui choubai weiyuanhui gao nongmin shu," Huabei Xinhua shudian, ed., *Pingfen tudi shouce* (n.p.: Huabei Xinhua shudian, 1948), pp.32–33.

19. "Jin-Sui ... gao nongmin shu," pp.25–26; *Zhongguo Gongchandang Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Zhongyangju gao quanti dangyuan shu*, "Pingfen tudi shouce," pp.23–24.

20. The above regional proclamations to the peasants and the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu proclamation to Party members are all characterized by distrust of village cadres and unconditional confidence in the poor peasants and farm labourers.

21. See Tanaka, "Mao and Liu," pp.590–593. In April 1948, Lai Ruoyu, the Secretary of the CCP Taihang Regional Committee, wrote that in Taihang before land reform the landlords and rich peasants had not had so much land that its distribution would have made all the poor peasants and farm labourers middle peasants and this was why middle peasant interests had been infringed on in the land reform movements. Even with the "fruits" returned by the cadres who had taken more than fair shares, Lai stated, it was impossible to eliminate the poor. *Taihang Xinhua Ribao*, 28 April 1948.

22. The above regional proclamations to the peasants all call on the poor peasants and farm labourers for the *fanshen* implying that they were to make the *fanshen* only by implementation of the Outline Land Law. The CC directive of 22 February 1948 referred to those who had become middle peasants through the preceeding land reform as middle peasants and only those who were still land-poor as poor peasants and farm labourers. See *Yijiusiqi nian yilai*, pp.62–64. The cases reported in detail by Hinton and the Crooks confirm the point. See Hinton, *Fanshen*, Part 3 passim; Isabel and David Crook, *Mass Movement in a Chinese Village: Ten Mile Inn* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp.23–31.

23. See David and Isabel Crook, *Revolution in a Chinese Village: Ten Mile Inn* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), pp.157–158; Hinton, *Fanshen*, pp.222–

- 239; Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification," p.36; Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, pp.19–21.
24. Hinton, *Fanshen*, Chapter 58; Qi Wu, *Yige geming genjudi de chengchang* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), pp.280–281. Many village cadres appear to have committed suicide. In fifteen counties in the Taihang Region, of 84 killed in the land reform during the first four months of 1948 nineteen were village cadres and Party members who committed suicide because of the harsh rectification measures. Taihang *Xinhua Ribao*, 6 June 1948.
25. See, e. g., Zhonggong Zhongyang Huazhong Fenju, *Guanyu tudi wenti gei geji Dangwei de yifeng xin* (n.p.: Zhonggong Zhongyang Huazhong Fenju, 1947?), pp.1–2.
26. See John Lossing Buck, *Chinese Farm Economy: A Study of 2866 Farms in Seventeen Provinces in China* (Nanking and Chicago: University of Nanking, Institute of Pacific Relations and University of Chicago Press, 1930), Chapters 4–5 and 9; John Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities in Twenty-two Provinces in China, 1929–1933* (Nanking: University of Nanking, 1937), Chapters 6, 9, and 13; J.B. Tayler, *Farm and Factory in China: Aspects of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1928), pp.23–29 and 106; R.H. Tawney, *Land and Labour in China* (London: George Allen & Urwin, 1932), pp.31–50 and 63–69; Zhongguo Guomin Zhengfu Zhujichu Tongjiju, ed., *Zhongguo tudi wenti zhi tongji fenxi* (Zhongqing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1941), pp.50–75; Chen Hansheng et al, *Gendai Shina no tochi mondai* (Japanese translation) (Tokyo: Seikatsusha, 1938), pp.3–175; Xue Muqiao, *Shina noson keizai ron* (Japanese translation) (Tokyo: Sobunkaku, 1937); Minami Manshu Tetsudo Kabushiki Kaisha Chosabu, ed., *Kita Shina no nogyo to keizai* (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 1942) II, pp.327–442 and 579–767; Amano Motonosuke, *Shina nogyo keizai ron* (Tokyo: Kaizosha, 1940) I, Chapters 1–2; Ramon H. Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890–1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.299.
27. Shi Mei, "Lun xianjietuan de Zhongguo tudi gaige," in Shen Zhiyuan, ed., *Zhongguo tudi wenti yu tudi gaige* (Hongkong: Xinzhong chubanshe, 1948), pp.30–32.
28. The fixed set of figures in the CCP documents on land-ownership were 70–80 percent of China's farmland belonging to 8–10 percent of the rural population, which were a gross exaggeration at least as far as North China was concerned. See, e.g., the CC resolution attached to the Outline Land Law, Hinton, *Fanshen*, p.615; SW IV, p.164.

