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PROBLEMS OF CHINESE AGRICULTURE IN 1961

- COMMUNIST CHINA -

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FOREWORD

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PROBLEMS OF CHINESE AGRICULTURE IN 1961

- Communist China -

The following is a translation of an unsigned article appearing in Ajia Kenkyu (Asia Studies), Tokyo, No. 250, 10 January 1961, pages 2-7.

The Three Year Battle and the Great Leap Forward came to an end in 1960. Yet it would seem that agricultural production last year, as in the previous year, brought about a slump. The "two legs" of agriculture and industry will be one of the important problems facing China's economic construction in 1961. The manner in which China maintains this balance in the course of events will bear careful observation. The slump in agriculture has had its effect on basic construction in industry in terms of investment and raw material supply. Accordingly it is not difficult to suppose that a crucial point this year for China's economic construction will be its confrontation with growth in agricultural production. And just how will this barrier be surmounted?

1. Strengthening the Two-five System

In the latter half of last year "relocating" of the cadre was undertaken once again in China. This was done to encourage the two-five system leadership program. Cadre are sent out to the first line of production where they are thrust into positions of production leadership. The two-five system leadership program was proposed by the party committee of the Hsien federated communes in Hopei Province's Wu-ch'iao Hsien. According to a paper made public by the Wu-ch'iao Hsien Committee titled Experiences with and Effectiveness of the Two-five System Leadership Program, the actual substance of the two-five system is as outlined in the following.

"Two days out of the week are given over to studies, conferences and research projects. During the other five days they join small production brigades, participating in and taking charge of production. They materially assist in the resolution of the problems of the small production brigades." (The People's Daily, 16 June 1960)

As further concrete aspects of this program, on both Monday and Tuesday the Hsien Committee, the Commune Party Committee and the General Party Branch of the Administrative District hold their respective meetings, conduct research and hold discussion meetings. On Monday the Hsien Committee conducts research. On this day the commune, administrative district

and the relocation cadre conduct joint study sessions. On Monday night the Hsien Committee hands over to the commune the week's operations. On Tuesday the commune collaborates with cadre of the administrative district and draws up plans for the implementation of the week's operations on the basis of suggestions made by the Hsien Committee.

On Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday cadre at the three levels of hsien, commune and administrative district each join a small basic production brigade and participate in production. In February of last year after this system had been promoted in Wu-ch'iao Hsien, it was reported that "this flower is in full bloom throughout the Hsien."

After the two-five system leadership program was implemented, various kinds of leadership programs were devised all over China.

a. The Three-seven System Leadership Program

Since the land is extensive and communications are poor in Kirin Province's Shuang-liao Hsien, the three-seven system leadership program was utilized. The three classes of cadre -- hsien, commune and administrative district -- conduct study, investigation, and allocation of work for the first three days of a ten-day period. During the last seven days they enter the basic level and engage in production in the production areas. Here they take the leadership of production (People's Daily, 29 June 1960).

b. The Three-three System Leadership Program

In Shensi Province province level organizations and those below the level of special districts have formed basic production units out of one-third of their cadre. These participate in production and are put in positions of leadership. Another third of the cadre normally join in at the basic level and participate in inspection tour operations. The remaining third of the cadre stay with their organizations and carry on daily operations (People's Daily, 19 November 1960).

c. The One-two-three System Leadership Program

This system is being implemented in the city of Lan-chou. Its principal features stipulate that out of one week "they will give over one day to studies and two days to conferences and recapitulation activities, and for three days they will engage in production on the front line." This system is being widely promoted principally in workshops, mines and enterprises (People's Daily, 10 July 1960).

These various systems differ in form from the two-five system, but basically they are all identical.

The two-five system leadership program has two important characteristics. The first is the large number of cadre who are given field assignments. Taking Hopei Province's Wu-ch'iao Hsien as an example, we see that they have established four criteria used in electing cadre for field assignments.

a. A direct relationship is maintained with agricultural production. Further as far as office work is concerned, 20 to 30 percent of the cadre remain with their organizations, there being, relatively, a considerable amount of leeway in the categories of

party, government and mass organization. In addition, 70 to 80 percent of the cadre who have been given field assignments are sent out to the production front lines of the agricultural villages. Of these relocated cadre, two-thirds are usually formed into supervisory units (pao-tui). (These undertake all phases of the production operations of the small production brigade.) They are separated from agency operations and specialize in exercising guidance over production. In addition to bearing the responsibility for inspection work and participation in production, two days every week they return to their agencies and hold conferences and study operations.

b. As for office work, in the relatively busy Commerce Bureau, Food Bureau and Government and Law categories roughly 30 percent of the cadre remain with their agencies. Approximately 70 percent of the cadre are given field assignments in the farming areas. Furthermore usually a third of the cadre sent on field assignments are formed into supervisory units. The other two-thirds of the cadre are not so organized, but participate in labor and inspection tours.

c. In categories where office work is extremely heavy, for instance, at radio stations, postal and telecommunication bureaus and hospitals, about 30 percent of the workers remain with their agencies, while the other 70 percent or so of the cadre -- excluding those specialists who cannot be transferred -- are given field assignments in agricultural areas. Generally these relocated cadre are not organized into supervisory units, but participate in labor-production and inspection tour activities.

d. As for the cadre of the industrial system, a minority are left to do organizational work, while the majority of the cadre are given field assignments in factories. Here they must participate in production and assume its leadership.

