PREFACE AND POSTSCRIPT TO "RURAL SURVEY"
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PREFACE

(March 17, 1941)

The Party's rural policy is now no longer geared to agrarian revolution as during the ten-year civil war, but to the National Anti-Japanese United Front. The whole membership should carry out the Party Centre's directives of July 7 and December 25, 1940, as well as those of the forthcoming Seventh National Congress. The following material is published to help comrades to tackle the problems confronting them. Many comrades holding responsible positions still work in a casual and perfunctory manner and give direction and guidance with little or no understanding of conditions prevailing at lower levels; this constitutes a grave danger. There can be no really good leadership without real and detailed understanding of the actual conditions of the classes in Chinese society.

The only way to understand the actual conditions is to make a social survey, to study how various social classes actually live. For those whose duty it is to give direction and guidance, the first essential is to pick out in a planned way a number of cities and villages and then subject each of them to careful and comprehensive examination from the fundamental Marxist viewpoint, that is, by means of class analysis. Only by so doing can we grasp the essentials of China's social problems.

In making a social survey of this kind, the first requisite is that, instead of star-gazing, we should turn our gaze down to earth. Unless one feels the urge and makes up one's mind to do so, one can never really find out anything about China.

Secondly, we should call fact-finding conferences. Certainly no complete knowledge of the subject can be acquired by just glancing around and listening to hearsay. The material I got together through such conferences on Hunan and the Chingkang mountains has been lost. The present publication consists mainly of the Survey of Hsingkwo, the Survey of Changkang Township, and the Survey of Tsaiki Township. Holding a fact-finding conference is the simplest, the most practical and the most reliable method by which I have learned a great deal, far more than I could ever have learned by attending a university.

Those attending the conference should include the really experienced cadres of the middle and lower ranks, or the local people. During my survey of the
five counties in Hunan province and the two in the Chingkang mountains, I approached the middle-ranking cadres in charge of the counties and during the Hsunwu survey I approached a number of cadres of both middle and lower ranks, a poor hsiuts'ai, a bankrupt ex-president of the chamber of commerce and a petty official who had been in charge of the county revenue department but was out of work. These people all opened my eyes by giving me a great deal of fresh information. The man who first gave me a complete picture of the rottenness of Chinese gaols was a minor prison officer whom I met during my investigation in Hengshan, Hunan. In the county of Hsingkuo and the townships of Changkang and Tsaiki, I approached ordinary peasants and comrades working at the township level. All these people — the cadres, the peasants, the hsiuts'ai, the gaoler, the merchant and the revenue clerk — were my teachers whom I held in great respect and, in order to learn from them, I, as is only proper for a pupil, was respectful and industrious and behaved to them in a comradely manner; for otherwise, they would have ignored my questions and told me nothing or held back certain information. A fact-finding conference need not be large; an attendance of from three to eight is enough. But ample time must be allowed, points of inquiry must be prepared beforehand and questions must be put, answers

1 A successful candidate for the first degree of the imperial competitive examination.
noted, and discussion stimulated. It is clear then that we cannot hold such a conference, let alone a successful one, unless we are full of enthusiasm, determined to turn our gaze down to earth, eager for knowledge, and willing to shed our pretentious airs and graces and become modest pupils. Unless we understand that the people are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often like ignorant children, we shall never be able to acquire even the most elementary knowledge.

I should like to reiterate that the main purpose of publishing this collection of reference material is to illustrate a method of finding out about the conditions prevailing at lower levels, and not to have comrades learn by heart the details or the conclusions drawn therefrom. Generally speaking, the Chinese bourgeoisie, which is still in its infancy, has not yet provided and can never provide us with such comprehensive or even rudimentary information on social conditions as has the bourgeoisie in Europe, America and Japan; therefore, we have to collect the information ourselves. Specifically speaking, those doing practical work must keep abreast of changing conditions and no Communist Party in any country can depend on other people for this. Therefore, all those doing practical work must investigate the conditions prevailing at the lower levels. Such investigations are especially necessary for those who have only theoretical knowledge but are not acquainted with actual conditions, for otherwise they will be unable to link theory with practice.
I have been dubbed a “narrow empiricist” because I asserted “No investigation, no right to speak,” but I do not regret having made the remark and, what is more, I still stick to it. There are many people who, the moment they take office, noisily speechify and criticize, finding fault right and left, and each and every one of them is a failure. Their speeches and criticisms, not based on careful and comprehensive investigation, are nothing but ignorant and idle chatter. These “imperial envoys” have done incalculable damage to our Party. They descend upon us out of the blue, here, there and everywhere. Stalin rightly says: “Theory becomes aimless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice.” And he rightly adds: “Practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory.” No one should be labelled narrow empiricist except those who are entirely immersed in practical details and lack vision, perspective and long views.