29. In his examination of the existing studies of the Chinese agrarian conditions, Ramon Myers has noted that those by Marxist economists tend to exaggerate the problem of concentration of landownership. Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, Chapter 2.
30. The GMD-CCP united front against Japan was kept after the Resistance War, because neither Party was willing to look responsible for breaking peace which had come after the long series of wars, civil and external, and which the Americans and the Chinese public were eager to maintain.
31. Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, p.8.
32. See Crook and Crook, *Revolution*, pp.118–121.
33. See Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, pp.16–17.
34. *Ibid.*, pp.8–9.
35. Ren Bishi's speech of mid-January was the first sign of the top leaders' serious attention to the preceeding practice of upward misclassification. See Section 4 below.
36. For the text, see Li Minghua, *Zhonggong de tudi douzheng* (Taipei: Guoji guan-xi yanjiusuo, 1965), pp.208–213; *Liu Shaogi xuanji* I (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), pp. 377–383.
37. Item 11, Li, *Zhonggong de*, p.211.
38. See, e.g., *Gongzuo Tongxun* 24 (26 July 1946), pp.5–8. This inner-Party journal, published in southern Hebei, stated that the Party found its old policy of "few arrests, no killings" towards "bad people" ineffective. It had caused them to kill more "masses". Therefore, the journal said, the Party had adopted a new policy of "self defence" to "make them pay for life with life" and to allow the masses to kill "great criminals" as they wished.
39. See the Preamble, Li, *Zhonggong de*, pp.208–209.
40. Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, pp.5–7.
41. For the text, see Xi Ming, ed., *Ruhe shixian 'gengzhe you qi tian'* (Linyi: Shandong Xinhua shudian, 1946), pp.4–9.
42. See Tanaka, "Naisen to" II, pp.13–21.
43. Li Minghua lists six liberated areas apart from Shandong where land reform legislation was promulgated in autumn-winter 1946. Li, *Zhonggong de*, p.214.
44. Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification," pp.36–40; Tanaka, "Mao and Liu," pp.575–583.
45. *SW* IV, p.166.
46. Nie Rongzhen, "Zhengdun women de duiwu," *Wei chunjie*, p.24.
47. In August 1946, Mao Zedong told Anna Louise Strong: "We have fought twenty years; if need be we can fight for another twenty." In her long interviews with

Mao, Strong failed “to get him to say that the Chinese Communists would win.” A few months later, she found in the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region that recruitment of soldiers “had been geared to the possibility that the civil war might last ten to fifteen years.” Strong, *The Chinese Conquer China* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1949), pp.43, 51, and 197. In early 1947, Yang Xiufeng, the Chairman of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region Government, told Jack Belden: “The people of North China and the 8th Route Army ... are preparing to fight the Kuomintang for twenty years, if necessary.” Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p.49.

48. In autumn-winter 1947, many CCP leaders at the Central and regional levels were convinced of an American intervention and argued against launching the general offensive. One of the purposes of the emergency CCP meeting called by Mao in late December 1947 at Yangjiagou, was apparently to discuss the matter. The meeting seems to have found a compromise in that the Party would launch the offensive but postpone the establishment of a rival government of China to replace the GMD's Nanjing Government. After the meeting the Party carried out a rectification campaign to rid its members of “capitulationism”. See SW IV, pp.158–159, editorial note, and 181.

49. The anti-GMD agent campaign in 1946–47 accelerated radicalism in land reform by providing an additional excuse for violence, arrests, and confiscation of property. The inherent arbitrariness of anti-agent work (*chujian gongzuo*) is revealed in the cases reported in Hinton, *Fanshen*, Chapter 34; *Renmin Ribao*, 1 and 18 January and 5 April 1948; and Taihang *Xinhua Ribao*, 21 March 1948.

50. See Tanaka, “Mao and Liu,” pp.571–582; Teiwes, “The Origins of Rectification,” pp.36–37. For the text of Liu's letter, see *Liu Shaoqi wenti ziliao zhuanji* (Taipei: Zhonggong yanjiu she, 1970), pp.185–187.