According to relocation plans such as the above, the number of cadre sent out to the front line of production is huge. Out of the 1,413 cadre who belong to organizations under the immediate control of Wu-ch'iao Hsien, those who have been given field assignments in basic production units number 1,000. Out of the 39 cadre of the bank of Wu-ch'iao Hsien, 30 were given field assignments in basic production units. Of the 156 cadre of Wu-ch'iao Hsien's Commerce Bureau, 36 were formed into supervisory units in agricultural areas and 99 participated in production (People's Daily, 29 August 1960).

Roughly speaking, relocated cadre account for over 70 percent of the aggregate number of organizational cadre.

The second characteristic of the two-five system leadership program is the relocated cadre's domination of the basic production units of agriculture. For example, in Hopei Province's Shang-tu Hsien, high-level cadre of all departments at the hsien level are appointed assistant secretary or assistant brigade leader of production brigades in agricultural areas. The general cadre of the hsien and commune are given the post of assistant secretary of small production brigades or assistant

brigade leader (People's Daily, 21 October 1960). Further at all six people's communes in Ch'inghai Province's Kung-ho Hsien there is one cadre who is, at the least, a member of Communist China's Hsien Committee, dispatched to the commune and in a position of leadership. A cadre of the hsien leadership class is stationed in each production brigade and is in a position of leadership. In each of the small production brigades the cadre dispatched for field work average less than two men. They are sent to participate in production guidance work (People's Daily, 3 July 1960). In the [sic] southern districts of Shansi Province approximately 16,000 relocation cadre have been appointed assistant brigade leaders of production brigades and managers of rural dining halls (People's Daily, 24 August 1960).

The two-five system leadership program is the fruit of the experience of the production leadership of Wu-ch'iao Hsien. It would seem that the Wu-ch'iao Hsien Committee began the Great Leap Forward in 1958. They devised various production guidance programs and utilized the three-seven guidance program during this period.

Under this program 70 percent of the cadre's working time was given over to participation in small production brigades and manual labor. 30 percent of his time was given to research in his organization. After this a program was adopted under which seven days out of ten were given over to field assignments, and three days were used for work in the cadre's organization. Finally in Wu-ch'iao Hsien's federated commune the present two-five system leadership program -- based on the three-seven leadership program -- was developed (People's Daily, 24 August 1960).

The government recognized this program as one which would "assure production guidance and send production unflinching forward." To this end the government has promoted this throughout China with Hopei Province as the starting point. This is what brought about the present success of cadre relocation.

2. Living Conditions

On January first of this year The People's Daily published an editorial under the following headline: "Unite and, Relying on the Masses, Achieve New Victories for Peace in the World and Socialist Construction at Home!" In addition, the First Phase of the Red Flag exhorted in its editorial: "Let us advance under the great slogans of the general line." These two editorials are both directed against stagnation of agricultural production in 1960 and toward victory over this stagnation and the economic construction of the new year. The difference we find between these clarion calls and those of January 1960 is a question of living conditions.

The 1960 New Year's editorials sang the praises of the fruits of the previous two years' brilliant continuous leap forward. They proclaimed the new year to be one of a continuous leap forward and outlined a basic policy of economic construction that made "agriculture its basis." These became the beautiful melodies of "Open the Gates for Red", "A Room Filled with Red", and "Red Everywhere" and celebrated the future course of the continuous leap forward. The New Year's editorials of 1961, however,

abound with realistic, reliable reverberations instead of flowery appeals like those above. In place of the fine-sounding Great Leap Forward melodies the "Living Conditions of the People" are pictured as the urgent task now confronting the nation.

This is extremely important when estimating China's economic plans for 1961. Already it is thought that 1961's economic plans may be reduced because of stagnation in agricultural production in 1960. In addition, Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi himself has made it clear that 1961 is a year for adjustment. The crux of the matter is in the following: (1) the living conditions of the people; (2) the adjustment of the unbalance found in economic growth. The former is a concrete reality of the Chinese economy itself; the latter is profound self-criticism of the Great Leap Forward policy. People's Daily editorials argue: "All people's communes must dispatch their best cadre to operate and administer their communal dining halls...the proportional relationships of every sector of the national economy must be adequately adjusted." These arguments, more than mere words, convey to us a hint of the grave actualities of the Chinese economy.

Living conditions in China are the "utilization of foodstuffs in a rational way and according to plan both in the cities and in the rural area of the country. It is the producing of as many vegetables and subsidiary products as possible." It is the best operation of communal dining halls by the "best cadre". And it is "depending on the people outside of the disaster areas and arousing the benevolent feelings of the classes, economizing on clothing and food, and aiding the stricken areas." It is by these means that they intend to overcome the hardships in the disaster areas that they are faced with today. In other words, it is the act of "not lamenting affluence, only inequality."

The above are closely related to an agricultural policy to encourage production of subsidiary industry and reduce basic construction in agriculture this year. They are measures devised to weather the difficulties facing agriculture and, at the same time, raise the commune member's share of the commune revenue.