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Land Reform - 1940-1941

1. Just before the war with Japan, which began in 1937, Chiang Kai-shek had driven the Chinese Communist forces back into the area of Shensi Province where they set up their capital at Yen-an. When the Japanese attacked China and occupied the western coast it was an excellent breather for the Communists and an opportunity to expand operations. They swept out from Shensi across Shansi and into Hopeh killing off the leaders of brigand groups who were passing themselves off as Chinese patriots in those areas and organizing the banditry under Communist leadership ostensibly to fight the Japanese. This Communist sweep had a double purpose. First, to get a hold on the people; and secondly, to organize the guerrillas. The emphasis in either case was on the organization of the people of that area under Communist leadership.
2. Techniques of organization were, first, to begin with a good and gentle front. Then men, women, and children were organized into their special groups. The most respected leaders of villages were appointed leaders of the various new organizations. There was no requirement that a leader must be a Communist or know Communist principles. To get the people organized was the thing. Then, gradually, Communist ideas were introduced through select Communist elements in the various organizations, and as the people became more indoctrinated in Communist principles they were led to criticize the original group leaders as not "eager enough" to see the people's will accomplished. These leaders were sometimes liquidated, but usually they were merely replaced.
3. After organization was far enough advanced, land reform agitation began. [redacted] In Chinese rural communities there has always been a "farmers' committee" which amounted to the governing body of the village, made up of the heads of families. In the period 1940-1941 these committees came solidly into Communist control [redacted] and were fitted-out with a sort of Communist core amounting to an agitating committee within the larger committee. This agitation committee was headed by the propertyless and the ne'er-do-wells of the villages - the bums, in other words. It was designed to

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attack the landlord (who would hold large areas of land and had tenants or hired hands working for them).

4. The meetings of the farmers' committees were now filled with demands for justice for the poor man - "a poor man ought to have a better break". There was no sudden grat for the property of the rich. The agitating committees spent hours and days designing ways to separate the landlords from their possessions under a pretext of justice. The usual first charge was that the landlord had dealt unfairly with a tenant or a hired hand with respect to pay, perhaps 10 years previously. Let us say that at that time (about 1930) a landlord paid a tenant or worker an equivalent in Chinese money of US\$70 for a year's work (a fairly good wage for the time). The Communist agitators in the farmers' committee would arbitrarily contend the wage was unjust - the man should have been paid US\$150. Therefore, the landlord would now owe the worker US\$80 principle, plus the interest that would have accrued on US\$80 over the 10 year period. The worker who was to benefit from this "justice" was often tempted to become an ardent Communist and to support the charges for reasons of gain. Another device was this one. Ten years ago a landlord, by accident, killed a chicken of a poor neighbor. He must now pay 10 years' accrued interest on the chicken. He must pay for all the eggs that chicken would have laid, which in turn would have become chickens, and, further, he must pay interest on these unborn chickens. Just another way of saying he must surrender all he owns.
5. After the agitating committee had fabricated sufficient of this sort of "evidence" against a landlord, further complaints would be gathered from the people of the village at a public court with the condemned landlord seated on a platform before them. Every complaint would be heard. Then a Communist leader would say, "What do you think, should we kill him?" "Plants" in the crowd would shout, "Yes". Others who had no complaint against the landlord would not dare say anything. Usually landlords were not killed but they were tortured, beaten badly, and dragged through the village. Their families were driven from home and all were reduced to begging. But it didn't end here. The farmers' committee would then determine from whom and in what villages the dispossessed would be free to beg. Persons who did not have permission to feed the ex-landlords and their families, and did so, would be charged with the same crime as the landlords and would likewise be driven from their homes. After about one-half to one year the dispossessed would be given a little house and a plot of land like everyone else and the ordeal was over.

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Communist Organizational Levels in Peking -

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There were two main levels of organization: territorial and occupational-professional. At the territorial level the smallest cell was the Hutung, or side street, comprising maybe one hundred families. In the beginning a great show of democratic process was made - officers were elected usually from among the more respected members of the street. In the early stages, too, within the Hutung cell there would be meetings to discuss the beauties of Communism - one day for the men,

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another for the women, and then for the children. These side-street cells were consolidated into larger territorial units, arbitrarily set, but usually conforming to convenient geographic considerations - usually a block of several streets. These blocks of cells made communication of quasi-governmental directives (Party instructions) very easy. The occupations were organized [redacted] - particular emphasis was on the factory workers, steel workers, miners, etc. Each skill within each factory formed its own cell. These various intra-factory cells were combined into a factory organization and then there was a city-wide organization for each industry in that ascending order.

8. The indoctrination of the workers went on in this fashion. The general aim was to bring the workers to look upon the factories as their property - to cease to look "selfishly" for a better salary - and to realize that the good of the factory was the good of the workers. Austerity programs were then suggested by Communist elements. Workers were invited to reduce their salaries somewhat after this example. Coal miners, or steel workers might normally expect in salary 300 to 400 pounds of millet per month (that is, sufficient currency to purchase that much millet). The worker is told politely he is actually worth less than that, and he is asked to write down his daily duties and place after each duty the number of value points the Communist factory leadership has set for that unit of work. Then the worker is told his "self" estimate of his value to the factory is overrated; that a slight reduction is in order. The worker is finally "shaken down" after some cautious haggling on his part to a certain monthly wage - say 80% of his normal salary. At this point he is asked how much he feels he ought to give to factory maintenance and production needs. If he balks he is reminded that he is "still unconscious of the part he plays in factory ownership". Then usually he offers to reduce his salary another 10% or so. But if he refuses, he will be placed before the assembled workers and derided until he submits. After his austerity has been thus patriotically "self-imposed", the worker does not dare complain that he was tricked. He goes on with an outward show of having made the sacrifice willingly. The good worker can't win. "You are a very good worker", an overseer will say. "You ought to work longer and set a good example for the others". Then the poor fellow is given longer hours and his name is published in the papers as a patriotic example to other workers. He too must pretend he actually volunteered.

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The University for Political Studies in Peking

12. This university is near the Summer Palace and is intended to instruct Communist leaders and manipulators of many levels more thoroughly in Communist aims and techniques. It is used also to orient, ~~politically~~, professional people and technicians who will be assuming moderately responsible positions in various lines of work. Admission to the University is not based upon conventional academic achievement. While the school in Peking is probably the most important of schools in China of this type, actually every large city has one.

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