51. In implementation of the Outline Land Law, village cadres were subjected to struggle as harsh as that against landlords. CCP sources reveal common cases of their house arrest, imprisonment, loss of property by confiscation, beating, suicide, and even killing. See, e.g., Liu Shaoqi, “Pingshan tugai zhengdnag fanli” in *Tugai zhengdang dianxing jingyan* (Hongkong: Zhongguo chubanshe, 1948), p.24; *Liu Shaoqi wenti*, p.550; *Renmin Ribao*, 17 and 26 April 1948; Taihang *Xinhua Ribao*, 6 June 1948.

52. See, e.g., SW IV, pp.82–83; the regional Party documents cited in Notes 17, 18, and 19.

53. At the end of 1946, only 4.2 million peasants (little over 10 percent of the peasant population) in the Northeast had benefited from the land reform, whereas in

the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu and Jin-Cha-Ji Border Regions virtually all the peasants had been involved in it. See "Yinianlai Dongbei jiefangqu tudi gaige," *Renmin Ribao*, 8 September 1947; Di Chaobai, *Zhanhou Zhongguo nongmin wenti* (Hongkong: Nanhai chubanshe, 1948), pp.28–29.

54. Pepper, *Civil War*, p.310.

55. See, e.g., Item 11, May Fourth Directive, Li, *Zhonggong de*, p.211; "Zhengqu chungeng qian wancheng tudi gaige," *Jiefang Ribao* editorial, reprinted in the *Renmin Ribao*, 18 December 1946; "Ren Zhong Tongzhi zai Weicun dahui shang guanyu ruhe kaizhan daguimo shengchan yundong de qifa baogao," *Xinpingyan* 12 (20 April 1947), pp.8–18; *Dongbei Ribao* reports, 19 June 1947; Wang Yi, ed., *Tudi gaige wendao* (Linyi?: Shandong Xinhua shudian, 1948), p.14; Zhonggong Zhongyang Huazhong Fenju, *Guanyu tudi wenti*, p.2.

56. "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," SW IV, pp.157–173.

57. See official and semi-official accounts in: He Ganzhi, *Zhongguo xiandai geming shi* (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1956), pp.319–325; Hu Hua, *Zhongguo geming shi jiangyi* (Beijing: Renmindaxue chubanshe, 1962), pp.535–541; *Zhongguo Gongchandang lishi jianbian* (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1957?), pp.272–281; Miao Chuhuang, *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianyao lishi* (Beijing: Xuexi zazhi she, 1956), pp.169–173; Meng Xianzhang, *Zhongguo jindai jingji shi jiaocheng* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1951), pp.375–377; Hubei daxue Zhengzhi jingjixue jiaoyanshi, ed., *Zhongguo jindai guomin jingji shi jiangyi* (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1958), pp.526–530; Qi Wu, *Yige geming genjudi*, pp.279–283.

58. SW IV, pp.164–166.

59. See, e.g., the case of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region in the *Renmin Ribao*, 31 December 1947 and 19 January 1948; Hinton, *Fanshen*, pp.263–265.

60. SW IV, p.165.

61. Ren, "Tudi gaige zhong de," p.33; Liu Shaoqi, "Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de baogao," *Tudi gaige zhongyao wenxian huiji* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1951), p.21; Hu Hua, *Zhongguo geming shi*, p.537.

62. "Zhongyang zhengqiu guanyu jieji fenxi de yijian," *Jizhong Gongzuo wanglai* 17 (25 December 1947), pp.6–7.

63. Ren, "Tudi gaige zhong de," pp.32–55.

64. *Ibid.*, pp.33–36.

65. *Ibid.*, p.32.

66. SW IV, pp.232 and 239, Note 3.

67. *Ibid.*, pp.181–188.

68. *Ibid.*, pp.193–202.