Today I still feel keenly the need to make a careful and comprehensive study of conditions in China and in other countries; this arises from the scantiness of my own knowledge in this field and I do not for a moment imagine that only others are ignorant while I know everything. It is my wish that together with all the comrades of the Party I should continue to be a pupil of the people and learn from them.

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In the present period of the Anti-Japanese War we can draw the best and most pertinent lesson from our experiences in the ten-year civil war. This, however, refers not to the tactical line but only to the question of uniting with the people and mobilizing them to oppose the enemy. The Party's present tactical line is different in principle from that in the past. In the past we opposed the landlord class and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, but at present we unite with all those landlords and bourgeois who do not oppose the resistance. Even in the latter period of the ten-year civil war, we made the mistake of not distinguishing the reactionary government and party that launched armed attacks on us from the capitalist social strata under our own regime, nor between the different groups in the reactionary government and party and varying our policies to suit them. At that time, we pursued the policy, undoubtedly wrong, of all-out struggle towards all sections of society except the peasantry and the lower stratum of the urban petty bourgeoisie. In land policy we also made the mistake of
repudiating the correct line, according to which the landlords were allotted land just like the peasants and made to farm the land so that they would not become displaced persons or disturb peace and order by becoming bandits — a line adopted in the earlier and middle periods of the ten-year civil war. At present the Party has a different policy: neither all-out struggle to the exclusion of unity, nor like the Ch’en Tu-hsiu-ism of 1927, all-round unity to the exclusion of struggle, but the policy of forming a united front with all social strata opposed to Japanese imperialism while engaging in different kinds of struggles against them according to the different degrees of their vacillation and reaction, of their tendency to capitulate to the enemy and oppose the Communists and the people.

The present policy is twofold, combining unity and struggle. Our policy on industrial relations is also twofold and consists in improving the living conditions of the workers without hampering the proper development of capitalist economy. Our agrarian policy is

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1 The first period of the ten-year civil war, generally known as the period of the Chingkang mountains, lasted from late 1927 to late 1928; the middle period lasted from early 1929 to the autumn of 1931, that is, from the establishment of the Central Red base area to the victorious conclusion of the campaign against the Kuomintang's third encirclement and annihilation; the final period lasted from the end of that campaign to the enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau held in January 1935 at Tsunyi, Kweichow, which put an end to the “Left” opportunist line and steered the Party back to the correct line.
also twofold and consists in asking the landlords to reduce rent and interest and the peasants to pay the reduced amount. The twofold policy in regard to political rights consists in granting all the anti-Japanese landlords and capitalists the same personal, political and property rights as the workers and peasants and guarding against all possible counter-revolutionary activities on their part. State and co-operative enterprises in our economy should be developed, but as the main economic sector in the rural base areas today consists of private and not state enterprises, we ought to allow the sector of non-monopoly capitalism in our economy to develop in order to oppose Japanese imperialism and semi-feudalism. This is the most revolutionary policy for China today and it will be definitely a mistake to oppose it or prevent its implementation.

To make serious and determined efforts to preserve the communist integrity of our membership and at the same time to protect and develop properly that capitalist sector of social economy which is still beneficial, are both indispensable tasks in the period of resisting Japan and building a democratic republic. In this period some Communists may become corrupted by the bourgeoisie, and capitalist ideas may arise in our ranks, but, while we must fight these decadent ideas in the Party, we should not wrongly transfer the inner-Party struggle against capitalist ideas into the field of social economy to fight its capitalist sector. We must draw a sharp line of demarcation between
The Chinese Communist Party is working under most complicated conditions, and all members, especially the cadres, must steel themselves into fighters who understand Marxist tactics, because a one-sided and over-simplified view of the problems facing us will never lead the revolution to victory.
The Chinese Communist Party is warning members that corruption, especially in power, must be removed from the party's ranks. A plan to rehabilitate market and private enterprises is being developed to resist the invasion of anti-Marxist, anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary activities. The government should strive to develop state-owned enterprises in the rural sector, which today consists of private and state enterprises, so as to allow the state sector of non-monopoly capitalism in our economy to develop in order to oppose Japanese imperialism and semi-feudalism. This is the most revolutionary policy for China today and it will be definitely a mistake to oppose it or prevent its implementation.

To make serious and determined efforts to preserve the communist integrity of our membership and at the same time to protect and develop properly that capitalist sector of social economy which is still beneficial, are both indispensable tasks in the period of resisting Japan and building a democratic republic. In this period some Communists may become corrupted by the bourgeoisie and capitalist ideas may arise in our ranks, but, we must not let these decadent ideas in the Party intrude and strongly transfer the inner-Party struggle to the field of social economy where the capitalist sector and the workers struggle. We must draw a sharp distinction between these two.