

A Historical Investigation of the Land Reform of the Communist Party of China during the War of Liberation

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Abstract

During the Liberation War, the Communist Party of China formulated land policies in line with national conditions with a strong sense of mission and remarkable political wisdom, and led masses of famers to launch the land reform movement. During the movement, lessons were constantly learnt, and then united to look forward. Under the correct leadership of the CPC and the efforts of the masses, the land reform eradicated feudal exploitation and achieved the liberation of hundreds of millions of famers, laying the foundation for the victory of the Liberation War.

Keywords

China's Political Situation; May Fourth Instruction; Chinese Land Law Outline; Correction of Deviations.

1. China's Political Situation on the Eve of the Formulation of Land Reform Policy

In the first half of 1946, China was in a special period where the domestic political situation remained highly uncertain and the Chinese Communist Party had been making persistent efforts to establish domestic peace. However, what our party ushered in was Chiang Kai Shek's perverse acts, such as the Kuomintang's army constantly launching attacks on the liberated areas and preparing for the civil war. The CPC Central Committee gradually realised that the fundamental nature of Chiang Kai-shek's autocratic dictatorship remained unchanged. The CPC made adequate preparations to resolutely crush the civil war waged by the Kuomintang, such as strengthening military training and organising the mobilisation of famers in the liberated areas to participate in supporting the war. The CPC attached particular importance to protecting the material interests of the famers and won them over as staunch supporters of the CPC by securing the land on which they relied for survival.

2. Succession and Transformation of Land Reform Policies

2.1. Continuing to Implement the Policy of Rent Reduction and Interest Reduction

For a period after the victory in the war, the CPC still used the policy of rent and interest reduction as an important element in organising and mobilising the masses. Since the Communist Party promulgated its land policy on 6 February 1942, the various liberated areas behind enemy lines have seriously implemented it with great success, but it is sobering to see that not all liberated areas have implemented it universally. Since the feudal landlords were dominant in rural China, and given the war conditions at the time, it was very difficult to thoroughly implement the reduction of rents and interest rates. In the process of reducing rents and interest rates, there were instances where rents were not reduced at all, or where reductions were made explicitly but not implicitly. In his 1945 mission report, Mao Zedong

clearly pointed out that one of the important tasks for the liberated areas was to check whether rent reductions had been implemented in areas where they had not been completely completed; in areas where rent reductions had not yet taken, rent reductions should be started quickly and the masses should be completely mobilised. The CPC also carefully summed up the reasons and experiences for the failure to implement it completely, and concluded that apart from some special objective reasons, the main reasons existed in the leadership, working methods and the solution of certain problems of their own. The CPC purposefully raised three important issues for the reference of the liberated areas. Firstly, some comrades of our Party have recognised the importance of rent reduction and interest reduction in their work, but have not realised the complexity and long-term nature of the reduction. For example, in a considerable number of villages, there is a phenomenon that everything is fine without careful inspection after the vigorous campaign. Therefore, it is required to recognize not only the importance but also the long-term and complex nature of rent reduction and interest reduction. Secondly, the way in which complex problems are solved is too simple, such as village cadres taking over. The cadres should give support to the famers and support their struggle in accordance with the law, but they should not do everything. Thirdly, the famers' right to tenancy should be safeguarded, and the famers' fear of land grabbing by landlords in retaliation should be dispelled, so as to safeguard the interests to which they are entitled. In some areas, although rents have been reduced in the past, it is necessary to conduct in-depth investigation. We must first educate the cadres ideologically and then enlighten the masses with examples, and mobilise them to organise themselves to solve the problem. In areas where rent and interest reductions have not yet been made, they should be regarded as an important task and carried out with all their might. The specific methods should be based on the experience of the old areas. Lastly, we should try to avoid the "leftist" tendency of overdoing it and underestimating the amount of rent.

2.2. From the May Fourth Instruction to the Outline of Chinese Land Law

After the Japanese imperialism was overthrown, the appeal of the broad masses for the direct implementation of land reform was the fundamental reason why the "May 4th directive" decided to solve the farmers' land problem and implement "the tiller has his land". In view of the political situation in China when the May 4th directive was formulated, various ways were taken to solve the land problem of farmers in the implementation of the "tiller has his land" movement. Firstly, landowners who had become traitors and bullies during the war were directly confiscated and distributed to famers who had no land or little land. Transfer the land of the landlords to the famers through liquidation and other means. Secondly, the land of the middle famers should never be infringed upon, "Where the land of the middle famers has been infringed upon, attempts should be made to return or compensate them. The whole movement must gain the genuine sympathy or satisfaction of all the middle famers, including the rich ones." [1] Again, "Generally no changes are to be made to the land of the rich famers. For example, in the period of liquidation, renunciation of lease and land reform, it is necessary not to infringe upon them and not to strike them too hard because of the demand of the broad masses. A distinction should be made between rich famers and landlords, and the rich famers should be given special attention to reducing their rent while preserving their own farming." [2] Finally, for those landowners who belong to the anti-Japanese families, as long as they did not oppose the Communist Party, the movement should adopt a conciliatory and arbitral approach and give them more land; for the small and medium landowners, they should also adopt a conciliatory and arbitral approach and take considerable care of their livelihood; for those who come from poor backgrounds but belong to traitors and lackeys, a divisive policy should be adopted to make them confess and repent, and give them the benefits they deserve; for the intellectuals, they must be actively united and provided with opportunities to study and work. With great courage and strong responsibility, the Communist Party of China launched the

land movement under the spirit of fully implementing the mass line and giving full play to the Communist Party members' spirit of serving the people. This changed the Party's policy of reducing rents and interest rates during the war of resistance against Japan into a policy of "land for the cultivator", and effectively involved the middle farmers in the movement, bringing them into close contact with the masses. " Soon after the May Fourth Instruction was issued, a full-scale civil war broke out. In order to sum up and solve the new problems encountered in the land reform, a very important national land conference in the history of the land reform movement was held in the liberated areas of Jinchaji from July 17 to September 13, 1947. On 10 October, the Outline of the Chinese Land Law was published and put into practice. The aim of the Outline was to abolish the feudal system of exploitation and to give the cultivator his own land. It also reminded everyone not only to carry out land reform but also to carry out production and to attach great importance to the issue of purity within the Party.