69. Liu, "Pingshan tugai," pp.24–25.
70. "Zhonggong Zhongyang guanyu zai laoqu yu banlaoqu jinxing tudi gaige gongzuo yu zhengdang gongzuo de zhishi," *Tugai zhengdang dianxing jingyan*, pp.26–31; *Zhou Enlai xuanji I* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), pp. 288–296.
71. *SW IV*, p.197.
72. *Ibid.*, pp.197–199.
73. *Tugai zhengdang*, pp.26–27.
74. *Choubu* is a shortened form of *chouduo bushao*, *choufei bushou*, meaning "draw from the plenty to supplement the lacking and draw from fertile land to supplement infertile." The word *choubu* was commonly used to mean to take minor parts of large and/or fertile land holdings and add them to small and/or infertile ones in order to make every per capita holding in the village roughly the same both in size and quality. The method is less radical than total reshuffle, as it largely preserves the existing ownership.
75. *Tugai zhengdang*, pp.26–28.
76. The word *pingfen* is used in the directive to refer to a different and more radial method than *choubu*. See *ibid.*
77. Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification," pp.44–46.
78. *Mao Zedong ji X*, pp.125–126. The date in the text in *Tugai zhengdang*, pp.4–5, is 13 March 1948.
79. "Xi Zhongxun Tongzhi zai Suide gongzuotuan huiyi shang zhishi jiupian yu zhengdang gongzuo," *Renmin Ribao*, 25 March 1948. The original Chinese words for "mid-March" are *sanyue zhongxun* which means a day between 11 and 20 March. The text in Andong Ribao she, ed., *Mao Zhuxi*, pp.20–34, has the date 23 May which should presumably be read 23 March.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *SW IV*, pp.219–225.
82. Teiwes, "The Origins of Rectification," p.46.
83. The Crooks state that the text of Ren's speech was not available in the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region until late March "because of disruptions in communications caused by war." This could hardly be the case, however, since the Region received and published Mao's Yangjiagou report within a week and the military situation only improved since. The reason for the delayed publication of Ren's speech in Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu must have been political, although no available source suggests what it was. See Crook and Crook, *Mass Movement*, p.116; *Renmin Ribao*, 1 January 1948.
84. On 28 March, the *Renmin Ribao* carried a report of a planned investigation of misclassification in two districts in Licheng County, Shanxi, which was its first report

of undoing misclassification in practice.

85. *Mao Zedong ji X*, pp.137–138; *SW IV*, pp.235–236.

86. Hinton, *Fanshen*, Chapters 41–42. The case of Ten Mile Inn where the poor peasant-farm labourer line did not go too far after the Outline Land Law was a very rare exception, if the Crooks did not modify their report to fit the case in the Party's *ex post facto* explanation that general moderation began with Mao's Yangjiagou report. See Crook and Crook, *Mass Movement*.

87. In March and April, when CCP leaders urged cadres to take resolute and prompt action to correct past excesses, its importance was invariably and forcefully explained by the need for production. Even when no explanation was given, it was often obvious that the economic factor dictated the decision. See, e.g., Xi Zhongxun's directive, Andong Ribao she, ed., *Mao Zhuxi*, pp.29–31; Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Bureau directive to the Taiyue Party Committee (Note 10), Andong Ribao she, ed., *Mao Zhuxi*, pp.36–38; Mao's Jin-Sui speech, *SW IV*, pp.235–238.

88. See, e.g., Wang Yi, *Tudi gaige wendao*, pp.13–14.

89. In the first three months of 1948, when the poor peasant-farm labourer line prevailed in Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu, where the Outline Land Law was released at the end of 1947, the *Renmin Ribao* carried a number of reports indicating such phenomena. See also Crook and Crook, *Mass Movement*, pp.168–169. The Crooks report that the Ten Mile Inn villagers did no repairing or building of their houses during winter 1947 fearing another wave of struggle which they believed was impending and would take away their houses (p.229).

90. See Kobayashi, *Chugoku kakumei*, pp.76–85.

91. One of the first areas that carried out the correction was Guoxian where the work began on 17 February. But its report did not lead CCP leaders immediately to realization of the incompatibility of the two principles, although the report suggested it. See *Tugai zhengdang*, pp.6–11.

92. Party leaders' and senior cadres' growing impatience and concern about production are indicated in a series of directives they issued during the period. See *SW IV*, pp.181–188 and 193–259; *Tugai zhengdang*, pp.26–58; Andong Riabo she, ed., *Mao Zhuxi*, pp.14–42; *Yijiusiqi nian yilai*, pp.56–61 and 95–115.

93. Ren, "Tudi gaige zhong de," pp.49–51; *Taihang Xinhua Ribao*, 6 June 1948.

94. *SW IV*, p.166.

95. See *Renmin Ribao* report of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region land conference, 31 December 1947.

96. "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party," *SW III*, pp.180–220.

97. Tanaka, "Mao and Liu."