3. Correcting Deviations in the Agrarian Revolution

There were "leftist" mistakes in the equalization of land, such as "checking the three generations" in the division of class composition, arbitrarily raising the class composition, and "sweeping the hall" "carrying stones" in the way of struggle. First of all, on the issue of class division, the relationship of possession of the means of production was not taken as the basis for class division, but in addition to the presence or absence of exploitation, "the size of the paved stall", "political attitude" and "checking the three generations" were also used as criteria. " As a result, many farmers who were not exploited or only slightly exploited were wrongly classified among the landlords and rich farmers, seriously widening the scope of the crackdown. Moreover, the interests of the middle farmers and the industrialists and businessmen were violated. As some of the middle farmers were classified as landlords and rich farmers during the class determination, the "long surplus" land of the middle farmers was demanded to be taken out and shared equally. Politically, the middle farmers were attacked and excluded, and many industrial and commercial households have been liquidated as "shaped landlords". Secondly, in order to dig up all the landlords' properties and completely overthrow the landlords' prestige, the landlords in their own villages had almost finished digging up their underlying wealth, so they went to other villages to dig up their property, which was called "tangzi". This kind of campaign broadened the scope of the fight and seriously infringed on the interests of the middle farmers and the industrialists and businessmen, and in some places, there was even chaotic fighting. Finally, the number of so-called "bad cadres" was overestimated, and it was one-sidedly assumed that a considerable number of cadres opposed and obstructed the land reform, and that they were the "stones" that weighed down on the farmers and prevented them from turning over completely. In the equalization of land, a wind of "stone removal" was set in motion. The demand was made that "all village cadres who are landlords and rich farmers and who are not good village cadres should be replaced and made to step down, and that the leaders of the poor farmer groups should take charge of all matters in the village." [3] Even for the so-called "bad cadres", they were "to fight whoever they wanted to fight" and "to fight as much as they wanted to fight", which caused a large number of cadres to suffer.

The reason for this is that the "leftist" tendency of the movement was that the farmers and the petty bourgeoisie were prone to impatience in the revolution, while the farmers, as small producers, had the disadvantage of being narrow-minded and selfish. Comrade Mao Zedong attached great importance to this and stressed that "landlords as a class should be eliminated and as individuals should be protected" [4] and that when the "leftist" tendency became a trend, Communist Party members should oppose this trend. All the liberated areas then took measures to correct the "leftist" deviations in the land reform, and ended the land reform work in the old areas on the basis of correcting the "leftist" deviations. The first step was to identify

the problem. The leader who was early to identify the "leftist" deviation in the land reform movement was Ren Bishi. He conducted surveys in the villages where the land reform was carried out, interviewed the famers personally, asked them for their opinions on the land reform, asked his staff to go out shopping and asked small businessmen whether their business is good or not, whether they are afraid of confiscation, etc., and then wrote materials and handed them to him.[5] Ren Bishi also suggested that "class analysis is inconsistent everywhere and has gone too far, for fear that there are cases where rich famers are counted as landlords and wealthy middle famers as rich peasants, etc., so it is really necessary to issue a largely common document on 'how to analyse classes'." [6] Mao Zedong also pointed out clearly, based on surveys in various places, that in the countryside, according to the number of households, landlords and rich famers accounted for only about 8%, while middle famers, poor famers and hired famers together accounted for 90%, and that this front must not be confused. The second is to clarify the policy. The lack of clear criteria for class division were the root causes of the expansion of the crackdown on land reform. On this issue, Ren pointed out that "there is only one criterion for dividing class composition, and that is to determine the various classes according to the differences in people's relations to the means of production." [7] Any adventurous policy towards the middle famers must be avoided, and those whose exploited income was below 25% of their total income should be designated as middle famers, and those above that should be considered rich famers. The industrial and commercial businesses run by ordinary businessmen, landlords and rich famers, even those who sold their land and invested in industry and Commerce during the period of rent and interest reduction in the past, cannot be confiscated, because this is beneficial and necessary for the prosperity of China's economy. For intellectuals who do their own work, which is a form of mental labour, the democratic regime should adopt a policy of protecting them. Enlightened gentlemen who have made considerable contributions must be taken care of on a case-by-case basis. In the strategy of struggle, we should differentiate between landlords and rich famers, small and large landlords, and bullies and non-bullies among the landlords and rich famers. Indiscriminate killing and excessive killing were prohibited. Landlords and rich famers should be regarded as the labor force of the country and protected and transformed. The Communist Party of China clarified the various policies in the land reform, and our Party's theories on land reform were enriched and matured. The land reform movement during the Liberation War made a great contribution to the victory of the Liberation War and the building of state power, laid a solid historical foundation for the Chinese people to "stand up" and provided favourable conditions for the industrialisation of the country .

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